

ONE STOCKPORT FAMILY HUBS – ONE YEAR ON

Report of the Director for People and Neighbourhoods

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report highlights the progress and impact of Family Hubs in Stockport during their first 12 months. It identifies key achievements and areas for development to support their growth.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. In Autumn 2022, Stockport was selected as one of 13 authorities to receive transformation funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to create a network of Family Hubs. This funding was provided to enable transformation, create conditions for system change, and capture learning.

- 2.2. Family Hubs transformation has built on what's already in place, for example:

- Start Well – early years integrated delivery model in communities underpinned by the healthy child programme
- Stockport Family – integrated children and family services' across education, social care and health
- Team Around Approach
- Stockport's Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) strategy
- Development of One Stockport and commitment to Neighbourhoods and Prevention

- 2.3. The goal has been to develop 7 Family Hub networks to:

- Enable clear and simple access help and support via physical buildings, outreach, and digital developments with a warm welcome to all families, reducing any stigma in asking for help.
- Build Family Hub networks based on a strong universal offer, linked to anchor institutions (e.g. nurseries, schools, GPs and libraries).
- Focus on two thematic areas; early childhood development, especially speech, language, communication and improving integrated pathways for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Empower families to support their children's development by providing easy access to information and self-help resources.
- Develop trusted relationships with communities by further developing relationships and trust with the VCFSE sector.

2.4. Stockport's model focuses on joining up existing support offers to make it easier for families to access a range of universal and early help services, and community offers in one place to reduce inequalities. Family Hubs are

- a 'front door' (virtual and/or physical) to a 'one-stop shop' of information, help and support.
- forming a vital part of One Stockport Local, which is bringing together help and support to make it easier for residents to help themselves, their families, and those they care for.
- Catalysing the focus in Stockport on a Neighbourhoods and Prevention approach to bring whole system collaboration to supporting families in need.
- contributing to the delivery of the '5 big things' in the One Stockport One Future borough plan, in particular 'the best place to grow up', 'best health and care' and 'thriving neighbourhoods'.
- one of the priority programmes of work contributing towards the Children and Young People plan and the delivery of the SEND, Start Well and Early Help strategies 2024- 2027.
- prioritising the earliest years of life at its core and taking learning from the local Nesta Innovation Partnership
- closely linked to the following National programmes:
 - Start for Life, Supporting Families and Reducing Parental Conflict

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1. It's been a year since the first Family Hub sites opened, and the first Family Hub networks and virtual Family Hub were launched. Stockport's vision is that Family Hubs will support families 0-19 (up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities) to start well, live well and thrive.

3.2. The model is built on three key principles - access, connection and relationships. These principles guide the model of delivery and inform the outcomes framework. Stockport must demonstrate maturity against each of these principles as set out in the DfE Family Hubs model framework guidance which says –

- Family Hubs are both a physical and virtual place, and a neighbourhood approach designed to make it easier for families to access information, help and support. They support families from pregnancy through to teenage years (this is up to age 25 for children and young people with SEND), creating a seamless system of support within neighbourhoods that covers all aspects of family life.
- Family Hubs offer access to a range of services including pregnancy and antenatal care, infant feeding, children's health and development, play sessions, SEND specific support, parenting, housing, cost of living support, training and employment opportunities, finding childcare, youth activities, help to stop smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health, mental health and wellbeing, and relationships.
- Family Hubs are for all families living in Stockport. The model prioritises a prevention and early intervention, communities-first approach to reduce inequalities and prevent issues from escalating.

