

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

3 October 2024

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme

Report from: David Whiting, Acting Director of Public Health

Author: Glenn Page, Children's Commissioning Lead
(Universal Services)

Summary

This report provides an overview of Medway's approach to delivering the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme and progress to date.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 The Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme is funded by government grant. The programme supports delivery of priorities 1, 2 and 4 of the Council Plan.

3. Background

3.1. The Family Hubs & Start for Life is a 3 year funded programme (April 2022-March 2025) overseen by the Departments for Education and Health and Social Care. It requires participating Local Authorities to develop and enhance a package of family support services delivered through a Family Hub model. This includes face to face services in Hubs and in outreach settings as well as digital services. Funding has been made available for participating local authorities to deliver the requirements of the programme as set out in the Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme Guide.

3.2. Medway's total grant funding allocation for the Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme (2022-25) is £3.8 million. The funding is ringfenced for key delivery areas:

- Family Hubs Programme
 - Family Hubs Capital
 - Perinatal Mental Health & Parent Infant Relationships
 - Parenting Support
 - Infant Feeding
 - Early Language Development & Home Learning Environments
 - Parent Carer Panels
 - Publishing the Start for Life Offer
- 3.3. Whilst the programme officially runs from April 2022, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) and first tranche of funding was not received until February 2023. While this has been badged as a 3 year programme, the work has been condensed into a reduced timescale due to the delay in receiving the MOU.
- 3.4. The programme is led on behalf of Medway Council by Public Health and Children's Services. A Transformation Team based within Medway Council's Public Health Directorate has been established consisting of a Project Manager, Lead Analyst, and Marketing and Digital Engagement Manager. These posts are funded via the Programme grant.
- 3.5. A Multi Agency Working Group made up of key partners from the public and voluntary and community sector has been established to set priorities and guide delivery of the programme with task and finish groups for each of the funded areas. Partners engaged in these groups include Medway NHS Foundation Trust Maternity Team, Medway Community Healthcare (MCH) Health Visiting, Medway Parent Carer Forum, Home-Start Medway, Family Action, Medway Voluntary Action, Schools, Early Years Settings and Kent & Medway ICB. Medway Council services represented include Children's Services, Public Health and Education & SEND.
- 3.6. Medway has 4 Children and Family Hubs, managed by Medway's Family Solutions service in Strood, Chatham, Wayfield and Gillingham. Medway also has 9 Family Wellbeing Centres. These are rooms in primary school sites, which are leased by the Council to provide additional space for the delivery of services for children and families across Medway. This infrastructure pre-dates the national Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme.
- 3.7. The programme has enabled an expansion of the offer across the hub network which includes:
- Midwife and Health Visitor clinics
 - Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationships support (e.g. Medway Pregnancy to Three Service, Singing Mamas (perinatal singing therapy), Family Wellbeing and Mindful Parenting sessions)
 - Groups for young children and their families such as Baby and Toddler Groups, Stay and Play and Baby Massage.
 - Structured parenting groups and targeted interventions for parents and their families such as Incredible Years Babies, Solihull, Triple P

Parenting, Small Steps (for parents of children with SEND pre and post diagnosis), Domestic Abuse Recovery Together (DART) and Barnardo's Dice programme for parents of children at risk of exploitation.

- Child Development interventions (e.g. Home-Start Tiny Talkers and Little Adventurers)
- School holiday activities for children
- Counselling and therapy support for young people and adults (e.g. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services, Ocean Counselling, North Kent Mind and NHS Talking Therapies)
- Medway SENDIAS service
- Public Health programmes including Little Chefs, Food Explorers, Social Prescribing, Health & Wellbeing Coaching
- Welfare benefits drop in
- Healthy Start Vitamins

3.8. Following engagement with stakeholders and an insights study conducted in the summer of 2023, Medway has used the programme funding to enhance and develop its Family Hubs and Start for Life offer as follows:

| Funded Area | Update |
|--|---|
| Family Hubs Capital: | |
| A programme of building improvements at each of Medway's four children and Family Hubs | <p>Work has focussed on improving accessibility and making the spaces more adaptable and purposeful. Entrances and reception areas have been revamped and made more accessible. Work is underway to enhance sensory spaces at Chatham, Strood and Wayfield Hubs. The Boardroom at Chatham Hub is being refurbished to make it more adaptable to a greater range of activities.</p> <p>Digital information screens have been installed at the Hubs. Kiosks for digital sign in/out of hub buildings are currently being rolled out.</p> <p>Tablet PCs have been purchased for supervised use by parents & carers for registration and booking onto hub activities.</p> |

