

	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 20 November 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Community Development
	Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools - Councillor Gwen Grahl
Family Wellbeing Centre update 2024-2025	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Family Wellbeing Centre Annual Report (2024/25)
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of the Family Wellbeing Centres (FWCs) for the 2024/25 financial year. The FWCs were launched in December 2020 and the delivery model continues to develop with new partnerships being created, and service delivery increasing across all centres. The FWC annual report 2024-25 is attached as Appendix 1.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the progress of the FWCs.
- 2.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to make recommendations, particularly regarding potential new partnerships and funding / resourcing opportunities, to strengthen the FWC delivery model.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1.1 The FWC offer a wide range of support to families and link to the Borough Plan priorities:

- Prosperity and Stability in Brent
- Thriving Communities
- The Best Start in Life
- A Healthier Brent.

3.1.2 The FWC also support the Digital Inclusion strategy and help to address the impact of cost-of-living challenges and childhood poverty.

3.2 Background

Family Wellbeing Centres

3.2.1 Brent has a well-established Early Help service that FWCs are an integral part of. The FWCs provide a universal 'front door' for families to access a wide range of early help and preventative services, including some targeted support.

3.2.2 There is a core service offer across all the FWCs and some variation depending on local needs and what services are delivered in the community. A description of the FWC service offer is detailed in appendix 1 and includes health and wellbeing, education and childcare, parenting and relationship, and activities for children of all ages and stages.

3.2.3 FWCs are at the heart of Brent's Early Help community-based offer and are a priority in the Borough Plan (2023-27). The FWCs provide an integrated 'whole family' (for children aged 0-18 years old, and up to 25 for those with SEND), bringing together a wide range of services and support into a single offer. This arrangement helps the co-ordination and delivery of services for more vulnerable children using contextual safeguarding approaches.

3.2.4 FWCs are open full time with several centres offering early evening youth activities. There is some Saturday opening on rotation across the FWCs to facilitate additional sessions including for families / children with SEND. Each FWC is shaped by a Local Steering Group (LSG) of stakeholders and there is integrated working across Brent's Early Help network to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of local families using a holistic approach. The LSG link to the FWC Family Hub and Start for Life Steering Group which has multi-agency representation at senior officer level.

3.2.5 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. All FWCs have SEND navigators promoting and signposting families to Brent's Local Offer and other relevant support.

3.2.6 The Willow FWC is co-located with a nursery for children aged 9months - 4yrs. The nursery is registered to provide full-time care for 98 childcare places. The places are managed flexibly to accommodate the needs of the community. The

nursery offers 30 places for Children with a Disability (CWD) and 28 places for Children in Need (CiN). Willow FWC also has enhanced childcare provision offering 12 places to children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), on a part-time offer.

- 3.2.7 FWCs work closely with Brent Community Hubs to ensure there are effective working relationships in place to support Brent's residents. Managers from the respective services meet periodically to review service delivery, update on current developments, and address any partnership working challenges.
- 3.2.8 The FWCs focus is on prevention and early intervention, using a whole family approach to stop problems escalating and requiring higher tier and more costly support. An early help approach achieves better outcomes for families and reduces the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, enabling families to thrive.
- 3.2.9 When FWCs were established, they were focused on delivery against 6 key priority areas:
1. A reduction in referrals to higher level interventions
 2. Prevention of family breakdown resulting in entry to care
 3. Addressing the growing challenge of serious youth violence
 4. Building capacity in universal services so that they can support children earlier
 5. Successful delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (0-19)
 6. Improved school readiness for children when they enter Reception.

A detailed update on progress against each priority is included in section 7 of the FWC Annual report 2024-25, attached as Appendix 1.

Outcomes

- 3.2.10 The outcomes and impact achieved for families through the FWCs is wide ranging and dependent on what services families are accessing, how well they engage, and the length of the intervention. For example, some families access ad-hoc stay-and-play sessions, whereas others receive targeted key worker/lead professional support lasting up to 1 year and as part of this work multiple agencies will be involved. The full range of support on offer that improves family outcomes is detailed on page 28 of the FWC annual report attached as appendix 1. Outcomes and impact are evidenced through contract monitoring data from commissioned services, case studies, case files, direct work tools, service user feedback, outcome/impact reports following the completion of interventions, assessment tools, and bi-annual parent satisfaction surveys. During the 2024-25 financial year 18,079 families were supported to achieve positive outcomes in the following areas:
- Improved family finances and reducing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis
 - Reduced numbers of families presenting as homeless, securing long term accommodation and reducing the threat of eviction
 - Improved family nutrition, weight management and access to fresh fruit and vegetables
 - Support to stop smoking improving family health and wellbeing