4. STOCKPORT'S EVOLVING MODEL

- 4.1. Family Hubs exist as networks of connected help and support. Each Family Hub network will be bespoke to the communities it services while incorporating the three delivery principles: access, connection and relationships.
- 4.2. Those services and offers that make up the Family Hub network share a common purpose and approach to working with families. This means they will work together to support families to start, well, live well and thrive. They understand the importance of relationships and prioritise children, young people and families, making every contact count. They will provide a warm welcome, promote inclusivity and whole family working.
- 4.3. Families can access this network of support in a number of ways - virtually via the website; physically by walking into a main Family Hub site; via outreach within local communities through designated places of support (Family Hub bridges) or via partnership services that provide home visits.
- 4.4. By providing a wide breadth of access within communities, Stockport's network approach acknowledges and addresses the particular challenges in accessing information, help and support for some families, for example, where trust may be an issue or whereby transport or language is a barrier.
- 4.5. The Family Hub bridge role is key to network development, providing access options where families already have existing connections and trusted relationships.
- 4.6. Family Hub bridges are key connectors to the network of support. They enhance and facilitate access to the Family Hub core services and local community offer. Family hub bridges are not experts in all aspects of family life however they will help families find the right information or person to help.
- 4.7. To date, libraries, leisure centres, Stopford House reception and Stockport Homes have all played a key role in prototyping Family Hub bridges, helping us better connect as a support system and meet the individual needs of local communities.
- 4.8. The Family Hubs transformation team are now working with the 'Innovation Unit' to better understand the potential of the role and develop a blueprint to support scaling across the borough. The Family Hub bridge role aims to reduce inequalities by broadening the access and developing a place based workforce with common purpose and approach to working with families. It supports the delivery of non-stigmatising, accessible information, help and support in local communities.

5. ONE YEAR ON – SUMMARY OF PROGRESS, KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- 5.1. **Seven Family Hubs networks launched** across the borough to develop support for families that is accessible and reduces the stigma associated with asking for help.
- 5.2. *At a Family Hubs network event, a parent asked for help finding sports clubs for their child with additional needs. A Family Hubs team member got advice from the*

SEND team and showed the parent the Local Offer website with its SEND-specific information help and support. With this information, the parent confidently approached a sports club, and their child started attending weekly training sessions in his favourite sport. The family plans to use the Local Offer website again to find other services and will continue to benefit from the support they received from their initial contact with Family Hubs. Most importantly, their child can now enjoy training with a sports club and feels part of a team.

- 5.3. **Integration of services** – one of the core achievements has been the integration of start well, family help and school nursing, creating a 0-19 integrated team linked to each family hub network, helping families navigate what can sometimes feel like a complicated and overwhelming support system. The integration enables a more holistic approach to providing support and strengthens whole family working.
- 5.4. **Three Family Hubs sites opened** at Westmorland Drive, Brinnington, Abingdon Road, Reddish, and Garners Lane, Adswold. These sites were identified based on inequalities data and early years outcomes. Each site has a co-located 0-19 integrated team providing a single point of access to a 'one stop shop' of support under one roof. Linked housing, Mosaic and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) workers further enhance the skill mix. The space supports the delivery of universal and targeted offers and interventions.
- 5.5. *A parent attending EPEC's 'Being a Parent' course at the One Stockport Family Hub in Brinnington stayed after the session to speak to the leader about some challenges she was having with her children and how she was feeling. The mum mentioned counselling but didn't know how to access this. The leader put them in touch with Beacon Counselling and the mum was in the process of getting support from them by the end of the course.*
- 5.6. **Focus on access as a priority** – Family Hubs are improving access to information, help and support for families by reducing the need to visit multiple places for different offers and by widening the breadth of access options; Family Hub sites, Family Hub bridges and online. There are some good examples of Family Hub bridges and practitioners from wider partnership services signposting families to the Family Hub core services and local community offer.
- 5.7. Family Hubs have prioritised accessibility and are developing strong community engagement and partnerships through the development of the Family Hub bridge role. Through these partnerships, Family Hubs can not only widen the breadth of access but also offer a wider range of services, tap into additional expertise and reach more families than a traditional designated Family Hub site model would have achieved.
- 5.8. There are 24 Family Hub bridge sites including libraries, life leisure, Stopford House and Stockport Homes.
- 5.9. *One of the Family Hubs library bridges offered friendly support to a resident visiting their service, who opened up to them about the domestic abuse they were experiencing. The staff members who had accessed the Family Hubs bridge induction and Orange Umbrella training played a crucial role in improving this*

situation. They were able to provide the necessary support by referring the parent to the specialist Stockport Homes Domestic Abuse Housing officer and a safety plan and temporary housing was in place that day. It was clear that it was only because the person felt safe in the Family Hubs bridge and comfortable with the member of staff that they were able to open up about the problem and take those vital steps towards fleeing domestic abuse. They would not have had the confidence or trust to talk to 'authority' figures.