| Family Hubs Programme: | |
|---|---|
| Medway Family Hub app – Digital front door providing a one stop shop access point to Medway’s Family Hubs and Start for Life offer for families. | Medway Family Hub had its official launch w/c 29 th April and has gained 5653 users. |
| Family Hubs & Start for Life Workforce Development Programme – Making Every Contact Count style training for frontline staff to ensure consistency in messaging regarding Start for Life themes (e.g. infant feeding, child development, perinatal mental health) and consistency of signposting to local services. | Pilot session being delivered on 24 th September to gather feedback from a range of delivery partners. Roll out of face-to-face training programme to commence late October with bitesize e-learning available in February 2025. |
| Child Friendly Medway community events - To promote the programme and encourage families to access the Hub network. | <p>Child Friendly Medway delivered 329 activities/events from May 2023 to September 2024 with a total attendance of 45,928 for all projects. The focus was largely on engaging children in reading as well as promoting services and support for families.</p> <p>Early Help Coordinators from the children and family hubs and other delivery partners (E.g. Home-Start and Family Action) attend some of the events to promote the service offer.</p> |
| Parenting Support: | |
| Universal Parenting Programme – Delivered by Family Action for parents and carers of children aged 0-2. The programme is a universal offer for all parents making the transition to parenthood. | The face to face programme commences 28 th October 2024 with online bitesize content being developed for launch in the New Year. |
| Small Steps - Parenting support programme for parents and carers of children with SEND, pre and post diagnosis delivered by Family Action | Received 345 referrals between Sept 2023 and Sept 2024. 174 parents/carers attended community drop-ins, 42 attended parenting programmes and 181 attended other interventions such as workshops, 1-2-1 support and befriending. |
| Engagement with Fathers Workforce Development Programme – A programme delivered by the Fatherhood Institute to enhance skills and knowledge across the workforce in | Delivery of training including Fathers & Infant Feeding, Supporting Fathers’ Perinatal Mental Health, Becoming Dad, Fathers Reading Everyday (aimed at engaging fathers in reading with their |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>engaging and working with fathers and male carers.</p> | <p>children), Working with Resistant Fathers, Staying Connected (working with separated fathers) and Fatherhood Champions training to commence 17th September 2024.</p> |
| <p>DadSpace – Mental health support for dads. Pilot project aimed at providing a safe space for dads to talk, listen and share their experiences of fatherhood.</p> | <p>Programme will commence October 2024.</p> |
| <p>Incredible Years Pre-School Training for Hub Staff</p> | <p>12 Members of staff from the Hub Network will be trained to deliver the Incredible Years Pre-School parenting programme for children aged 2-4 years. (Date to be confirmed.)</p> |
| <p>Perinatal Mental Health & Parent Infant Relationships:</p> | |
| <p>Parent Infant Relationships Workforce Development Programme – Training for frontline staff in identifying mild to moderate perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship difficulties, providing brief advice and signposting as necessary. Aimed at developing a more holistic approach to perinatal mental health conversations and having more robust referral pathways between organisations.</p> | <p>This service is being delivered by Family Action. A training team has been recruited and trained. The training package has been co-designed with service users and partner organisations. The training scheduled to start in November '24. The initial target groups include staff in GP surgeries and Early Years settings.</p> |
| <p>Perinatal Mental Health Peer Support – Development of Peer Support offer for parents with mild to moderate perinatal mental health difficulties.</p> | <p>A Peer Support Coordinator and Peer Support Worker have been recruited and trained. Recruitment of peer supporters is ongoing. The service provides one to one person-centred peer support for women who have been supported by the Medway Pregnancy to 3 service.</p> <p>The service has supported 59 mothers and their babies (April-September 2024). Data from assessments suggest significant improvements in mental health and wellbeing for the mothers and improved attachments with their children.</p> <p>A volunteer peer supporter with lived experience is also providing group and peer support for mothers in the early stages of pregnancy.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>QWELL - Digital Perinatal Mental Health Service providing round the clock remote access to counselling, support and self-help resources.</p> | <p>Launched during Mental Health Week (w/c 13th May). 1,251 people have clicked through to the website as a result of the supporting social media campaign. 68% of users access the service out-of-hours.</p> |
| <p>Additional Perinatal Mental Health support staff in Health Visiting and Maternity</p> | <p>Additional perinatal mental health support staff have been recruited in the MCH Health Visiting Service (2 FTE) and Medway Maternity Service (1FTE). A Band 4 Maternity Support worker has been recruited within Team Lotus at Medway Foundation Trust to support mild-to-moderate PMH within the midwifery team. Training is now complete. Two Band 4 Nursery Nurses have been recruited within Medway Community Healthcare and are providing 1-2-1 support to families. They have formed a support group and are linking in with support workers at Medway Foundation Trust.</p> |
| <p>Baby Massage training – For Family Hub staff to work with parents on improving parent-infant attachment and bonding and identify families who might need more intensive support.</p> | <p>7 practitioners across the hub network have been trained and licences purchased from Connected Babies. Trained practitioners are now delivering classes. Further training will take place in October for another 12 practitioners to increase capacity due to high demand.</p> |
| <p>Singing Mamas - singing therapy for maternal wellbeing</p> | <p>Delivery has commenced in the Hubs. 403 people booked onto the Singing Mamas sessions being delivered in the Hubs from September following a social media campaign in August 2024. Hub workers to be trained to become singing group leaders due to popularity.</p> |
