



17 March 2025

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

ESTABLISHING FAMILY HUB NETWORKS - PROGRESS UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update to the Children and Families Select Committee on Family Hub Network developments in Nottinghamshire and future delivery plans.

Information

What are Family Hubs?

2. Family Hubs, as described by the government, offer support from pregnancy, through the child's early years, later childhood and into young adulthood.
3. Family hubs bring together different services in a 'one stop shop' to make it easier to get the help parents/carers and their family needs. They provide a single place to go for face-to-face support and information from a variety of services. They are not a statutory function and so the local offer from Family Hubs may vary from area to area, but Government asks that at the heart of all family hubs are services for families with 0 to 2 year-olds, which give babies a great [start for life](#).
4. Family Hubs should make it easier for parents and carers to get the support they need, with trained staff on site who work together to help overcome any difficulties they might be facing.

Who are Family Hub Networks for?

5. Family Hub Networks will provide services for all parents and carers from conception until their child reaches the age of 19, services are both universal and targeted. Universal services include examples such as Maternity Services, Health Visiting, activities for families with preschool children, schools, and Youth Services. Targeted provision includes services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), interventions such as behaviour management and parenting programmes, and targeted provision in priority neighbourhoods and work with underrepresented groups and emerging communities.
6. Family Hub Networks also include dedicated services for young people such as Local Authority and Voluntary sector led youth services.

Why are Family Hubs Networks so important?

7. All kinds of families face challenges from time to time. Family Hub Networks will make it simpler to get the help that the whole family needs as early as possible. The development of Family Hubs was introduced by the previous Government and has been continued by the current Government because of the focus on early intervention and family help.
8. *“Family Hubs in particular offer an important universal access point to support for families and will be critical to providing support both to families who are eligible for universal support (and might additionally be receiving a more intensive offer through Family Help), as well as families who have lower levels of need but still need help”*. Josh MacAlister, Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022).
9. Family Hub Networks provide support for families from conception to 19, however Government continues to emphasise the importance of retaining services and support for families with preschool children. The learning from Sure Start and Children’s Centres has evidenced that investing in the first years of life has improved outcomes in relation to educational attainment (in particular for children eligible for Free School Meals)¹, a reduction in hospitalisation for children of primary school age (in particular those living in disadvantaged areas)², and a reduction in serious offending in adolescence and a reduction of the amount of time children spent in care³. By helping to establish nurturing, supportive environments for the youngest members of society, family hubs will make it easier for parents and carers to give their children the best start in life and subsequently improve their life chances.
10. The implementation of Family Hub Networks will help to deliver the Council’s commitment to early help and prevention outlined within the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021- 2031 and the approach to achieving this commitment, approved by Cabinet in November 2023. In line with the budget report to Cabinet in February 2024, Family Hub Networks will help to strengthen the building blocks of good health and wellbeing in communities by actively prioritising those which will benefit most from the support and services that each network offers.

Nottinghamshire’s approach to Family Hub Network developments

11. Despite some local authorities focusing solely on establishing dedicated Family Hub buildings, in Nottinghamshire the approach has been to establish a Network of services which families can access, both physically and virtually. The Networks include services such as the NHS and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
12. Each District will have a partnership in place of local professionals who will help to oversee the work of the Network, ensure partnership arrangements are established and services provided under the umbrella of the Family Hub Network are working together effectively. Despite the Council being the responsible body for Family Hub Networks, it is critical that services work together to ensure that families get the right support at the right time.
13. In response to findings of the public consultation carried out in autumn 2023, plans are underway to create Family Hub Network access points in a variety of venues and not just

¹ [The short- and medium-term impacts of Sure Start on educational outcomes | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

² [Report reveals benefits of Sure Start | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

³ [The effect of Sure Start on youth misbehaviour, crime and contacts with children’s social care](#)

dedicated buildings. This will not only reduce stigma for some families, but this will also ensure that families can access services when they need them, regardless of where they live e.g. libraries, health centres, youth centres and schools.