- 5.10. **Collaboration across organisations and sectors** – Stockport’s approach to Family Hubs emphasises collaboration between public sector services and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, which has strengthened service delivery and outcomes e.g. EPEC, Dad Matters, Digiknow device sale.
- 5.11. A dedicated Family hubs VCFSE engagement lead hosted by Sector 3 is supporting strong partnership working between public sector services and the VCFSE sector, and building capacity within the sector by linking to potential funding opportunities. For example, 6 VCFSE groups attended a workshop that was held in collaboration between family hubs and Sector 3 to support the sector to seek further funding. A VCFSE Family Hub contact list (149 contacts so far) has also been developed to share with the sector key updates, funding opportunities, training events, and anything else requested by the VCFSE contacts.
- 5.12. The Family Hubs VCFSE engagement lead role has been key to establishing meaningful feedback methods and processes to ensure feedback from communities informs the development of Family hubs. Engagement with fair and inclusive network leads has enabled a greater diversity of people to inform the Family Hubs equality impact assessment review.
- 5.13. **Workforce development and training** – the transformation programme has invested in training staff and supporting workers from all sectors, helping them collaborate more effectively and develop a common purpose and approach to working with families. This includes establishing Making Every Contact Count, Connect 5 and Solihull Parenting Approach as the underpinning practice models.
- 5.14. To support the launch of Family Hub networks we have delivered six stakeholder briefing events reaching 338 people. Engagement in the Family Hubs bridge concept has been strong, with expressions of interest from a range of groups and providers. The diversity of interested Family Hub bridges is both a strength and a challenge, necessitating continuous review of the induction offer. So far, 16 Family Hubs bridge induction sessions have been attended by 186 individuals from a range of organisations and services working in neighbourhoods, demonstrating their commitment to access, connection and relationships.
- 5.15. **Digital developments** – has been a stand out achievement for Family Hubs in the first year, enhancing access and service delivery offers. The Family Hubs website and newly launched One Stockport Local directory provides a virtual ‘front door’ and allows families to access information, help and support 24/7. The use of these digital systems by families is allowing us to collect data on user journey, which is helping improve the quality of the information available and ensures any further iterations of

the systems are tailored to the needs and wants of families. There have been 13,663 website page views in the first 12 months of going 'live', illustrating the demand for digital access.

- 5.16. Social media and the development of the Family Hub network newsletter for stakeholders are the main digital communication channels helping to raise awareness, share key messages and extend reach.
- 5.17. Since launching the first One Stockport Family Hub sites and networks in October 2023, the approach has supported 167 families to access information, help, and support through the website's online enquiry pathway. Enquiries have been received from each postcode area SK1 to SK8, with the top three themes for enquiry related to Debt and Welfare, SEND, and Housing and Homelessness. Over 90% of enquiries required information and advice, with only a small percentage requiring triage into potential Early Help Assessment or safeguarding. Even with higher-need families, high-quality information is provided quickly for them or professionals working with them.
- 5.18. *A parent contacted Family Hubs via the online enquiry form in early September 2024 asking for support with a difficulty in communications around a request submitted to school admissions. Family Hubs contacted the admissions team on the family's behalf and was able to provide an update while waiting for the paperwork to follow. They said:*
"I found the Family Hubs Enquiry form on Stockport Council website. They solved my problem quickly. I recommend anyone who has a problem to contact them."
- 5.19. **Strengthened early years offer** – core to laying the foundations, the Start Well strategy has been refreshed, ensuring the earliest years of a child's life are central to the Family Hubs vision and ambitions. Integrated working between midwifery and health visiting has been strengthened, and family hubs midwifery leadership has been funded to prioritize the first 1001 days of life. The enhanced maternity pathway supports parents and unborn babies antenatally through a joint midwife and health visitor contact for families requiring targeted support, enabling relationship building and joint assessment and plan of care. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of antenatal contacts, supporting earlier identification of need, continuity of care, and stronger relationships with families.
- 5.20. Commitment to giving children the best start in life is demonstrated by delivering interventions that make a difference, building on insights and learning from the Nesta Innovation Partnership, and reviewing 0-2 years interventions. This ensures the strongest evidence base for delivering interventions and a renewed focus on the importance of the home learning environment and building relationships. Peer-led options of support have been expanded through the Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) program and delivery of the 'Baby and Us' course. A new social-emotional development and mental health toolkit has been launched to support integrated working and consistent standards of practice when working with children 0-5 years and their parents and carers.
- 5.21. In response to feedback from dads in Stockport, we have commissioned a bespoke Dad Matters offer which is supporting dads during the perinatal period (conception –