| <p>Matticlick Training - An evidence-based psychosocial intervention designed to reduce anxiety for new and isolated parents by helping them to recognise and make the most of their social connections to support parenting.</p> | <p>10 workers from across the workforce received training. After the success of the first round of MattiClick training, another round of training will be delivered towards the end of 2024.</p> |
| <p>Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) and Parent Infant Relationships (PIR) Strategy Development – Barnardo's have been commissioned to work with stakeholders and develop a PMH & PIR</p> | <p>A multi-agency Roundtable event for stakeholders took place 14th August 2024. Barnardo's have also conducted survey work with delivery partners and parent groups.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Strategy. This will include recommendations for workforce training and supervision and strategy options which take account of the uncertainty surrounding funding for the Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme after 31st March 2025.</p> | <p>Initial recommendations to be shared in November with final strategy sign off in January 2025. Workforce development recommendations shared w/c 9th September. These will inform commissioning of further training.</p> |
| <p>Infant Feeding:</p> | |
| <p>Infant Feeding Support Team – providing 1-2-1 support for new mothers around the clock on the Maternity ward at Medway Maritime Hospital. The team also provide follow up support in the home and over the phone as well as delivering education and targeted antenatal support.</p> | <p>The infant feeding support team is now fully operational within the Maternity department at Medway Maritime Hospital.</p> <p>752 families have been supported to date with positive impact shown on breast feeding initiation rates (at around 70%).</p> <p>There is evidence of an increase in the continuation rates and excellent feedback from service users.</p> |
| <p>Health Visiting Infant Feeding Peer Support – Salaried Peer Support Workers to enhance support offer and improve retention of peer supporters.</p> | <p>The Band 4 paid peer support role is delivering the Medway Breastfeeding peer support network on a weekly basis – Offering support to 105 women between April and June 2024. Latest data shows that 80% of mothers breastfeeding at new birth visit are still breastfeeding at 6-8 week check.</p> |
| <p>Early Language Development & Home Learning Environments:</p> | |
| <p>Tiered Intervention Model – Medway Community Healthcare (Health Visiting & Speech & Language Therapy Service) and Home-Start Medway have implemented a tiered intervention model for children aged 3-4 identified with mild to moderate communication delay. Children are identified by the Health Visiting service via 2.5 year development checks and through the school readiness questionnaire. Interventions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tiny Talkers, a 6-week course for parents and their children to | <p>Tiny Talkers has received 95 referrals. 65% of parents have reported improvement in their child’s speech and language. 25% have been referred on to Speech & Language Therapy Service.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>learn strategies and techniques for improving speech and communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1-2-1 support delivered in the home for families needing more intensive support - Referrals to speech & language therapy for those children with a higher level of need | |
| <p>Early Talk Boost – 12-week targeted intervention for 3–4-year-olds identified with language and communication delay. Delivered within Early Years settings.</p> | <p>Practitioners have been trained to deliver Early Talk Boost in 34 Early Years settings. 205 children have been registered as receiving the intervention. 76% of participating children have narrowed the gap to expected levels by 50% or more. Planning is under way to deliver another tranche of training for Early Years settings in the Autumn.</p> |
| <p>Medway Early Talkers - A universal digital platform delivered by Speechlink for parents/carers, with a focus on children aged 3-4 years to develop speech and enhance school readiness</p> | <p>Following launch in July, the platform has gained over 700 users with many coming to it initially via the Medway Family Hub app.</p> |
| <p>#MedwayGrowThroughPlay social media campaign - To raise awareness among parents of how to support their child’s speech and language development in Early Years and help with school readiness. Messaging promotes key messages such as the importance of parents & carers talking, playing and reading with their children, uptake of Health Visitor checks, funded places in Early Years and Medway’s School Readiness Questionnaire</p> | <p>The campaign has had over 123,000 views on social media since the beginning of the campaign to date. (September 2023 – September 2024).</p> <p>The campaign promoted uptake of the Health Visiting Service School Readiness Questionnaire during the application window for primary school places September to December 2023. This led to 1800 completions compared with 390 in 2022. This campaign is being repeated for 2024.</p> |
| <p>Parent Carer Panel:</p> | |
| <p>Medway Parent Carer Panel – A representative group of Medway Parents and Carers to co-design, commission and improve Family Hub and Start for Life Services with delivery partners</p> | <p>Medway Parents & Carers Forum (MPCF) has been commissioned to establish and support the Panel for Medway.</p> <p>The panel has 21 members. Reps attend the Multi Agency Working Group and support co-production of services</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | including recently the Universal Parenting programme and DadSpace. |
| Publishing the Start for Life Offer: | |
| Mixed mode marketing campaign to promote the Family Hubs and Start for Life offer and raise brand awareness. | <p>The Start for Life and Family Hubs offer has been published. The main access point is via the Medway Family Hub which is available as an app as well as an internet link.</p> <p>A mixed mode media campaign has been used to promote the offer. This has included social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn & X), a range of out of home channels such as billboards, totems, adverts on buses and phone box kiosks, Medway Matters, Heart of Kent Radio and Kent Online.</p> <p>Promotional materials have been provided for delivery partners including leaflets, posters, social media graphics, copy and banners.</p> <p>The programme evaluation will commence on the 23 September and will assess the level of brand awareness among Medway Families as well as impact on registrations and footfall at the Hubs.</p> |

