



**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny  
Committee**  
22 September 2022

**Report from Corporate Director,  
Children and Young People**

## **Early Help and Family Wellbeing Centres**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	N/A
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1: FWC Summer Programme Example
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
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### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To update the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on progress since the establishment of Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC); to outline current service delivery arrangements and examples of the outcomes and impact achieved for families and to update on the proposed wider changes to the Early Help service to align with the new FWC delivery model and the government's new 'Best Start for Life' programme.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

That the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:

2.1 Notes and comments on the current FWC service offer and the new partnerships/ services that could be created to enhance the offer.

2.2 Notes the wider planned changes to the Early Help Service to align with the Best Start for Life programme.

### **3.0 Detail**

#### **3.1 What is Early Help?**

Early help is an approach to providing services to families that focuses on reducing the likelihood of a problem occurring or becoming worse in the future. The reasoning is that if we can provide the right support at the right time, we can prevent problems such as youth crime, domestic abuse, and substance misuse from becoming complex, ingrained and from reaching crisis point. This would provide a better quality of life for families while reducing public spending on costly crisis intervention services.

3.2 The needs addressed through Early Help services can arise at any time in a child/ young person's life – these services are not solely focused on the early years. Early Help consists of universal and targeted services. Universal services are available to all families, and include schools and GPs. Targeted services address specific needs, and include domestic abuse advisors, counselling and therapy services and engagement work with children at risk of school exclusion. The Early Help network includes professionals from all the universal and targeted services for families available in Brent.

3.3 Independent reviews and research undertaken over the last 10 years have consistently found that Early Help services are essential to breaking cycles of deprivation and improving outcomes for children and young people, as well as reducing spending on public services. Nationally, most local authorities deliver Early Help initiatives beyond their statutory duties, incentivised by the potential to support families before situations escalation and reduce spending on statutory services.

3.4 Policy shifts towards integrated working, most notably the government's Supporting Families (previously Troubled Families) programme, have resulted in the establishment of dedicated teams of keyworkers that coordinate strengths-based, multi-agency support for families experiencing multiple complex problems. The local authority is responsible for ensuring all Early Help providers implement 'whole family working', an approach in which all family members are engaged in support provided to one or more family members, and all family members have their needs considered.