2 years). Since January 2024, the Dad Matters perinatal mental health coordinator has received 25 referrals for one to one support (18 of these are live referrals), engaged 515 dads universally, and 461 professionals have been engaged to support the development of 'dad friendly' practice.

5.22. The integrated EYs SEND pathway has been refreshed and will be launched in Spring 2025, and waiting times for Portage intervention have been reduced using Family Hubs transformation funding.

5.23. **Parenting offer** – access to parenting support has been expanded through the introduction of online webinars and resources, allowing parents to access support from home. Online resources such as Solihull and Essential Parent are evidence-based and empower parents and carers to seek support independently and learn more about child development. Since the launch of Family Hubs, there has been an increase in other agencies outside of core teams signposting parents to take up the online Solihull offer, e.g., GPs, MASSH, and children's social care. The biggest uptake has come as a result of promotion by schools.

5.24. The range of parenting courses has been extended based on evidence and the needs of families. This includes the delivery of 'Invest in Play', a new evidence-based intervention for parents and carers of children aged 2-11 years, focusing on play, attachment, predictability, and consistency. Stockport has been recognised internationally as the UK trailblazers and early adopters. In the last 12 months, 11 groups have been delivered aligned to 4 Family Hubs networks, reaching 73 parents. Routine outcome measures indicate significant reductions in parent stress and child disruptive and troublesome behaviours.

5.25. *A parent taking part 'Invest in Play' was asked about the help they received from accessing the intervention, they said:*

"You have learnt [sic] me and my family so much and I feel like myself and my children are really finding our feet and we are now working together as a family. When I first reached out for help, I really felt my life getting extremely difficult and I just couldn't seem to cope very well. With your help I am feeling a lot more in control and confident with my parenting strategies. I am so sad it's ended, but obviously I'm happy at just how far we have come. I'm going to miss your support and advice, but I have my tool bag...you have helped me so much and I'm so grateful for what we have achieved."

5.26. **Measuring outcomes that matter** - funding has been used to make better use of data and ensure a holistic view of the analysis of children's outcomes. To ensure measurement of what matters, a Family Hubs Outcomes Framework has been co-produced, focusing primarily on culture change in relation to access, connection, and relationships, providing a foundation and acting as common pathways to improved outcomes for children, young people, and families.

5.27. In July - August 2024, a parents and carers survey was distributed across Stockport to measure the current impact of Family Hubs for families, children and young people - the survey received 220 responses.

- 5.28. The survey was distributed via a variety of methods including the Family Hubs website and social media, posters and professionals. The survey offers an important temperature check of Family Hubs current impact against the Outcomes Framework.
- 5.29. Feedback collated indicates high levels of feeling welcomed, trust, confidence returning for future services - with the purpose of increasing access, reducing stigma. Key findings included:
- 75% of families reported feeling welcome when they asked for help
 - 83% trusted the people helping them
 - 75% were satisfied with the quality of information, help and support provided
 - 78% with the ease of accessing this information
 - 76% felt confident that they would go back to Family Hubs services if they needed to in the future
- 5.30. Respondents shared a number of practical ideas to enhance Stockport Family Hubs, including:
- Providing more activities for teenagers, including potentially providing them with work experience opportunities
 - Hosting more baby and toddler stay and play sessions
 - Providing more support for families with children with SEND
 - Promoting the offer more and sharing information about what is on offer
 - Providing more support for single parents (especially that is not means tested)
 - Delivering practical support, such as food vouchers, or being able to use a computer
 - Considering support offer for grandparents

6. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1. Transitioning from a strong early years integrated delivery model to 0-19 approach - connecting youth provision to family hubs and making family hub sites accessible to teenagers is an area for development. Building on and mobilisation of youth offer and alignment with Family Hubs.
- 6.2. Raising awareness - just over half of families surveyed were aware of Family Hubs and few respondents knew about the full range of services Family Hubs offer access to. Those with older children are less aware of Family Hubs.
- 6.3. Family Hubs have a strong social media and online presence which can be built on to further reach families, children and young people in Stockport. Targeted outreach will help raise awareness and engage families, for example by working in partnership with VCFSE sector, nurseries, schools and GPs. Building trust across communities and a positive association with the One Stockport Family Hubs brand requires continued collaboration and partnership working.
- 6.4. There have been varied expectations of what Family Hubs can bring from the diverse set of stakeholders . Building a shared vision through the initial theory of change and engaging stakeholders in the codesign process, transparency and

having a clear communication and engagement plan has been crucial. The development of a shared understanding of the local Family Hub approach is ongoing. Building a positive association and trust with the One Stockport Family Hubs brand is ongoing .

- 6.5. Balancing an approach that's meets all access needs – Family Hubs have digital options for accessing information, help and support, ensuring families have the technology and connectivity remains an issue for some families according to stakeholders. It is also recognised that not all families feel confident with digital technology and access can be a challenge for non-English speaking families. Digital literacy and inclusion has been captured in the equality impact assessment action plan which includes working with VCFSE partners who are already helping families to get online.
- 6.6. Recognising the potential of digital in empowering self-help, the digital offer and online resources will be further enhanced to make support even more accessible and flexible to the needs of families. This builds on the feedback from families, who have indicated they prefer to access information, help and support via websites, apps and social media in the first instance.
- 6.7. Physical access options include Family Hubs main sites and the Family Hub bridge role. The Family Hub bridge role is in its infancy and there is some confusion from families about how and why they would access the gym reception for example to receive support. Learning from the last 12 months will inform how this concept and role develops in Stockport to make every contact count with families and support behaviour change in communities both for the workforce and wider population.
- 6.8. Physical access will be further expanded through the designation of an additional Family Hub site in Offerton including the colocation of SEND specific services.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1. Moving beyond DfE transformation to maintaining and sustaining - scaling the approach to dovetail into the wider Neighbourhood and Prevention ambitions based on learning from the last 12 months, feedback from families, the workforce and wider stakeholders.
- 7.2. Impact and outcomes – data from a survey to measure the current impact of Family Hubs against its outcomes for workforce is currently being analysed. In October, the Innovation Unit will bring together the findings of the parent and carers survey, the workforce survey and existing data for outcomes measures in a mid-point review of Stockport Family Hubs. This will form a baseline for future outcome measurement.
- 7.3. Enhancing data collection and implementing the Family Hubs outcomes framework will track longer-term outcomes and develop a local approach based on evidence.

8. FUNDING ALLOCATION AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. All transformation funding awarded to Stockport has been spent in line with the Memorandum of Understanding with the DfE and local detailed delivery plan.
- 8.2. Additional funding of £27.7k was awarded in October 2024 to support ongoing digital and data development.
- 8.3. The government announced £69 million in the Autumn budget 2024, to continue the ongoing development and delivery of Family Hubs in England. As of yet, there is no further detail from government as to how this funding will be allocated to local authorities across the country.
- 8.4. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Family Hubs equality impact assessment has been reviewed and an action plan has been developed.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1. Family Hubs are on a journey to transform support for families by building on existing services. Significant progress has been made in the first year, creating conditions for integrated delivery within neighbourhoods and stronger relationships with communities. Despite challenges, there are positive signs of impact on the system, workforce, and families.
- 11.2. To achieve lasting impact, Family Hubs must continue to deepen integration with core teams and extend partnerships across services and sectors. Collaboration is essential for creating a seamless support system that meets the needs of families

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1. Note and comment on report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

For further information please contact lj.woodward@stockport.gov.uk , Head of Service Early Years and Neighbourhoods.