



HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 31 OCTOBER 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

LEICESTERSHIRE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PARTNERSHIP PLAN: PROGRESS UPDATE

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Health and Wellbeing Board a progress update on the delivery of the 'Best Start for Life' priorities of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which sits within the Children and Families Partnership Plan 2021-23.

Link to the local Health and Care System

2. The Children and Families Partnership is a subgroup of Leicestershire's Health and Wellbeing Board. The Children and Families Partnership Plan is aligned to the Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Recommendation

3. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the progress in delivery of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategic Priorities that sit within the Children and Families Partnership Plan.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

4. In November 2016 the Health and Wellbeing Board approved the Terms of Reference for a Children and Families Partnership to replace the Supporting Leicestershire Families Executive as a subgroup of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The expanded remit included oversight of how the priorities for children and families as set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, are delivered.
5. In May 2018, the Health and Wellbeing Board approved the Children and Families Partnership Plan for 2018 - 21 and in November 2020 approved the refreshed Plan for 2021 - 23.

Background

6. The Children and Families Partnership Plan is a strategic document which sets out the shared vision for children, young people and their families and the priority outcomes that need to be improved. The Plan is not a detailed description of the individual work of each partner against the identified priority areas, but rather a summary of key areas of work that are best delivered together to have the biggest impact on the lives of children and young people.

7. The five priorities of the Partnership Plan are:
 - i. Ensure the best start for life (early years)
 - ii. Keep children safe and free from harm
 - iii. Support children and families to be resilient (early help)
 - iv. Ensure vulnerable families receive personalised, integrated care and support
 - v. Enable children to have good physical, emotional and mental health
8. The Integrated Care System Children’s Design Group, Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership, SEND and Inclusion Board, Youth and Justice Partnership Board and Early Help Partnership are aligned and provide regular reports to the Children and Families Partnership.

Progress update

9. Priority leads have continued to work with partners and other key stakeholders to deliver against the five priority action plans of the current Children and Families Partnership Plan, which runs to 2023. The Partnership is undertaking a review and refresh of the Partnership Plan and will align this to meet the objectives set out in the Best Start for Life chapter of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The updated Partnership Plan will be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board for agreement by December 2023.
10. For the purposes of this report, updates will focus on the progress that has been made against two the spotlight areas of the First 1001 Critical Days/School Readiness and Family Hubs.
11. The work being undertaken on the First 1001 Critical Days/School Readiness sits within the “Best Start for Life – Early Years” priority action plan of the current Children and Families Partnership Plan. This work aligns to the First 1001 Critical Days and School Readiness sub-themes of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
12. Work to embed support for families throughout the First 1001 Critical Days has been focussed on workforce development, to raise awareness of the importance of the first 1001 days for children’s development across the children’s workforce. This includes a communications plan to share key messages and practical support with families.
 - Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFWS) has developed an e-learning module that has been completed by 196 staff. This module is now mandatory for all new CFS staff and will be shared via the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP) website for all professionals to access. Multi-agency webinars have been delivered to LCC, LPT and UHL staff and to early years providers, foster carers and Homestart volunteers. Workshops have also been delivered to midwifery students at De Montfort University and students at further education colleges.
 - Resources, including a Five to Thrive leaflet and Baby’s First 1001Days animation, have been developed in consultation with local parents to help share practical ideas for promoting children’s development.

- Interactive events were delivered by Children and Family Wellbeing Service in March and September, aimed at sharing key messages and modelling the behaviours that support early brain development to attract families who don't usually engage in services. Messages are shared every other month via Council social media and also shared by UHL and LPT.

13. Work in relation to School Readiness has focussed on the early identification of children at risk of delay, embedding an integrated Early Years Pathway, delivering support and training to early years professionals. Including a communications plan to share key messages with families on the importance of accessing early years provision and practical ideas to support children's learning and development. Activity undertaken has included:

- Embedding an integrated Early Years Pathway. Identification of children at risk of delay has significantly improved through the sharing of two-year health review data and a pathway of support from Health, Children Family Wellbeing and Early Years SEND services is now well established. This data has also been used to support early years providers to attend a programme funded by Healthy England, Language & Living, SEND Integration. This is a joint project between health and education services across LLR. The focus of the programme has been to improve early identification and intervention for children with speech and language needs and occupational therapy needs, thereby preventing escalation of needs and onwards referral. Using data from ASQ low scores for fine and gross motor skills helped to pinpoint early years providers from Blaby and Earl Shilton where there were higher levels of need. Settings were invited to participate in the project through access to training, audits and questionnaires, supporting setting 'champions' to cascade information and learning strategies to settings and receiving on-site support from an Occupational Therapist where needed.
- Delivering a campaign to promote the importance of early education and access to early years provision. A robust communications campaign is now embedded as business as usual and data shows children are now returning to access their Early Years provision. 'Two to School' top tips for parents provide a range of hints, tips and examples to support parents in the home learning environment.
- Developing support for early years professionals and parents to address developmental areas impacted by Covid 19. The effects of the Covid 19 pandemic included delays in children's development of social skills, communication and literacy and had an impact on children accessing provision. Support at home is important for children's early development, in particular opportunities to share books and develop a wide vocabulary. As children's experiences at home vary, it is important that practitioners focus on communication and language for all children, particularly for those who do not benefit from a rich vocabulary at home. A raft of high-quality training has been offered to the Early Years workforce to enable them to support children effectively, including supporting practitioners to understand how children learn and develop oral language, which specific techniques help children to develop oral language, and identification of children who may need more frequent and targeted approaches.

