

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 4 June 2024
Subject:	Family Hubs and Changes to the Front Door		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Children's, Schools and Families		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report provides an overview of the recent changes made to the Front Door and developments in Early Help which will see a move from Family wellbeing Centres to three main Family Hubs with a network of smaller hubs. To add context, it provides some background information about the context of Family hubs from a Department for Education (DfE) perspective, information about Sefton's approach, an update on the current position and future plans.

Recommendation(s):

(1) To review and note the report for information

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The report is an update on recent developments and as such no key decisions are required.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

N/A

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):								
Legal Implications:								
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications. (Please note that Council have agreed care experience should be treated like a protected characteristic. Please delete as appropriate and remove this text)								
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes Both changes to the Front Door and developments within Family Hubs ensure that children are safeguarded, and that children and families can access the right support, at the right time, by the right person.								
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will <table border="1"><tr><td>Have a positive impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Have a neutral impact</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Have a negative impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td><td>No</td></tr></table> The developments reported on through this report have neutral impact on climate emergency as the changes are focused more on practice.	Have a positive impact	No	Have a neutral impact	Yes	Have a negative impact	No	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	No
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Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Family Hubs and changes to the front door directly relate to supporting the most vulnerable either from a safeguarding perspective or supporting those families and children who may need advice and support, help or more help.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Through the delivery of services through Family hubs we are meeting the needs of communities on a locality footprint – ensuring there is support for all communities.

Commission, broker and provide core services: Both Family Hubs and the front door are core services for the Council as they cover a safeguarding function and offer a means of early intervention and prevention.
Place – leadership and influencer: Family Hubs are central delivery points in localities and therefore take a leadership role in co-ordinating what offer is available in each locality.
Drivers of change and reform: Both Family Hubs and changes to the Front door are significant programmes of change and reform as move towards a more relationship-based approach and ensuring families get the support they need when they need it.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD5765/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD7665/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Implementation Date for the Decision

N/A

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2023 the Early Help Service (Including Family Wellbeing Centres) transitioned from Communities into Children's Services. This was followed shortly afterwards by a system wide review of Early Help, undertaken by Peopletoo. Their final report outlined a significant number of recommendations to support the partnership, Council based Early Help and Front Door arrangements.

2. Background – Family Hubs

2.1 The Government's 2019 Manifesto pledged to champion Family Hubs across England. In December 2020, the then Minister for Children, Vicky Ford, outlined plans to create a National Centre of Excellence for Family Hubs, funded by the Department for Education (DfE). The Best Start for Life Review: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days outlined a programme of work to ensure the best support during those crucial first 1001 days, setting babies up to maximise their potential for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing.

2.2 The DfE and DHSC (Department of Health and Social Care) announced in April 2022 that 75 local authorities would become pilot areas for the Family Hubs and best start in life scheme. Unfortunately, Sefton was not part of the funded local authorities.

2.3 "Family hub" is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services. Hubs deliver these services from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

2.4 Family hubs aim to make a positive difference to parents, carers, and their children by providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can easily access non-judgmental support for the challenges they may be facing. Family Hubs will provide a universal 'front door' to families, offering a 'one-stop shop' of family support services across their social care, education, mental health, and physical health needs, with a comprehensive Start for Life offer for parents and babies at its core.

2.5 Each family hub is bespoke to the local community it serves and should adhere to the three key delivery principles that underlie all family hubs, Access, Relationships, and Connections.



Government (DHSC & DFE) have set out their expectations on delivery of family hubs which include: (1) Face to face at a family hub; (2) through the family hub but received elsewhere in the network and (3) Virtually through the family hub, including static online information and/or interactive virtual / digital service.

3 Sefton Context and Background

- 3.1 Early Help in Sefton saw a significant change in 2018 with the emergence of Family Wellbeing Centres. This saw the joining of Family Centres and Children's Centres into a new holistic approach offering support for families and young people from 0-19. Initially, considerable development with partners saw partners operating from Family Wellbeing Centres and these became vibrant one stop shops for families and professionals.
- 3.2 Unfortunately, Covid took hold, centres closed or reduced operating hours and partners retreated. Alongside this, demands within social care increased significantly, leaving the Early Help offer unable to flourish.