14. Work with a range of organisations is taking place to enable them to officially become members of Family Hub Networks. A short quality assurance exercise will be completed before they can advertise themselves as a Family Hub Network member, this will include ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures are in place regarding safeguarding, information sharing, and participation in some training e.g. 'Making Every Contact Count'. Each partner will also have access to the Notts Help Yourself website which includes an up-to-date directory of services which will also assist them in finding the right help for a family.
15. The previous Government awarded Family Hub Best Start for Life funding to 75 pre-selected local authorities; Nottinghamshire was not preselected so the approach aims to make the best use of existing resources by working together and ensuring this way of working is sustainable.

Progress so far

16. Despite no additional funding, Family Hub Networks remained a priority and on 28 March 2024, Cabinet approved the roll out of Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire.
17. Five design sites were established in Retford, Sutton in Ashfield, Hawtonville, Oaktree and Netherfield. Establishing these design sites has allowed the Family Hub Partnership to use a test and learn approach, where new processes were created, tested and evaluated. Findings have now been used to shape full roll out across the County.
18. The voice of families and local professionals has been important in shaping how Family Hub Networks are provided. Public consultation was carried out in autumn 2023, followed by additional targeted consultation in spring term 2024. Views from parents/carers, professionals and young people were gathered, analysed and are being actioned.
19. Localised co-production activities are a standard requirement for each Family Hub Network, with local families and stakeholders engaging in discussions about what is important to them and how needs can be addressed holistically. A 'parents and carers panel' is being established in each district to ensure family voice remains a priority.
20. All Children's Centre buildings have now been renamed and rebranded as Family Hubs which by April 2025 will provide a range of services from conception to age 19.
21. Most roles within the Children's Centre service have now been changed to enable staff to work with families who have older children. For example, Early Years Practitioners will soon be working with families who have children up to the age of 8.
22. 17 local Family Hub Networks are being established and at the time of Committee, all but three will have been officially launched (the remaining sites to be launched by 31 March).
23. There has been a substantial increase of internal and external services operating from Family Hub sites enabling networks to provide services from conception until young people

reach the age of 19. This includes Family Hubs which host young people's activities in the evening.

24. New branding has been developed with families and professionals and it is anticipated that this will become easily recognisable and trusted by local families.
25. New multi-agency processes have been tested in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood, bringing together a group of professionals to agree a collective response to meet the needs of families. This has been particularly beneficial for families who require support from several organisations. Feedback from these tests has been extremely positive so far.
26. New Early Help Advisor roles have been tested in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood. These roles have in the main provided support and advice for schools which are unsure how best to support children and young people who have entrenched needs. It is anticipated that these roles will be created and rolled out across Nottinghamshire.
27. These tests have been reviewed and feedback has been positive. The success of new multi-agency processes and Early Help Advisor roles has resulted in plans to roll these out across Nottinghamshire from April 2025:
 - a. *"I feel like I've had more help in the last 30 minutes that in the last few years"* (parent who attended a multi-agency meeting)
 - b. *"Thank you, it feels like we have a team around the child now"* (practitioner)
 - c. *"In one case, we had the Youth Service emailing the local Youth Centre to arrange contact with a family during the multiagency meeting. It was that fast!"* (practitioner)
 - d. *"I was signposted to services that I had never come across before"* (practitioner)
 - e. *"It's been great to offer families a wider range of things that they can try"* (practitioner).
28. A new referral/service request process has been tested to reduce bureaucracy and speed up the process from referral to service delivery. This process includes all Council early help services rather than using different processes for each service. This is being refined before being fully implemented next financial year.
29. Family Hub Network partnership groups are now established across all Districts except for Gedling and Rushcliffe which are currently being progressed with Borough Councils.
30. There are an increasing number of partners and internal teams now providing services from Family Hub sites including services and activities for families with older children, as well as services for young people e.g. counselling. Dedicated Family Hub teams are also providing services from other venues in priority areas including Libraries and Community Centres.
31. Parents, carers, children and young people have consistently shared their concerns about accessing mental health services. Perinatal mental health services and young people's counselling services are now provided from some Family Hub buildings, and positive links have been established with commissioners, voluntary sector services and CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services).