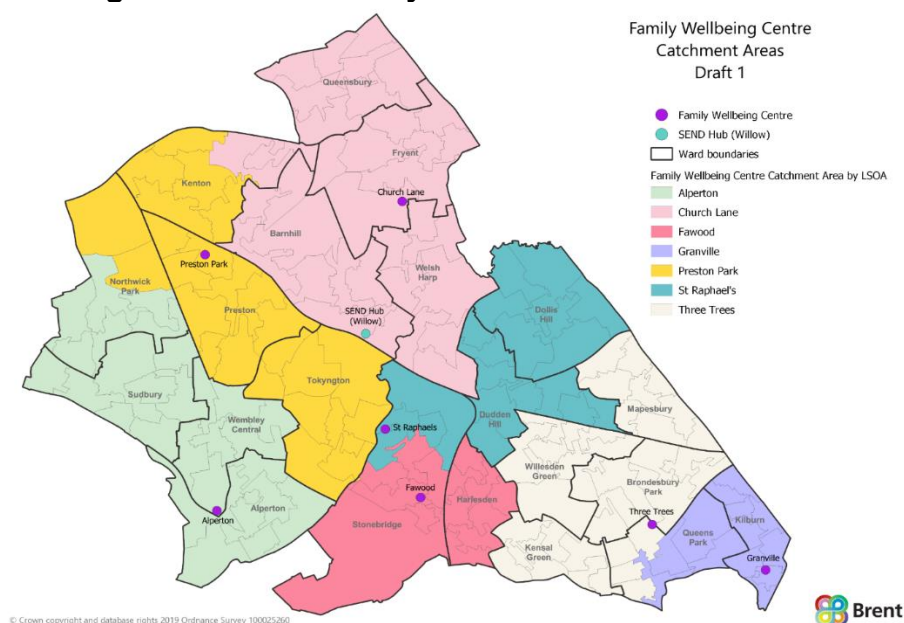
#### **Early Help in Brent**

3.5 The Brent Children's Trust Early Help strategy provides a common framework for delivering Early Help offer in Brent. Its core is a set of priorities identified and agreed by a large cohort of Early Help practitioners and stakeholders in Brent. Importantly, it also represents a commitment from these professionals to work together to progress them. The priorities include working in a strengths-based, whole family way to ensure families build resilience and achieve long-term sustainable outcomes, with recognition of the impact of adverse childhood experiences and sector-wide buy-in to trauma-informed practice. It includes championing the voice of the children, young people and families who use Early Help services, and continually improving the accessibility of services, including through cultural competence. The Brent Multi-Agency Early Help Strategy

Delivery Plan recognises the wealth of existing and planned activity in the Early Help field and is made up of actions to link with, support and enhance this work, while addressing gaps that the Early Help network have identified.

- 3.6 Brent Council has a well-established Early Help service that includes Brent Family Solutions (Supporting Families keyworkers), Parenting support, an Early Years offer (childcare sufficiency planning, Children and Families Information Service, and Willow Nursery for children with SEND), the Youth Offending Service, support for Young Carers and the Early Help Resources panel. The Early Help service also includes the Accelerated Support Team which works with young people on the 'edge of care' (including an out of hours element) and our 8 Family Wellbeing Centres (launched in December 2020) offering multi-agency support on a neighbourhood level. Brent Early Help works closely with partners in other agencies to deliver these services, including the NHS, Police, Probation Service, education and childcare providers. Complementing and interwoven with these services is a wealth of support and activities for children, young people and families provided by Brent's vibrant and diverse Voluntary and Community (VCS) sector.
- 3.7 FWCs are at the heart of Brent's Early Help community based offer and are a priority in the Borough Plan (2019-23). The creation of FWCs provides an integrated 'whole family' (for children aged 0-18 years old, and 25 for those with additional statutory needs) service, bringing together core health visiting, school nursing, children's centre services and some parenting and family support services into a single offer. This arrangement helps the co-ordination and delivery of services for more vulnerable adolescents using contextual safeguarding approaches. The centres closest to the new Roundwood Alternative Provision School (St Raphael's and Fawood / Curzon) work closely together to ensure family support services are co-ordinated. The FWCs signpost young people to local opportunities as set out in the September 2021, Cabinet approved, Youth Strategy and delivery plan. The FWC initiative responds to the national shift towards hub-based working and comprehensive local consultation. Each FWC is shaped by a steering group of local stakeholders which are integrating working across Brent's Early Help network to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of local families.
- 3.8 FWCs are delivered from the following locations:
1. Alperton
  2. Church Lane
  3. Granville Plus
  4. Preston Park
  5. St Raphael's
  6. Three Trees
  7. Fawood and Curzon (managed as one centre by the Curzon Crescent and Fawood Partnership)
  8. Willow (predominantly a SEND centre)

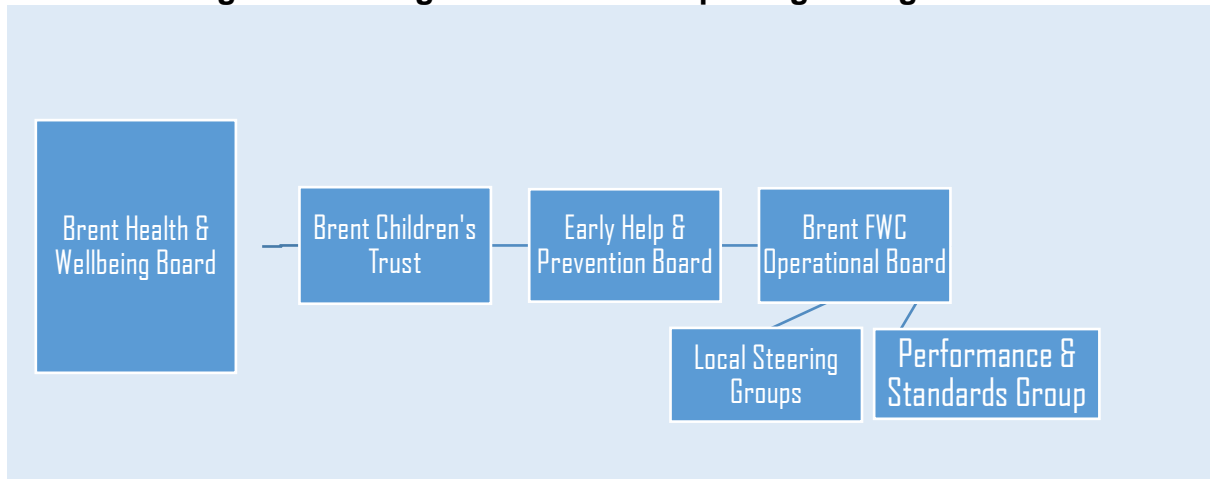
**Figure 1: FWC delivery sites and catchment areas**



