



**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny
Committee**
28 November 2018

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Children and Young People**

The Development of Family Hubs in Brent

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides information about Children's Centres in Brent and an overview of Family Hub models and their potential to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. It includes details of what the introduction of a Family Hub model in Brent could provide, building on the current provision of services offered by the borough's Children's Centres.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee notes the content of this report and provides feedback to Children and Young People's Services in order to support the ongoing development of the Family Hub model.

3.0 Detail

Background to Children's Centres

- 3.1 The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities to improve the wellbeing of **children from birth to age five** in their area and to reduce inequalities between them. Local authorities were obliged to ensure sufficient numbers of Children's Centres were provided to meet local need and that relevant partners worked together to ensure services were integrated. The main purpose of Children's Centres has been to:
- Provide an environment for services to work together and not in isolation;
 - Offer and co-ordinate 'step up' and 'step down' support for families who require additional support;
 - Work with families as part of a team and deliver specialist interventions when needed across a spectrum of needs, whether to individual children (e.g. early intervention speech and language therapy) or parents (e.g. accredited parenting programmes, counselling, adult education, and support with financial literacy).
- 3.2 Since 2006 further major policy changes have been introduced:
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum became statutory in 2008 that set standards in welfare and learning for all providers caring for children from 0-5 years.
 - Responsibility for public health transferred to councils in 2015.
 - Free childcare entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds were introduced in 2010 and extended to 30 hours in 2017 for children of working parents.
- 3.3 Central government funding reductions, increasing demand for services and the changing policy landscape are providing the catalyst for local authorities to review their current provision of services. This includes expanding support to entire families, including parents and older children that acknowledges the need for whole family working and prioritisation of resources where they are most needed. A 2016 All Parliamentary Party Group report and a January 2018 Local Government Association report (<https://www.local.gov.uk/delivering-childrens-centre-services>) focused on the role that Children's Centres in some areas are now providing as hubs for local services and wider family support. By building on the existing infrastructure of Children's Centres and extending their offer to include support for parents and all children regardless of age (albeit retaining specific provision for very young children and their families), these family hubs are delivering holistic, early intervention services to families within the wider community.

Brent context for Children's Centres

- 3.4 There are 17 Children's Centres in Brent – 14 of these are managed through a 5-year contract with Barnardo's that commenced in October 2015 and was established in order to improve service delivery as well as realise required Council savings. Services are delivered within 3 clusters, operating through a unified management and workforce structure, with a single advisory board of parents and partners in each cluster. This arrangement led to the transfer of all

Brent Council staff working within the 14 Children's Centres to Barnardo's in 2015.

- 3.5 The remaining 3 Children's Centres are managed by the Curzon Crescent and Fawood Children's Centres' Partnership.
- 3.6 The types of services located from Children's Centres include:
- Brent Family Solutions (Troubled Families Programme and aligned services);
 - Health visiting and Midwifery;
 - Speech and Language Therapy Services
 - Parenting programmes;
 - Freedom programme for women affected by domestic abuse;
 - Adult education and training courses;
 - Citizens Advice Service;
 - Employment services.
- 3.7 Children's Centres have been successful in engaging families – for example 80% of all Brent families with a child aged 0-4 years have been registered to a centre. This engagement has led to significant impact in a number of areas:
- More children are school ready within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
 - There is greater resilience amongst families at greater risk of escalating problems.
 - Demand on more acute services, such as Looked After Children has been effectively managed. There has been a reduction of under 10s coming into care.
 - Parents with very young children are better equipped with the confidence and knowledge to be effective parents and manage their child's behaviour and support their development.
 - There has been greater engagement of fathers in the lives of their children.

Initial consideration of Family Hubs

- 3.8 The changing nature of service demand has required the Local Authority to think differently about how services are delivered to families most in need within the borough. This has also been driven by the requirement to make budget savings with the result that the focus will increasingly need to be on providing targeted rather than universal services. The growing challenge of serious youth violence that can be linked to low educational outcomes, school exclusions and gang related activity, particularly acute in specific neighbourhoods, requires a different approach to be taken with the finite resource available. Services are becoming increasingly aware of the needs of vulnerable adolescents, those who are susceptible to becoming victims as well as perpetrators of crime and the requirement to support families to meet their needs.
- 3.9 Increasingly the focus should be upon whole family working, learning from good practice that has been identified in other parts of the country. Retaining the current position for Brent's Children's Centres as focusing solely on children aged 0-5 and their families is not sustainable as it limits whole family working and does not allow a focus upon those school aged children who are most in

need and who have been recognised through the Council's Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs).

