

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: Friday 24th February 2023

Subject of Report: Family Hubs and Children's Centres

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Dawn Newton (Head of Service) and Tracey Wells (Team Manager)

Key Decision: No

Reason: To update Scrutiny.

Reason:

This provides the Panel with the vision for the system wide Family Hub model within North Somerset.

Recommendations

Members note the update on the current position in relation to progress on the development of the Family Hub model in North Somerset.

1. Summary of Report

Set out below is a summary of the plans to develop the Family Hub model in North Somerset.

2. Policy

The recommendation by the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care is for local authorities to build on their early help provision and create a system wide Family Hub model for 0-19 (25 for children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)) within their communities. The aim of the model is to provide access to the right support in the right place at the right time for our children and families.

North Somerset Council is adopting this recommendation.

3. Details

3.1 What are Family Hubs?

3.2 A Family Hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined up, whole-family support services for families with children aged 0-19 (25 years of age for young people with SEND). They provide families with somewhere they know they can go if they need information, advice or guidance about parenting, concerns about family breakdown, and other worries. The hub is a central access point for services and support and will provide a universal front door to families, offering a one-stop shop of family support services across their social care, education, mental health, and physical health needs.

3.3 Through community and support services, we hope to ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19, (or 25 for young people with SEND) receive strengthened early help and support.

3.4 Effective early help can improve:

- Children's wellbeing
- Education achievement
- Life chances, i.e., opportunities to improve quality of life
- Reduce family poverty
- Improve mental health; and,
- Lead to lower crime, unemployment other negative outcomes.

3.5 Each Family Hub is bespoke to its local community, while incorporating three key delivery principles. These are:

- Access
- Connection
- Relationships.

3.6 A Family Hub will work in partnership a range of other services and the community, for example, midwives, health visitors, children centres, SEND, parenting, housing, debt advice and welfare and voluntary organisation.

3.7 The Family Hub model is not only offered via a building. We know it is important to provide a variety of ways for families to access support and this includes outreach i.e. in another community building, children centre, park / play space, online and virtually. Children's Centres are key in supporting the success of Family Hubs as they will support a hub and spoke model.

3.8 Family Hubs offer information, advice and provide a range of activities that all children and families can access. This is called our universal offer and can include:

- Midwifery appointments
- Services offered by health visitors
- Activities for children aged 0-5 years
- Youth services

- 3.9 We recognise being a parent / carer is rewarding but also brings its challenges as every child is unique. To help parents and carers understand their child and their needs, Family Hubs offer a range of parenting programmes and services to cover all ages and stages, including online courses.
- 3.10 Family Hubs aim to provide parenting support which will:
- Strengthen families by providing help with the challenges parents and carers face; especially those which will impact on children's development and their educational attainment.
 - Help prevent family breakdown by supporting families where parenting is particularly difficult and ensuring access to early help to address problems which might otherwise escalate.
 - Provide relationship support for couples at life's key pressure points and when parents find it hard to resolve conflict.
 - Support separating families to reduce parental conflict and achieve workable parenting arrangements in the best interests of the children, thereby preventing, where possible, the need to access the family courts.

North Somerset's identified Family Hubs

- 3.11 The following Children Centre buildings have been identified as sites to be developed into Family Hubs. These are:
- The Carlton Centre – located within South locality
 - Castle Batch Children's Centre – located within East locality
 - Clevedon Children's Centre – located North locality
- 3.12 The rationale for this decision is based on knowledge of where our children and young people socialise and what buildings we have within our portfolio that can provide the flexibility for further development, to meet the Department for Education's Family Hub Model Framework.
- 3.13 The Department for Education has commissioned the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families to provide guidance to local authorities who are progressing with the development of the system wide Family Hub model.

4. Consultation

Meaningful co-production will be prioritised to ensure inclusion of children, young people, and families to ensure their views and ideas are heard. This will include those whose experiences of working with professionals haven't always been positive; or those for whom services are not easily accessible. We know that without the inclusion of families whose needs haven't been met, there is a risk of repeatedly designing services that do not meet the needs of some of families that may be marginalised.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Family Wellbeing Service, which includes Children's Centres and Family Hubs, has been tasked with making £300,000 savings over the next 2 financial years.

Costs

- 5.2 The Carlton Centre renovations have been agreed and capital funding has been awarded at a cost of £270,000. The refurbishment work has already started and is well underway.
- 5.3 Castle Batch is a children's centre, however it is not currently within the Family Wellbeing service portfolio. There are increased costs to transfer this building which equate to £11,000 per year. This budget has been identified from the Supporting Families budget and building compliance is being completed before we the building can be transferred to Family Wellbeing. The transfer of the management of this building will enable more flexible working hours, including weekends at a more cost effective rate.
- 5.4 Our third Family Hub is at Clevedon Children's Centre at The Barn. There are no planned increased costs currently.
- 5.5 A request for funding for feasibility studies on all Family Hubs has been made. If successful, in line with consultation, this will enable us to have improved flexible space to support the right services in the right place, at the right time for our children, young people and their families.

Funding

- 5.6 No increases funding are requested at this time.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

Providing Family Hubs is not a directive from Government but a recommendation on which North Somerset Council is committed.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

At every stage in the development of our Family Hubs, we are mindful in respect of climate change and environmental implications in terms of staff plans but also using the opportunity to educate and positively influence families about changes they could make to their lifestyles.

8. Risk Management

The risk of not providing a system wide, Family Hub model is that children and young people will not be able to access the right services at the right time, which can impact on their achievement of their full potential. Without this level of early help, there may be a risk that without early intervention, families find themselves in crisis and ultimately demand higher level services which may also lead to an increase in cost of service provision as needs become more complex.

9. Equality Implications

There are no equality implications in North Somerset Council adopting this model. The system wide, Family Hub model will offer an opportunity to improve access and promote

inclusion by removing some of the barriers experienced by families when receiving support, moving between services or during transitional periods.

10. Corporate Implications

None

11. Options Considered

None

Author:

Dawn Newton, Head of Front Door and Family Wellbeing and Tracey Wells, Family Wellbeing Manager responsible for Family Hub and Children Centres.

Appendices:

North Somerset's Family Hubs slides.

Background Papers:

Further information on Family Hub can be located on the government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>