- Improving school attendance, punctuality and engagement with school, leading to better educational attainment
- Improved oral health and reducing teeth extraction for under 5s
- Improved parent/ carer and CYP mental health and wellbeing
- Improved parenting capacity leading to better relationships between parents and their children, reducing children's behavioural problems and improving communication
- Reducing negative discipline practices such as smacking and providing parents with alternative approaches to discipline
- Improving CYP and parent/carers emotional literacy
- Reducing substance misuse and the negative impact on families
- Improved family fitness leading to better wellbeing outcomes
- Increasing families' engagement with early help, preventative and intervention services, including refugee/ asylum seekers and less heard from groups
- Reducing the risk of domestic abuse and providing a whole family offer to process the trauma of domestic abuse
- Improving parents' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and soft skills leading to employment opportunities
- Reducing parental conflict and the negative impact on families
- Reducing the negative impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma
- Increasing families' resilience to the impact of multiple disadvantages
- Supporting parents and young people into employment and to access educational and work experience opportunities
- Increased identification rates of young carers linking them into support and reducing the impact of caring responsibilities on CYP
- Reducing social isolation, particularly for new mums
- Improving a range of outcomes for families of children with SEND
- Improving children's school readiness, particularly ensuring children have good Speech Language and Communication
- Preventing family problems becoming more complex and entrenched by intervening earlier and providing the right support at the right time
- Preventing family breakdown and CYP going into care
- Helping families to thrive, be happy, and achieve their goals.

Outcome of the key priorities for 2024-25

3.2.11 A summary of the FWC key priorities for 2024-25 are detailed below including an update on the outcome achieved:

- **Deliver the final year of the government's 'Start for Life' programme and exit planning** - the Start for Life delivery plan made significant progress with regards to implementation across all strands and regular updates are provided to the DfE. The DfE subsequently confirmed another year of funding to March 2026.
- **Link to the Council's strategic change programme to ensure that FWCs improve and evolve to tackle current and emerging challenges of our local communities** – the FWCs have actively participated in the Council's strategic change programme for example, the Period Dignity programme with free period products being distributed to women and girls, the FWC buildings are dementia friendly and

achieved accredited status, the centres support families impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

- **Increase the number of parents completing accredited parenting programmes and workshops** - there continues to be very high demand for the Cygnet programme – a support programme for parents/carers of autistic children aged 5-18, helping them understand autism and support their child. The introduction of Cygnet plus has been well received, and parents are reporting that this is supporting their parenting for older children with an autism diagnosis. A self-guided Cygnet programme is being introduced in 25-26 to further address high demand for this programme.
- **Develop the FWC youth offer linked to the refreshed Brent Youth Strategy and delivery plan** – the youth offer expanded during the year with new diversionary activities being added to existing activities that have been maintained across the FWC. In Spring 2025, the Brent Youth Strategy was successfully launched at St Raphael's FWC.
- **Support the Early Help and Social Care redesign to contribute to the development of a service that is fit for the future** – new Family Support teams were launched in June 2025, bringing together Keyworkers and Social Workers to deliver support more effectively to families, reducing the number of handover points and increasing the consistency of lead worker.

Challenges

- 3.2.12 Not all families access FWC support services and this continues to impact on children's school readiness, oral health and obesity outcomes. In addition, mobility in some areas of Brent remains high with families new to the UK who may not be aware of the range of support services available. Work continues across the FWCs to address these issues.
- 3.2.13 Challenges remain around completion rates of parenting programmes particularly for those parents who are referred in. The early help and social care redesign may support increased awareness of the practitioner role in supporting parents to attend programmes (rather than just referring them in) but there are concerns about the impact of the redesign on practitioner availability to deliver parenting programmes in 2025-26.
- 3.2.14 Families continue to present at the FWC significantly impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Families are triaged and connected into appropriate support as quickly as possible. The Triage service piloted a new Crisis Response fund (Brent Council funded) to provide one off payment to support families in financial crisis. Payments are received promptly. The pilot was successful and will be embedded across the FWC.