- 3.10 Future service delivery will take into account the research of the OBRs on domestic abuse, children on the edge of care and reducing the impact of gang activity. It is proposed that the family hub model will enable services to be co-located and delivered to families with children of all ages including vulnerable adolescents.
- 3.11 The value of integrated service hubs for families is consistent with messages given by Brent families. A February 2018 parent satisfaction and impact study found that for 20% of parents/carers their primary motivation in choosing to attend a Children's Centre was to receive information, advice and services from one place. The proportion was higher amongst households at more risk of disadvantage - young and lone parents and parents/carers who have a child with a disability or additional need. Families that also have older age children routinely suggest that support be available that can meet the needs of older age children too. This is especially so for after school and during school holidays.
- 3.12 Children's Centres are well placed to transform into Family Hubs, as outcomes have been consistently strong, they are well known, are non-stigmatising and are in a range of accessible locations and already offer a range of services delivered by Brent Council and partners. Following on from planned scoping work some universal, community-led services may be provided from Family Hubs although it is anticipated that most statutory service provision will be targeted at the most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

4.0 Services Family Hubs could provide

Health and development, mental health needs, CAMHS provision, childhood obesity

- 4.1 It is anticipated that midwives and health visiting teams would continue to deliver services from the hubs, providing data, information and escalating concerns as they do now. Their work includes routine developmental assessments and pathways to reduce childhood and family obesity. A new CAMHS strategy is in draft format and plans to bring CAMHS services to schools and centres in the community. Adult counselling is currently provided. Referral to more acute services through these early intervention services is being explored. A number of General Practitioners are planning to co-ordinate their services under a 'Family Care Home' model of practice in specific locations across the borough. This work could be closely aligned to the developing Family Hub model.

Employment support and childcare: links with Job Centre Plus

- 4.2 There are established links and employment advisors already based within the Troubled Families teams. This provides a solid platform on which these services could be brought into the hubs. It will be necessary to closely align work with the existing Brent employment and community hubs to prevent duplication whilst ensuring that some services are available on site.

- 4.3 The Children and Young People's Department Early Help service has responsibility for early years sufficiency – helping families to find childcare appropriate for their needs and this team would be able to operate out of hubs to support people in this way. A full range of parenting support for all ages of children and young people would continue to be offered. Relationship and mediation support will be explored.
- 4.4 As referenced within the report on Brent's Youth Offer to the Council's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 28th November 2018, effective services to support education, employment and training opportunities for the 16-19 cohort of young people are in place and services are being retendered in 2019. It is anticipated that some of these targeted support services could be based out of Family Hubs.

Supporting families with complex needs

- 4.5 Currently the Working with Families (incorporating Troubled Families) programme works with the most complex families unless they reach the threshold for statutory specialist services. The longer-term sustainability of the Council's current early help offer will need to be considered within this plan to prepare for the end of the Troubled Families programme financial support after 2020. Currently the majority of Council provided early help support is sustained through the Troubled Families funding mechanism.
- 4.6 Partnerships will need to be further strengthened and new ones developed through the Hub model to manage a reduced resource. There is a possibility that the hubs could be managed by the voluntary sector and would bring together services delivered by all sectors as well as some parent led activities.
- 4.7 **Educational outcomes:** It is anticipated that the effective work currently being delivered through Children's Centres to support the development of pre-school age children would continue from within Family Hubs. For school age children the centres could be used as settings to support out of school extra-curricular activities and to link to services where children are at risk of fixed-term or permanent exclusion.

5.0 Examples of Family Hub Development

- 5.1 There are already multiple examples of Family Hub models in different stages of delivery and development across the country. These are being considered by Brent to identify where good practice is evident and could be replicated in the local context.

Westminster

- 5.2 Westminster City Council are developing three Children and Family Hubs supporting children between 0-19 from existing Children Centres, the first of which opened at the Bessborough centre in summer 2018. One pre-existing Children's Centre has been retained for the 0-5 age group in Maida Vale. The other 8 Children's Centres have been closed. Each Children and Family Hub will offer both universal and targeted services.¹ The three locations were chosen

¹ Westminster City Council Cabinet reports: 'Service Proposals for Early Help', Feb 15 & 'Early Help

as being within areas of greatest need of early help services, informed by indicators of children's health and development, poor parenting, low educational outcomes, risks of criminal behaviour, domestic abuse levels and becoming a victim of crime.