- 3.9 The FWC model built on existing Children’s Centre services and the local authority statutory responsibilities regarding the provision of Children’s Centres. Cabinet agreed the approach to developing FWCs in October 2019, making a £1.5M saving as a result of implementing the changes to provision, by reducing the number of Children’s Centres from 17 to 8 FWCs. One of the key principles endorsed by the Cabinet was that there should be a reasonable geographical distribution of FWCs to ensure that all communities were able to access support as close to home as possible. The formal FWC launch took place on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at St Raphael’s and was attended by key stakeholders.
- 3.10 FWCs operate under a hybrid model, with some core services being delivered in-house. This model was considered as providing the best value and brought back in-house from Barnardo’s the operational management of the FWC buildings and delivery of retained services (e.g. parenting programmes, family support and some services for 0-5 year olds and their parents). These services are supplemented by close partnership working with the 0-19 Public Health Service, midwifery services and other appropriate services delivered by council / health teams and Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) partners. The FWCs are a single point of access for families requiring Early Help and support.
- 3.11 In addition, a smaller FWC support services contract was created with Barnardo’s, including crèche provision, volunteering programme, Family Support Assistants and Early Years Workers. Barnardo’s successfully bid for the 3-year contract to deliver these services. The contract has been successfully mobilised and Barnardo’s bring added and social value benefits for vulnerable families including the donation and distribution of white goods, mobile devices and data, gifts for children and access to social trips out.
- 3.12 Governance and reporting mechanism arrangements have been established and are detailed in figure 2 below. The FWC Operational Board’s key aims include developing and promoting understanding and ownership of a common

borough-wide vision for FWCs. Local Steering Groups are a Neighbourhood Forum for sharing information, identifying need and support requirements for families and service gaps / pressures, challenging performance and quality of the FWC, acting as local agents for integrating services and drawing in additional resources.

**Figure 2: FWC governance and reporting arrangements**



- 3.13 FWCs are currently open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm as a minimum with several centres offering youth activities until 6.30/ 7pm as well as some Saturday opening on rotation each week to facilitate support for working parents and the Dads programme. Plans are developing to open the centres on rotation to 8pm, Monday to Friday, and extend weekend opening from 10am to 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays.
- 3.14 A digital transformation project took place to enable families to register with the FWCs online through a My Brent Account, book most activities and services online, and then to electronically sign-in for appointments when they arrive at the centres. Families that are digitally excluded can still drop into the FWC, or call a staff member to request support with registration and booking for activities / services to ensure they are not disadvantaged. During 2021-22 financial year a total of 8,514 residents registered with the FWC and in excess of 75,745 contacts were made, most of which were to vulnerable families.
- 3.15 The new triage service, connecting families into appropriate services within 48 hours, has embedded well into the FWC, becoming an integral part of each centre. Partners are fully aware of the service and remit. The triage team uses a model called Outcome Stars to understand what support families need and Early Help Assessments (EHA) are completed when families require help at a higher level. The triage team provide either short term interventions or direct referrals to local services, depending on presenting need. 894 families were triaged during 2021-22 financial year and the common themes presenting to the service were:
- Support for Asylum seekers
  - Debt - utilities
  - Arrears - housing / rent/ Council tax
    - Children not in school