4.0 Forward planning

- 4.1.1 FWC key priorities for 2025-26 are to:

- Deliver the final year of the 'Start for Life' programme and transition to the governments new 'Best Start in Life' programme.
- Increase the number of families registering across the FWCs, targeting those in the wards with highest levels of deprivation
- Further develop the FWC youth offer linked to the refreshed Brent Youth Strategy and delivery plan
- Support the development of the new Early Help and Social Care family support model to ensure the service is fit-for-purpose and works effectively in partnership with the FWCs
- Support the development of the new adolescent Targeted Prevention Hub ensuring FWCs play a key role
- Capitalising on the redeveloped outside play areas to deliver a greater range of environmental projects and activities, to encourage more children's outdoor play and learning.

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 5.1 Significant consultation has taken place regarding development of the FWCs, including with the Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools. Various focus groups were delivered during the design and consultation period with multi-disciplinary staff, stakeholders, partners and parents.
- 5.2 Well established governance arrangements are in place with multi-agency representation at strategic and operational levels. Parents are involved with governance at the operational level via the FWC Local Steering Groups.
- 5.3 A Parent Carer Voice Forum was established to ensure there was a strong parent voice in shaping the offer. Parents were recruited with children at different ages and stages, children with SEND, dads and pregnant parents to ensure a diverse group and a wide range of views were captured.
- 5.4 A Youth Panel is used to co-produce and develop the CYP offer.
- 5.5 Feedback mechanisms are in place to capture the views of service users, and this is used to improve the FWC model to help ensure services and support offered, actively engages families and meets their wide-ranging needs. Overall service user satisfaction rates are high across the FWC, as evidenced by the autumn term 2024 parent/ carer survey which had over 2,000 responses, and demand for services continues to grow.

6.0 Financial Considerations

- 6.1 Following the Cabinet decision to develop the FWCs, savings of £1.5m per annum have been delivered to core funding since the changeover from Children's Centres in 2020.
- 6.2 Further savings were achieved during the 2024-25 financial year by reducing (by 5%) the contract value of Barnardo's FWC support services, reducing staff establishment, reducing general fund by shifting expenditure to grant funding, and developing partnerships with statutory and non-statutory sectors to use the FWC as delivery points and the partner has funded the service.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 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
 - Their social and economic well-being.

7.2 Section 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.

7.3 Section 5A (“Arrangements for provision of children’s centres”) requires arrangements to be made by the Council so that there are sufficient children’s centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need.

7.4 Section 5D (Children’s centres: consultation) requires the Council to undertake such consultation as it thinks appropriate before making arrangement for the provision of a children centre or before any significant change is made in the services provided through a children’s centre or before anything is done that would result in a children’s centre ceasing to be a children’s centre.

8.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in relation to FWCs was completed as part of the Cabinet report submitted in October 2019. A further Equality Impact Assessment was completed as part of the Family Hub and Start for Life programme in 2023. Another (EIA) will be completed as part of the new Best Start in Life programme 2026.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

9.1 A range of services are provided from FWCs that include consideration of climate initiatives.

10.0 Human Resources/ Property Considerations (if appropriate)

10.1 N/A

11.0 Communication Considerations

11.1 A communications plan is in place detailing who, how, when and where we publicise information regarding the FWCs. This includes posters, leaflets, social media, partnership forums, a video, the website, multi-agency meetings, schools, health, VCFS and Police. Most families are connected into FWC support services via a professional they are working with, or via word of mouth from another service user. Work continues across the FWC partnership to promote registration and take-up of services. Improved communications have resulted in an increase demand for services.

11.2 A focus this past financial year has been on improving communication with schools and this has included attendance at school cluster meetings and Designated Safeguarding Lead / SENDCo forums, publicising the offer in the Headteachers bulletin / Schools Extranet / Governors termly newsletter, via Family Support Workers linked to schools, joint outreach to schools to attend coffee mornings, parent workshops and the CYP Wellbeing Alliance network (a termly meeting that brings together statutory and non-statutory partners to share information/ new service developments, provide a forum for agencies to connect, with a focus on early intervention and prevention).

11.3 Public Health used Start for Life funding to recruit 2 Communication and Engagement Officers for a fixed term to develop an enhanced promotional campaign including print, digital and social media to raise awareness of breastfeeding and peri-natal mental health services and promote access to and use of FWCs by more disadvantaged communities. This includes attending community meetings, videos (with translated subtitles), digital ads (with translated versions), printed flyers, posters and promotional maternity packs.

Report sign off:

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Children, Young People and Community Development