4 A New Vision for Family Hubs

- 4.1 The vision going forward is to work even more closely with families, focusing on what families tell us about what we can do to help them. We will get the right help to families quicker, and in a way which makes a difference, and works effectively across the entire system to reduce hand offs, referrals, multiple assessments, and process. Bringing what we do closer to people and communities, to make the biggest difference.
- 4.2 Central to this vision is the development of three Family hubs one in each locality Talbot Street in the North, Netherton in Central and Marie Clarke in the South. In addition to these main Family Hubs, we will continue to have a wider network of accessible and community focused Hubs.
- 4.3 Family Hubs will serve several functions:
 - a. Information advice and guidance for families.
 - b. Connecting families to other services and support available.

- c. Hosting Sefton Council’s early help and family support functions.
- d. Hosting other Sefton Council and partner support for families.
- e. Provision of evidence-based support.

4.4 Delivery from Family Hubs will focus on the following areas and will incorporate a mixture of information, advice, and support, 1:1 sessions, group sessions, and delivery of generic and evidence-based interventions.



4.5. Family Hubs will be a key community asset, providing effective support for families minimising the involvement of statutory agencies. To ensure access, connection and effective relationship building developing a multi-agency approach to support families and communities is an ongoing priority. To date we have strong links with several partner agencies including:



5 Next steps

5.1 A new operating model and subsequent staffing structure will be implemented during the coming months ensuring the roles align with our delivery ambition.

- 5.2 Within this, new posts will add capacity to connect with local communities and hard to reach families and begin to attract them into the family Hubs. We will have a more significant focus on participation and co-production, really using families and children to shape the service going forward. Finally, we will acknowledge the value that experts by experience can bring to our delivery through employing members of community who have themselves experienced difficulties, previously volunteered or indeed both.
- 5.3 Through engagement with schools we have chosen a Family Hub logo (designed by a child in Our Lady Queen of Peace) which is now being used to develop a branding and marketing strategy. In addition, we are engaging with the wider Early Help Partnership to develop plans to launch the three Family Hubs in the coming months.
- 5.4 To extend our reach from physical Family Hubs, developing an engaging and intuitive digital platform is also being considered. This will ensure families and professionals can get the support and help easily when they need it, without having to even access a physical Family Hub
- 5.5. ^[OBJ] Scoping work is also underway to consider a Family Hub which will have a specialist focus on children and families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This would ensure an enhanced offer for families with integration from Health, Education and Early Help.

Children’s Help and Advice Team – Update on changes to the front door

Alex Jones 22-05-2024

Children’s Help and Advice Team (CHAT) launched on the 1st of May 2024. Prior to this there had been a rigorous implementation board and plan over a six-month period that created the various workstreams devised with by People Too to support the implementation plan.

Leading up to going live a wide range of training, briefings and communication packs were shared with the wider partnership within Sefton. The Implementation Board has meet monthly, and alongside this were weekly meetings with People to, to review individual workstreams.

Partnership briefings have been successful with approximately 1000 members of the partnership being reached through the briefing timetable. This has included internal briefings with Children’s Social Care staff. An online briefing jointly delivered with the safeguarding partnership board reaching over 350 people. Two face-to-face briefings ran jointly with the safeguarding partnership board with 200 people attending.

Alongside this multiple team meetings, both in person and online were attend by CHAT managers and a team around the school briefing. We were confident before going live that the partnership understood the new model and had access to communication and training material to support the implementation.

Accompanying the partnership communication was the internal preparation which involved workstreams focusing on staffing, telephone systems, Liquid Logic (LCS) changes to forms and learning about the ‘conversation’ with Leeds Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme, Leeds City Council.

Performance & Data

The model went live on 1st May and there is an overview of the data so far:

Date (week ending)	Number of Contacts	Number of Family’s	LCS (CHAT)	Referral
19-05-2024	315	176	251	61
12-05-2024	327	180	228 (120)	46
06-05-2024	337*	185	231	86

- *45 contacts completed 30th & 31st April (Monday & Tuesday of week 1)

Since going live there has been 373 telephone conversation-based contacts, 285 email contacts and 7 ‘other’.