- Families unable to afford food, basic necessities or clothing
  - Housing - over crowding
  - Families with English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- 3.16 There are 22 keyworkers supporting families across the FWCs who deal with more entrenched support issues. Families can receive a wide range of support from a Key Worker ranging in duration from 3 months to 18 months. Key workers helped a total of 1,600 families during 2021-22 financial year and are part of a team that includes Family Support Assistants.
- 3.17 There are over 40 volunteers who support the work of the FWCs. Volunteers support with administration, the crèche, promoting activities/ services, registering new families, English conversation groups, delivering parenting/ Freedom programmes, and outreach to promote the services in the local community. All volunteers go through Barnardo's vetting processes.
- 3.18 The MOPAC funded Parent Champions programme uses volunteer parents on the premise that they are the best people to support other parents to find out about childcare and services for families with children of all ages. The Parent Champions have been supporting the FWC with outreach to refugee families in local hotels to connect them into centre support services.
- 3.19 The core FWC service offer continues to evolve as new partnerships are created, new local needs are identified and services are reviewed to ensure they meet the FWC key objectives such as:
- a) A reduction in referrals to higher level interventions.
  - b) Prevention of family breakdown resulting in entry to care / Reducing Parental Conflict
  - c) Addressing the growing challenge of serious youth violence.
  - d) Building capacity in universal services so that they can support children earlier.
  - e) Successful delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (0-19).
  - f) Successfully discharge statutory responsibilities with respect to children's centres.
- 3.20 The FWC summer term programmes are detailed in appendix 1, with new services being added each term. The children's centre under 5s offer has been retained, as part of Brent's continued commitment to this age range and new partnerships with agencies delivering services for 5-18 year olds continue to grow.

Some examples of the wide range of the current offer includes:

- Support with asylum seeking, debt, arrears, overcrowding and housing through information, advice, and guidance services such as Citizens Advice Brent, Fairer Housing, Advice-4-Renters, and Salusbury World.
- Support with escalating energy costs through Step Change, Home Energy Advice, fuel vouchers and Citizens Advice Brent.

- Access to food through foodbank vouchers, the Felix project (over 4,500 meals provided during school holiday periods), signposting to local faith/ church groups.
  - Access to clothing, beds, and white goods through charities such as Barnardo's, BBC Children in Need, Wembley Compassionate Fund and the Resident Support Fund.
  - Families receiving free holidays through grants provided by the Family Holiday Association and access to free concerts and events through Wembley Stadium and Barnardo's.
  - Programmes delivered to improve health outcomes include healthy eating, weight management, oral health, family exercise programmes; families access health services on site.
  - Improved mental health through emotional health and wellbeing workshops, counselling support and diversionary activities.
  - Families reducing risk of Domestic Abuse (DA) through the Freedom programme, RISE perpetrator programme, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor and Chrysalis programme (DA one-stop-shop delivered from Curzon Crescent FWC).
- 3.21 Parents of older children are supported by a mix of parenting programmes (Strengthening Families / Strengthening Communities, Triple P), direct work delivered by key workers, access to advice services (such as Citizens Advice Brent) and specialist services for people affected by domestic abuse (RISE male perpetrator programme, the Freedom Programme for female survivors).
- 3.22 The Public Health 0-19 service is an integral part of the FWC delivery model providing Health Visiting, Infant feeding, Brent4Life and School Nursing services. Public Health introduced the Henry programme and is co delivered by FWC and CLCH staff to support families with young children to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 3.23 Midwifery services are providing both ante and post-natal support at centres; plans are in development to offer integrated preparation for parenthood programmes (midwifery, health visiting service, FWC and Early Years staff). The Perinatal mental health service provides support in FWC for any woman with mental health problems, who is planning a pregnancy, pregnant, or who has a baby up to one year old.
- 3.24 The FWC run programmes during the school holidays. The DfE Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is an integral part of the FWC school holiday offer. Vulnerable children receive a free place on a holiday play scheme, a free hot meal each day they attend, and their families have access to free healthy eating / cooking sessions and free food parcels via the Felix project.
- 3.25 A key priority for the FWC is to support children to be school ready and support families with the transition process. This includes ensuring children have well developed emotional, social, physical and cognitive skills in preparation for school. Early Help commissions Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) to deliver a preventative and early intervention service to support children's

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). Early Years workers provide crucial sessions for children under 5 years old. They offer a mix of targeted (Busy Feet/ HENRY – linking to healthy lifestyles) and universal, baby and messy play sessions. This approach enables young children to be identified who may be at risk of poor outcomes and appropriate referrals made, i.e. to SLT, Health Visitors, and community paediatricians.