- 3.9. Medway is making good progress against the requirements of the [Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide](#), currently meeting 91% of all the 'Minimum Requirements' and 'Go Further' options agreed with the Department for Education with plans in place to address the remaining requirements. (At the beginning of the programme, Medway was meeting 17% of the requirements.)

4. Risk management

4.1. Risks identified are listed below:

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|--|---|---|-------------|
| Cessation of government funding in March 2025. | At the time of writing, funding for the programme will come to an end in March 2025. This threatens the sustainability of the services and initiatives developed through the programme after that date. | A sustainability plan has been developed. Due to the time limited nature of the grant, a lot of the current investment has gone into developing infrastructure and skills across the system as a more sustainable offer. Some initiatives only require one off funding or minimal onward investment, some services have been commissioned from voluntary sector organisations who would have opportunities to apply for funding from other funding streams following the end of the programme. Where posts have been funded with health organisations, we will be using performance data to make the case for continued investment. | BII |
| Not achieving full budget spend | The funding allocation for this programme is allocated for financial years 22/23 to 24/25. The DFE have stated | Maintain regular contact with DFE Regional Delivery Lead to keep them up to date with proposed spend | CII |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>that funding may be withheld where authorities are likely to have a significant underspend. The DFE has stated that in the event of underspend, money would not be clawed back but money may be withheld. They have also suggested flexibility in terms of spend post 31st March 2025 as long as delivery of the work commenced in advance of the end of financial year 2024-25.</p> | <p>and delivery schedules.</p> <p>Maintain robust project and budget monitoring to ensure projects are running to time and budget.</p> | |
|--|--|--|--|

| Likelihood | Impact: |
|---|--|
| <p>A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare</p> | <p>I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor</p> |

5. Consultation

- 5.1. The plans developed through the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme have been developed in consultation with a wide range of partner organisations including Medway Maternity Service, Medway Community Healthcare, voluntary sector partners including Home-Start, Family Action and Medway Voluntary Action (reps including Carers First and Kent Association for the Blind), parent / carer groups including Medway Parents & Carers Forum, Medway Maternity Voices Partnership, schools and Early Years reps.

6. Climate change implications

- 6.1. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme has been funded by a ringfenced grant from government for financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25. The value of the grant is £3.8 million.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Lead officer contact

Glenn Page
Children's Commissioning Lead (Universal Services)
glenn.page@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background papers

None