14. Research shows that children who spend longer in early years provision have better educational outcomes later and that high-quality early years provision particularly benefits children from low-income backgrounds.
 - 96% of providers in Leicestershire are rated by Ofsted as good or better.
 - 80.7% percentage of Leicestershire children are reaching their age-appropriate milestones and achieving a good level of development at the 2-year health review.
15. Over the last five years, the trend for school readiness (percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception year) has significantly increased. In 2022/23 the good level of development for Leicestershire was 69.1%, which is above both the national and East Midlands average. 70.9% achieve the expected Early Learning Goal for communication and language and literacy.
16. The work being undertaken through Family Hubs sits within Supporting Children and Families to be Resilient - Early Help priority of the current Children and Families Partnership Plan. This work aligns to the First 1001 Critical Days, School Readiness and Preparing for Life sub-themes of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategic Delivery Plan.
17. Family Hubs are a national programme of the Department for Education. Leicestershire was one of twelve local authorities to be successful in applying for Transformation Funding, a time limited grant funded programme (due to end September 2024) to support the transformation of partnerships and service delivery. Family Hubs are 'one-stop shops' for all families 0-19 (or to 25 for young people with SEND), providing access to information, advice, resources, and support.
18. Family Hubs are very much about partnership arrangements and, working across the Early Help System to ensure that as far as possible there are integrated services being delivered in local communities. This could include co-location, delivering services from Family Hubs, or working together as a Team around the Family or Community. In the county this is being developed through:
 - Buildings based activity. Re-branding and launch of 20 Children and Family Wellbeing Centres as Family Hubs, places where all families can go for help. Additionally, working closely with county libraries (including providing training to Library staff) to create 'Hubs in Libraries' offering access to information and advice through a Family Hubs partnership website.
 - Development of a website for Parents and Carers, Young People, Professionals, and Volunteers. As well as having appropriate and useful content, linking to relevant partner sites, the website will focus on self-help resources on key topics such as parenting and behaviour, health and wellbeing. Resources will also be available to support workforce development and induction, for example, developing brief videos which help to explain the multitude of different roles and organisations providing services to children and families.
 - Community Engagement. This includes work to engage with families in more rural areas who may lack access to buildings and who may also be experiencing digital poverty. Connections have been made with a wide range of partners who

may be able to support taking information out to communities, for example through the mobile library service, Rural Community Council, etc.

19. Other targeted engagement has included:

- Maternity Champions Project. A time-limited project was commissioned in Charnwood to help understand local barriers to services which were contributing to late bookings particularly amongst Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic communities. Centre for Fun and Families was commissioned to explore barriers and issues and work with the Children and Family Wellbeing Service to identify, train and support 'Maternity Champions' – individuals from local communities who can promote the importance of maternity and early years services and enable services to understand barriers to women accessing services.
- Work with Gypsy and Traveller communities through Leicestershire Gypsy and Traveller Equalities organisation. It has been identified that a growing number of young women, some who are also young parents, are living separately from their communities and require additional support to access services. It is also well known that Gypsy and Traveller families are unlikely to access maternity, early years, or other universal health services. By working with women from those communities we will develop a greater understanding of barriers, solutions, and improved ways of working.

Future Developments

20. Work on the 1001 Critical Days, School Readiness and Family Hubs priorities will continue as part of the refreshed Children and Families Partnership Plan for 2024-26. Activity to be undertaken over the next year will include:

- Developing a Maternity and Early Years Strategy and action plan for Leicestershire. The aims of the strategy and action plan include developing consistent and shared messages across all the providers working in the 0-5 arena, developing shared data systems so that as a partnership we can take collective responsibility for the delivery of high-quality services and work together to target areas or populations with the highest needs and meaningful engagement with Leicestershire communities to support our collective response to commissioning and quality assurance.
- Expansion of childcare - In the Spring Budget 2023, the Chancellor announced the expansion of childcare and by September 2025, most working families with children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support. Leicestershire has seen a significant loss of childcare places due to the pandemic, cost of living crisis and retention and recruitment issues within the sector. The Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service are working with providers to look at willingness and capacity within the sector to offer increased places.
- The Early Help Partnership is currently developing a new Early Help Strategy and action plan for Leicestershire aimed at providing a partnership approach to

the delivery early help and Family Hubs. In November the Early Help Partnership will be attending a workshop to develop a Theory of Change for Family Hubs. This event will be facilitated by Coram, the evaluation partner for Leicestershire's Family Hubs programme. The workshop will provide an opportunity for both strategic leads and practitioners to work on their shared vision for integrated working and transforming how we collectively deliver the Early Help System.

- Launch of the Family Hubs Website, currently scheduled for December 2023/January 2024.

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Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality Implications

1. The Partnership Plan seeks to ensure that effective arrangements are in place so that services meet the identified needs of local people, and to deliver actions that have a positive impact on outcomes for children and families. An EHIRA screening has been carried out in relation to the impacts of the Plan and no equality, diversity or human rights impacts were identified. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.