- 3.26 The Willow FWC is predominantly a SEND hub providing support services to families of children with SEND using an approach to identify children's needs early and putting in place interventions to prevent an escalation of need and additional pressure on the High Needs Block (HNB) deficit. This is a key part of the HNB deficit recovery plan.
- 3.27 The FWC work closely with Brent's Community Hubs to ensure there are effective working relationships in place to support all of Brent's residents. Managers from the respective services meet periodically to review service delivery, update on developments and address any partnership working challenges.
- 3.28 Central government have been interested in learning about the progress made in Brent to deliver FWCs as both the DfE and DLUHC develop policy options to support the roll out of family hubs nationally. Brent has received visits from the DfE, DLUHC, National Centre for Family Hubs and the Family Hubs Network and officers have been asked to speak at national and pan London conferences on various aspects of Brent's FWC journey.
- 3.29 The FWC initiative responds to the national shift towards hub-based working and comprehensive local consultation. Each shaped by a steering group of local stakeholders, the FWC are integrating working across Brent's Early Help network to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of local families.

## **Outcomes and Impact**

- 3.30 The key objectives of FWCs when they were established were:

1. A reduction in referrals to higher level interventions – early intervention and preventative work across FWCs and wider Early Help service prevents families' problems escalating and becoming more complex.

### Progress:

- The number of families completing parenting programmes improved from a 73% completion rate in 20/21 to 82% in 21/22. Families will receive follow up calls this autumn to check in on the sustained impact of the programmes.
- New triage workers provide a rapid response at the first point of contact, by either providing information, guidance or direct work or by making an



appointment with the most relevant agency to provide the support needed. From December 2020 to April 2022, 895 families were worked with; only 13 of these families required higher level intervention (referral to social care or key worker in FWC). An increase in activity from April to June 2022 (433 referrals) has only seen one case step up to a higher level of intervention.

2. Prevention of family breakdown resulting in entry to care – a strong focus on family support delivered at FWCs and wider Early Help Service.

Progress:

- From December 2020 to June 2022, the Accelerated Support Team (who work with children who are on the edge of entering the care system) prevented 86% of 285 of the most vulnerable young people they worked with and identified as being on the edge of care from entering the care system.
  - The number of cases being 'stepped down' from children's social care teams to Early Help services increased by 54% from 2020/21 to 2021/22. This indicates level of risk has reduced and is safely managed by key workers in the FWCs. The number of cases open to key workers in the FWCs has been increasing steadily, with an additional 50 cases allocated to the teams since March 2022.
3. Addressing the growing challenge of serious youth violence – FWCs host activities and support for young people and signpost to opportunities elsewhere, linked to the Brent Youth Strategy and delivery plan.

Progress:

Young people have told us that although they wanted to access youth friendly spaces, they were reluctant to attend, if they were unfamiliar with them. To this end, FWCs have been working with local schools to meet young people and work together to co-design activities. This has seen an increase in young people attending FWCs and engaging in a variety of activities. As a result 13% of children's registrations are young people aged 12- 18 years. A number of activities aimed at older children were delivered over the recent summer holidays as part of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF). The current offer for young people includes: sports and sports leadership; arts workshops (animation, photography, comic books, murals); dance and drama workshops; Global Thinking intended to increase confidence in young women, build resilience and develop life skills. Young women attending report developing new friendships and better coping skills in stressful situations. A young people's survey was launched late August to update their views on the priorities of the

Youth Strategy and to capture their voices on what they would like to see delivered in the FWCs.

4. Building capacity in universal services so that they can support children earlier – strong partnerships and commitments are in place with the statutory and third sector to work together to achieve positive outcomes for families via the Early Help strategy and common framework to deliver early help across Brent using a whole family approach.

Progress:

Citizen's Advice Brent are commissioned to work across the FWCs to provide support to families experiencing a variety of financial difficulties. Financial gains of £1,804,539 were achieved for families last financial year and 2,435 families were supported, 354 families secured or were clearer about their immigration status and/or that of family members, 234 parents received advice relating to employment, 744 families were supported to secure accommodation, and 194 families were referred onto other support services.