Police remain the highest source of contacts at 173. Schools and education services the second highest source of contact with 163.

It was predicted that 60% of contacts would be received via telephone call and 40% via emails. 56 % of contacts have been received by telephone calls and 43% by email. (1%

'other'). This data is based on 3 weeks post implementation and will continue to be reviewed.

There have been 202 children referred into Children's Social Care for a Child and Family Assessment.

A key risk identified prior to going live was the wait time for professionals wanting to contact CHAT – we are reassured by the data we have seen to date. The '8x8' phone system was successfully installed and allows live analysis of call information by all staff based in both CHAT and FAST (Family Advice and Support Team) (Early Help) and analysis of call information over a long period.

Since the 1st May the average wait time is less than 1 second for the call to be answered by a contact officer. The most calls received on one day is 45, with the average number of calls being 33. The conversations when the referrer is speaking to social worker are not time monitored and the length of the conversation depends on the individual children and family's needs and reason for referral. What we know from feedback so far is that referrers are feeling listened to, the family are going to receive a timely response and are receiving the outcome email which allows for clear accountability.

Feedback:

The feedback received so far has been positive and constructive were needed. There is a survey for all referrers to complete following the conversation and response to this is increasing. The feedback received is used within team meetings for reflection and improvement with practice and also will form part of the post implementation reviews.

I have included some examples of the feedback received so far:

Just wanted to say thank you for all the updates, posters and comms. We've been really kept in the loop, and I know this new system will be great for families and for schools.

Good luck to the teams on the phone on the 1st!

Head Teacher

We used the new CHAT service this morning for the first time and got some really positive feedback from the clinician who made the call. Only waited 2 minutes, felt much more relevant information was obtained through talking, described the social worker / early help worker as 'lovely', our practitioner was really positive about it, and we shared this feedback in our managers meeting this afternoon. So great job so far!

Sefton Talking Therapies

I contacted the FAST team yesterday and just wanted to say that it was an excellent system, very efficient and user-friendly. I spoke to an Early Help worker

called Debbie and she was tremendous. I know it is early days, but I wanted to feed this back because I recognise how much hard work will have gone into preparing for the launch of CHAT and FAST.

Headteacher

Just had a conversation with Liverpool Women's who reported a positive experience with phoning with a referral. Reported good that they could have the conversation directly with a SW, rather than just a call handler and received an email of the outcome straight away.

Named Safeguarding Nurse

Designated Safeguarding Lead is absolutely delighted with the new process and asked me to pass how much better it is being able to speak to someone.

She said she has called a couple of times this week and has found everyone to be extremely friendly and helpful. She went on to say that she feels safe in the knowledge that things are happening when she calls.

DSL (Designated safeguarding leads), Sefton Primary School.

Internal feedback from staff has also been positive and the new model has been well received, contact officers are becoming upskilled and enjoy a new model and way of working. The contact officers are confident in the role and have quickly learnt the new model and new telephone system.

Social workers within Children's Help and Advice Team have more autonomy and professional curiosity. Social workers feel supported by managers with the implementation of the model. The time built in now for training and development will provide the opportunity for reflection and discussion which was not possible within the previous model.

Managers now know their focus is on the children at risk of harm or children in need. The conversations about children are timely and focused. Managers says they now have time spend on quality assurance and auditing to allow for improvement and growth.

Within the CHAT team their a positive atmosphere and a real sense of achievement as we reflect on the work completed at pace for implementation which has allowed a smooth transition between the two referral models.

Post implementation review:

The work continues to ensure the success of the model and that it becomes embedded. Plans are in place for a 3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month review points working both with Leeds City Council and People too.

The implementation board continues to meet on a 3-weekly basis, and this highlights key developments, strengths, and risks. The review points will bring together data, audits, and feedback to review the impact on children and families. From this training and updates can be provided to the implementation group, partners agencies and senior leadership on progress.

Within the 12-month period the reviews will feed into all the relevant strategic groups within the council including Overview and Scrutiny.