32. Parents and carers of children with SEND have asked for peer support groups, these have been established by other services and an invitation to host these in Family Hub sites (at no cost) is being actioned.
33. A workforce development matrix has been developed to enable Family Hub Network members access to training and opportunities to learn from each other.
34. A Family Hub Network Outcomes Framework is in development to enable the Council and its partners to understand the impact of this way of working on family outcomes.
35. Three Family Hub Network newsletters have been created and disseminated to local families, schools and other stakeholders. Newsletters will be a key element of the digital offer for families.
36. The Council's Families Information Service has led on communications for families through social media (Facebook and Instagram). Further work is required to promote digital communications to increase the number of local families 'following' relevant social media accounts and increasing content for families who have children of school age.
37. A review of staffing across Council early help services is underway, with plans to integrate some teams into Early Help Locality Teams working within each Family Hub Network. This will also enable the existing workforce who work with expectant parents and young children, to gain skills and capacity to support families with older children.

Areas for further development

38. Despite the progress made so far, further work is required to achieve some of the actions formulated from consultation findings which were shared with Cabinet in March 2024.

Recommendation	Progress
Design the new Virtual Family Hub with families and seek ideas for sustained promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Virtual Family Hub will provide information, advice and guidance for families focusing on a range of topics. A decision has been made that this will be hosted on a new digital community directory for the City and County. This platform will not be in place until April 2026 due to planning and procurement timescales, so Family Hub plans have been delayed. • However, information is currently hosted on the Notts Help Yourself website alongside information about services.
Provide briefings and training to frontline workers to enable them to navigate services with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workforce plan has been developed which includes information to help services enable families to access the right service at the right time. This work is also interdependent on the creation of the new digital community directory of services. • The implementation of the workforce plan has been delayed and will be launched in 2025/26.
Improve promotion of services to ensure that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This action is linked to the development of a new digital directory of services which will be in place from April 2026.

<p>families understand a wide range of needs can be addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All listings on Notts Help Yourself website have been updated to assist families and practitioners to identify the right support. • Family Hub Network partners have been invited to submit promotional information about their services and activities to increase the range of information shared through social media channels. Further work is required to engage more partners in this work.
<p>Continue to work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to help promote their activities for families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Family Hub Networks are bringing together a range of local organisations including the voluntary and community sector. Further work is required to increase ownership of Family Hub Networks so local partnerships are being established with district/borough councils and Place Based Partnerships to assist in the engagement of local charities and community organisations.

Next Steps

39. A new early help referral process has been tested and will be updated following the tests which were carried out in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood. This includes a new self-referral process for parents and carers. This work will be completed by September 2025.
40. Information sharing agreements are required with key partners to enable successful implementation of multi-agency processes and discussions. An information sharing agreement is already in place with Department for Work and Pensions Job Centre Plus, and work is underway to refresh the information sharing agreement with Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, however work has not yet started with other key partners yet.
41. New multi-agency processes will be rolled out across the County following two successful tests in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood.
42. A new quality assurance process has been developed to enable partners to become official members of each Family Hub Network. Work is underway to implement this new process which will be progressed fully in 2025/26. This work is anticipated to help increase ownership and engagement with voluntary and community sector organisations.
43. Implementation of the new Early Help Workforce development plan will begin in April once new posts are established within the Family Hub service.
44. Additional capacity is required within the Families Information Service to increase the information available to families with school aged children using social media tools and digital communications. This is being explored further to assist the small team increase outputs for families with school aged children.
45. The Family Hub Communications plan will continue to be implemented to assist in the creation of a new digital community directory, promotion of services and increased use of social media and platforms such as TikTok.

Other Options Considered

46. No other options have been considered.

Reasons for Recommendations

47. The development of Family Hub design sites is included in the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031 with the aim to improve access to family support services for residents and ensuring children get the best start in life.
48. Family Hubs bring together family support services providing support early when families need them. These include universal and targeted services, including access to the intensive support of a keyworker where appropriate.
49. The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) has estimated that the cost of late intervention is almost £17 billion a year, suggesting that providing family support early can lessen the demand for statutory intervention or acute services later on. Implementing successful Family Hub Networks will provide early interventions to reduce the burden on statutory and specialist services in the longer term.