The contract in place with Barnardo's brings added value by providing families with access to white goods (fridges, freezers, kettles, toasters), food donations and other donations such as concert tickets, mobile phones, tablets, data dongles, clothes and 'Driving Healthy Futures' support (healthy eating/cooking sessions where families get food vouchers for participating). Barnardo's have also made a number of £100 vouchers available to refugee families.

5. Successful delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (0-19) – health visiting and school nursing services are commissioned by Public Health and delivered across the FWC and other sites.

Progress:

With the changes and the expansion of the FWCs, it has improved access for families to the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme. The services include:

- 0-19 public health service (health visiting, infant feeding team, Brent4Life and school nursing) have worked with FWCs to obtain UNICEF Baby Friendly Silver Award and the health visiting team have also achieved Gold, leading to improved breast feeding rates
- The HENRY (Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young) programme was introduced by Public Health and is being co-facilitated by 0-19 staff and FWC staff. 4 pilot programmes ran in the summer term and retention is approximately 65%
- Introduction to solids and weight management clinics have started during the summer.
- Safeguarding clinics are carried out by the 0-19 service face-to-face.

- MECSH families (vulnerable families) are seen by a health visitor on a 1:1 basis more often to offer more support. There is a firm evidence base of the impact of this service to support vulnerable children.
  - FWCs are being used for delivering vaccinations to children including a BCG programme was delivered to children under 1 at Fawood and Curzon Crescent FWC. Uptake was very good as this prevented families having to travel longer distances.
  - Ante-natal and postnatal midwifery - is provided across 6 centres, at least twice per week. When concerns present, midwives are referring families to the triage worker for additional support which includes family support and access to CAB.
  - Perinatal mental health service – provided in 6 centres, the service is supporting families to access under 5s activities such as baby massage, emotional wellbeing programme for parents to improve outcomes for their families.
6. Improved school readiness for children when they enter Reception (aged 4/5 years).

Progress:

- CLCH are commissioned to work across the FWCs to provide Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) support to children. Outcomes include:
  - promoting age appropriate development of children's (0-5 years old) Speech Language and Communication (SLC) skills
  - early identification and intervention to prevent children's SLC needs escalating
  - improve children's school readiness with respect to their SLC skills
  - increase the skills and confidence of parents, staff and volunteers to encourage children's SLC development, particularly for parents of children with additional needs
  - enable families of children with additional needs to have timely and properly coordinated access to specialist and/ or early intervention services.
- In the 2020-21 financial year through FWC and linked settings 2,879 under 5s received universal SLT support, 1,221 received targeted support and 237 were identified as needing specialist SLT support.
- New initiatives such as the 'Best Start for Life' programme, funded by DLUHC will enhance the current offer – focusing on supporting a home learning environment. Health partners will introduce 2 year-old integrated development checks from autumn 2022 from FWC. Related outcome measures are in development.
- There is a continued focus on improving the take-up of the free nursery education grant in the borough to encourage more children to take advantage of nursery and childminding provision.

- CAMHS under 5s – a new CAMHS under 5s service has been established at Willow FWC and will provide support to families across the FWCs. Families will receive support to address issues for their children such as tantrums, sleep problems, behaviour difficulties, separation anxiety, developmental difficulties, parenting difficulties and family relationship issues.
- There is a continued focus on improving the take-up of the free entitlement to early education in the borough to encourage more children to take advantage of nursery and childminding provision. Research has shown that high quality early childhood education and care can have positive and long-lasting impacts on children's educations, cognitive, behavioural and social outcomes and play a positive role in raising attainment and closing the gap between outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and other children. Take-up of free entitlement places in 2022 has increased compared to last year. While still below both the London and national averages, the take up in 2022 of the 2 year entitlement is 57% (compared with 49% in 2021) and the take up of the 3 and 4 year entitlement is 77% (compared with 74% in 2021).
- Work is ongoing to raise awareness of the free entitlements to all communities, using a range of marketing / promotional strategies and in particular to reach the 43% of eligible 2 year olds and 23% of 3 and 4 year old who are not accessing the places that they are entitled to. Strong links have been made with partner agencies including health and the voluntary sector to increase reach within the community.