- 5.3 The priorities for the hubs have been defined as:
- A reduction in referrals to higher level interventions.
 - The prevention of family breakdown resulting in entry to care.
 - The building of capacity in universal providers so that they can support children earlier
- 5.4 The hubs have the following operational arrangements:
- A generic Early Help team to deliver services from the three hubs. They will undertake 1:1 work with families.
 - A single, central intensive/Edge of Care team providing intensive support to families in crisis.
 - An innovation and business development team to generate income through partnerships, opportunities within the local business community, and through 'trading' with schools.
 - An early years team ensuring the development of childcare places for 2, 3, and 4 year olds.

Essex

- 5.5 In April 2014 the number of Children's Centres in Essex reduced from 86 to 37. One intention of this change was to free staff up from Children's Centre buildings to allow them deliver services more locally and in venues that were easier for families to access as well as provide more support in family homes. Releasing staff from Children's Centre buildings saw an increase of 22% in the number of families reached.^{2 3}
- 5.6 Essex County Council have commissioned the operation of their Child and Family Wellbeing Service to Virgin Care who in turn run twelve hubs in partnership with Barnardo's. Rather than targeting geographical areas of need, each of the twelve Essex districts have a central hub supported by various satellite sites in which services are delivered from. These include local libraries and village halls.
- 5.7 In one district Virgin Care have partnered with the West Essex CCG who commission a variety of services that are delivered from the hubs and their satellite spaces. These include: specialist school nursing, speech and language therapy, community paediatrics, a SEND dedicated officer, a specialist A&E liaison, children's community nursing and dietetics.

Coventry

Changes including Children's Centres', May 16.

² 'Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Quality Account', Virgin Care; Cabinet report: 'Procurement of a New Model to Deliver Integrated Pre-birth to 19 Health, Wellbeing and Family Support Services' June 2016.

³ 'Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Quality Account', Virgin Care; Cabinet report: 'Procurement of a New Model to Deliver Integrated Pre-birth to 19 Health, Wellbeing and Family Support Services' June 2016.

- 5.8 Coventry City Council have converted eight of their original 17 Children's Centres into Family Hubs for 0-19 year olds, the last of these being opened in May 2018. The eight were chosen for their proximity to areas of highest need and those at greatest risk of health inequalities.
- 5.9 The authority will, via the hubs, retain delivery of a targeted and specialist youth offer that is focused on the most vulnerable and hardest to reach. However, universal nursery provision will cease, with private, voluntary and independent sector providers being sought to deliver these services within existing Children Centre facilities.
- 5.10 Coventry's family hubs have an early help focus, including a professional early help team working directly from the hubs including responsibility for tying together the early help strategy with other programmes such as Troubled Families.
- 5.11 During the equality analyses and consultation process, Coventry noted a risk that families on low incomes might struggle to engage with family hubs due to costs of public transport, meaning that needs might go unmet or even worsen. Moreover the loss of a local community resource had the potential to lead to greater levels of social isolation. To mitigate this, Coventry proposed that family hubs would be located in areas of highest need, that information about alternative family activities would be freely available, that outreach support would be part of the offer, and that work would be done with local community groups and resources to offer other family focused activities.
- 5.12 An anticipated positive impact of this model in Coventry is the potential for more nursery provision to be made available via the PVI sector or schools delivering from other Children's Centres that were not converted to hubs. During consultation a number of schools and PVI providers expressed an interest in providing childcare in eight such locations.⁴

Shropshire

- 5.13 Shropshire County Council have converted seven of their original 20 Children's Centres into a redesigned service. This approach will follow the family hub model of targeted early help services for those aged between 0 and 19, and 0 and 24 for those with disabled children.
- 5.14 As with Coventry, Shropshire have opted to geographically target help at families considered most in need; identified by mapping Troubled Families data on top of information on demand levels for statutory service care, children on child protection plans, families affected by domestic abuse, long term health conditions, anti-social behaviour, low school attendance, and unemployed family members.
- 5.15 Further analysis of data was utilised to understand the needs of vulnerable families, local need, deprivation, and accessibility, given where the majority of these families live. The Shropshire Early Help Family Hubs aim to bring together

⁴ Coventry City Council Cabinet reports: 'Connecting Communities – Phase 1', Feb 2016; 'Connecting Communities – Phase 2, Aug 2016.

partner agencies, including the voluntary and community sector providers, in one place. This is in contrast to the previous model, which included wide range of early help services delivered from a wide range of areas and buildings, often making it more confusing for families to know where to go for help and support.