Statutory and Policy Implications

50. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

51. Partners in the delivery of Family Hub Networks have been asked to use their own resources to help shape and improve services and interventions for children and families; no additional funding has been provided to support the implementation of Family Hubs.
52. New local authority Family Hub teams have been developed using available budgets and resources. Other Council teams who will work under the umbrella of Family Hub Networks will also be funded using their available budgets.
53. Properties owned by the Council which become Family Hubs will continue to be managed and paid for by Property Services in the Place Department.

Consultation

54. Consultation and co-production activities have been central in the development of Family Hub Networks. These have been carried out through countywide and local activities⁴.

⁴ [Get involved | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

55. A series of mini surveys were carried out at the start of 2025 with young people, parents and carers and professionals. The findings were analysed and provided useful insights into the needs and preferences of families in Nottinghamshire, helping inform the ongoing development and improvement of Family Hubs.

Crime and Disorder Implications

56. Some of the signs that children and young people may be at greater risk of involvement in crime are present from birth. By using evidence-based practice to target and engage children at risk of poor outcomes, Family Hubs will be able to respond appropriately to these signals of risk and when required provide additional support at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, research has identified that providing holistic community-based services for children under the age of 5 reduces the risk of serious crime in adolescence.

Data Protection and Information Governance

57. Information sharing and General Data Protection Regulation compliance will be central to Family Hub developments and implementation. Information sharing agreements, data protection impact assessments and Privacy Notices will therefore be progressed.

Human Resources Implications

58. An internal restructure of early help services is being progressed with additional capacity identified to help families with children of school age. This includes new job descriptions and relocation of some existing posts.
59. Consultation with affected staff and Trade Unions has now been completed.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

60. The creation of Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire will not have a negative impact on anyone with protected characteristics; this will however have a positive impact on children and young people with a disability, expectant parents and new parents, women, and families with children over the age of 4 (as well as continuing to support families with preschool children). An Equalities Impact Assessment has been published and will be updated as plans progress.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

61. Safeguarding children and families continues to be a key priority within Family Hub developments. All partners involved in Family Hub Networks are asked to access Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership training and have policies and procedures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Implications for Residents

62. The successful delivery of Family Hubs will be beneficial for children, young people and families by being accessible, better connected and relationship centred so that needs can be identified and addressed early.

63. All families will have access to information they need, when they need it: through a digital platform, as well as virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family. Families who need additional help will be supported through a range of virtual and face to face support.
64. Local families will have an accessible, single point of reference that families can use to navigate local services.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That the Children and Families Select Committee considers and comments on progress in relation to the implementation of Family Hub Networks and proposed next steps.

Councillor Tracey Taylor
Cabinet Member for Children and Families

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Constitutional Comments (SF 04/02/25)

65. This report falls within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee for consideration as set out in their Terms of Reference.

Financial Comments (CDS 04/02/25)

66. Financial arrangements are described in **paragraphs 51-53**. In summary, there should be no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Implementing the roll out of Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire – report to Cabinet 28 March 2024](#)

[Implementing the roll out of Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire – report to Cabinet 9 November 2023](#)

[The Council's Prevention and Early Help Approach - report to Cabinet 21 September 2023](#)

[Family Hub Developments in Nottinghamshire – report to the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board 15 September 2023](#)

[Best Start Strategy Annual Progress Report 2022-2023 – report to Health and Wellbeing Board 5 July 2023](#)

[Implementing Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 December 2021](#)

[Proposed changes to Retford Central Children’s Centre – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 December 2021](#)

Nottinghamshire Family Hubs Implementation Equalities Impact Assessment November 2021
[Completed Equality Impact Assessments \(EqiAs\) | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

[Proposed Consultation on the use of Retford Central Children’s Centre – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 September 2021](#)

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

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