3.31 The new FWC system is still developing, 12 months into full operation and outcome indicators will continue to be developed over time.

### ***Service user feedback***

3.32 Service user feedback and engagement with families is used to co-produce the FWC delivery model to ensure that services and support offered actively engages families and meets their wide ranging needs.

#### *Feedback from the Incredible Years parenting programme*

- 'I now know the importance of being a good role model to my children'.
- 'Made me really confident about myself and being a parent. I now know what my child needs. Really good programme'.
- 'I feel very confident about raising my daughters in a positive way and improve our mother-daughter relationship'.

#### *Feedback from the Freedom Programme (for women who have been or are in an abusive relationship)*

- 'The knowledge that the abuser has many faces and I know what signs to look for'.

- 'The programme has made me stronger as I was at home and isolated'.
- 'The programme has made me stronger and more confident and I know that knowledge is power'.

Feedback from the Young Carers group at the FWC

- 'I haven't been bowling before, thank you for letting me come.'
- 'I like coming to group with other young carers, it's fun.'
- 'I tried what you said and it helped. I managed to fit more revision in by making myself a timetable.'

**Figure 3: Parents attending the I Am Remarkable workshop linked to International Women's day**



Feedback from Health Visitor

'A mother previously walked one and half hours to attend a clinic and being based at Preston Park FWC has ensured easier access to the service.'

Feedback from a parent regarding triage

'I have received support from the Triage Worker in various ways that were much needed for me and my family. Just to name the support: I received food voucher, help with free school meal application, clothing for me and my family, help with getting school uniform for my son, toys and a kettle. The Triage Worker would also call to check on us every so often, we appreciate all that she has supported us with, she did a great job'.

*Key Workers ask families to complete an exit interview when closing the case. Families overwhelmingly strongly agreed with the statements below:*

- The Key Worker listened to what your family had to say.
- Your family's ethnicity, culture and religion were considered and respected.
- The actions expected of you and your family were made clear.
- Your family was involved in making decisions through-out the process.
- If there were challenges with your child/ young person in future how confident would you be able to deal with these?

## Local and national initiatives

### *Local initiatives*

- 3.33 The Early Help service as part of CYP recognises the importance of developing and maintaining robust internal and external partnerships. Collegiate cooperation and relationship building based on trust and a sense of shared objectives with senior officers from other teams in the council (for example public health) central government departments, NHS, elected members, schools, private providers and voluntary sector provider are essential. Going forward this approach will be strengthened further.
- 3.34 The government's '**Supporting Families**' (formerly 'Troubled Families') programme is embedded and aligned to the FWC delivery model. The new framework goes 'live' in October 2022. The programme has been expanded for the next 3 years with stable funding indicated that will enable medium-term planning. Brent's performance on the Supporting Families programme has been consistently strong.
- 3.35 **Health services for pre-school age children** plan to introduce integrated 2-year checks in Brent, and FWCs will be an integral part of the process. This will help to identify the most vulnerable families at an early stage and target support as necessary. A pilot will be delivered during the summer and the learning used to improve the programme before it is fully implemented.
- 3.36 Work is currently under way to offer new birth registrations at the FWC starting in the autumn term. The aim is to make the service more accessible so parents don't just have to come to the Civic Centre to register the new birth. It is also one of the recommendations in the Government's Best Start for Life programme.

### *National initiatives*

- 3.37 FWC are at the heart of the **DWP Reducing Parental Conflict** programme and will offer relationship support for families ranging from universal to specialist interventions. The LA will receive £44k this financial year to improve relationship support services and raise awareness of the negative impact of intense and sustained parental conflict on child outcomes.
- 3.38 The Best Start for Life report sets out the Government's vision with family hubs, (in Brent, the FWC) as the key delivery point for integrating support services from maternity through the early years. Local Family Hub networks will consist of both physical and virtual places where services to support families come together, from birth registration to midwifery, health visiting to mental health support and parenting courses to infant feeding advice. This programme of work by the Government to ensure that the best support is available to families in the first 1,001 days, identified within the report as 6 actions areas, has started

and local authorities are expected to implement the recommendations within each action area.