- 5.16 Some geographic flexibility has been incorporated into the plan, partly due to Shropshire's large and rural nature but also because of an appreciation that demographic changes are likely to alter the areas of highest need in coming years. While 70% of their Troubled Families reside in market towns, a growth in demand for early intervention services in rural locations is anticipated. Shropshire has thus made outreach services an integral part of their offer, but this is also based on the belief that early help is best delivered in homes or neutral settings, suggesting that specific buildings may not be critical to the success of the model.
- 5.17 These family hubs each follow a 'one hub, one plan, one team, one family' approach. Families will have all family-related needs met by one key worker, from one hub, working towards a single tailored family plan that adopts a whole family approach to early intervention.⁵

6.0 Relevant Data for Brent

- 6.1 Early help and the number of children accessing Troubled Families and other programmes:
- At 31 October 2018 there were 5,858 children known to the Troubled Families programme, within 2,874 families. This measure is rising as programme success is dependent on high numbers of families being worked with and outcomes achieved.
- 6.2 Data about the number of 'Children in Need' in the borough. 'Children in Need' refers to the definition under Section 17 of the Children Act (1989) regarding children who are:
- (a) unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority;
 - (b) their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services; or
 - (c) they are disabled.
- 6.3 There was a total of 2,534 Children in Need in the borough as at the snapshot date of 12/11/2018. The measure of this indicator is the rate of Children in Need per 10,000 child population. For the last 3 months this stands at 391. This is a reduction from the last nationally published position (31st March 2017) of 462 but remains above the statistical neighbour and national average.
- 6.4 Data about the existing use and uptake of children's centres by children and families:
- 80% (18,555) of Brent's children under the age of 5 are registered with a Brent Children's Centre as at 15/11/18 – this is a rising trend from 75% 12 months previously.

⁵ Shropshire County Council Cabinet reports: 'Early Help – a new delivery model', Jan 18; 'Phase 2 Early Help Family Hubs', May 18 & 'Phase 2 Early Help Family Hubs', Sep 18.

- 20,331 Brent families are registered with a Brent Children's Centre as at 15/11/18
- In the 12-month period, between 01/10/2017 and 30/09/2018, 14,541 children under 5 had a contact with a Brent Children's Centre and/or their partner agencies.
- In the same period, 13,695 families had a contact with a Brent Children's Centre and/or their partner agencies.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Developing family hubs from children's centres is listed as a 'difficult' savings proposal, which can be found in appendix B of the current budget consultation, reference number CYP008. There are currently 14 children's centres under contract with Barnardo's and 3 run by the Council. The proposal is to reduce the number of centres from 17 to 8, leaving 2 in each cluster plus retaining 2 of the council run centres.
- 7.2 The centres would be repurposed as family hubs as per the body of this report, in line with the outcome based reviews that considered children on the edge of care and involved in gang activity. The objectives of the hub would be closely aligned to the Public Health outcomes for children and families.
- 7.3 Savings proposal CYP008 will save £1.5M from the annual revenue budget of £3M, and would be implemented by October 2020 when the current Barnardo's contract ceases.
- 7.4 Savings proposal CYP010 is an alternative savings proposal to the above, and would save the full budget of £3M by closing all children's centres by October 2020. It is recognised as one of the 'most difficult' savings proposals and is listed in appendix D of the budget consultation.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Legislation relating to Children's Centres is contained in the Childcare Act 2006 (as variously amended by subsequent Acts including the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009, Education Act 2011, and Children and Families Act 2014).
- 8.2 Legislation requires the LA to provide sufficiency of Children's Centres.
- 8.3 Section 5D places a duty on local authorities to ensure consultation takes place before any significant changes are made to Children's Centre provision in their area. Any proposal to extend the service offering so it meets the wider needs of families (including those with children aged 0-5 years) from Children's Centre sites would not reduce Children's Centre provision and therefore not require formal public consultation.

9.0 Equality Implications

- 9.0 Not applicable at this stage.

10.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

10.1 Should budget proposals be approved statutory consultation will take place with stakeholders.

11.0 Human Resources/Property Implications

11.1 Property related implications will be considered through the Children's Centre consultation process. Human Resources implications will be managed through the Council's internal procedures during the tendering process.

Report sign off:

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