- 3.39 Brent has been identified as one of the 75 Local Authorities across England to receive funding for the government's **Family Hubs and Best Start for Life programme**. The programme is due to start in the autumn following receipt of the programme guide from the DfE. Officers are mapping the current FWC offer to the Best Start for Life offer in order to identify gaps, improve coordination and planning of service delivery between partners. The draft programme guide was received from the DHSC in August as well as a letter confirming that Brent will receive an indicative funding of £4.15M - £4.35M over 3 financial years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25).
- 3.40 In August 2022, MOPAC awarded £150,000 to Brent for a one-year programme that tackles over representation of BME children and young people in the youth justice system. This broadly consists of cultural competency training for Brent professionals supporting young people vulnerable to poor crime and disorder outcomes, and coproducing a range of youth provision across FWCs with young people receiving YOS. There are other opportunities on the horizon and because Brent FWCs are now well established Brent will be in a good position to apply for opportunities to pilot programmes and access any related funding
- 3.41 The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (May 2022) put forward the need for a 'fundamental shift' in the way children's social care responds to families who need help, confirming that identifying risks earlier and preventing problems from needlessly escalating will reduce the need for 'less dignified and more costly intervention' later. The review identifies family hubs as one of the possible settings for delivering help to families. Brent will therefore be well placed for the integration of place based early intervention services for families should the DfE accept this element of the review. A DfE response is expected by the end of the calendar year.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 In 2021/22, the management and service delivery of FWCs was funded from the budget available of £1.8M, funding from the Public Health grant of £0.75M to support the Early Help aspirations for the FWCs and DWP grant funding from the DWP for the Reducing Parental Conflict programme of £22K. In 2022/23, this grant increases to £44K. There has also been agreed capital investment to undertake enhancement works at the FWC sites of c£0.7M.
- 4.2 The new government programme of Family Hubs and Start for Life *could* mean further investment into the borough over the next 3 financial years from 2022/23 to 2024/25 of up to c£4M in total dependent on the final planned programme.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The statutory obligations in the Childcare Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act') concern '*young children*', which essentially are those aged between 0-5. Section 1 of

the 2006 Act imposes on local authorities a general duty in relation to the well-being of young children to:

- (a) improve the well-being of young children in their area, and
- (b) reduce inequalities between young children in their area in relation to:
  - Physical and mental health and emotional well-being
  - Protection from harm and neglect;
  - Education, training and recreations;
  - The contribution made by them to society; and
  - Their social and economic well-being.

5.2 S.3 of the 2006 Act sets out specific duties the council has in relation to early childhood services which includes early years provision and provides that the council must make arrangements to secure that early childhood services in their area are provided in an integrated manner which is calculated to facilitate access to those services, and maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children. In discharging its duties, the council must have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

5.3 Section 5A of the 2006 Act provides that:

(1) *Arrangements made by an English Local Authority under section 3(2) must, so far as is reasonably practicable, include arrangements for sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need.*

(2) *'Local need' is the need of parents, prospective parents and young children in the authority's area.'*

## **6.0 Equality Implications**

6.1 The public sector equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

6.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.



- 6.3 There is no prescribed manner in which the Council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.
- 6.4 An Equality Impact Assessment in relation to FWC was completed as part of the Cabinet report submitted in October 2019.

## **7.0 Human Resources/ Property Implications**

- 7.1 Responsibility for the FWC buildings, with the exception of Fawood/ Curzon, returned to the Council on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. A new contract with Facilities Management was set-up commencing 1 July 2021 to maintain the buildings and this included cleaning services from 1 December 2021. There was a delay to cleaning services to allow for TUPE arrangements to be progressed with the previous cleaning provider.
- 7.2 Staff assigned to activities covered by the FWC support services contract which commenced 1 December 2021 are employed by Barnardo's.
- 7.3 Given the reduction in the number of centres and new working model, there were more staff in scope to transfer to Brent than there were roles available when the children's centre contract with Barnardo's ended in November 2020. As part of this change process 25 staff TUPE'd to Brent, 4 staff took redundancy and 2 were redeployed. The process was managed in line with the relevant council policies.

**Report sign off:**

**NIGEL CHAPMAN**

Corporate Director, Children and  
Young People