

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	09 December 2024
Title of Report:	Family Hubs Contract Award
Lead Member:	Councillor Mary Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care)
Lead Strategic Director:	Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director Adults, Health and Communities)
Author:	Emma Crowther, Service Director, Integrated Commissioning
Contact Email:	Emma.crowther@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	FHCA
Key Decision:	Yes
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the work of the network of Family Hubs in Plymouth, with a view to awarding new contracts for a limited period from 1st April 2025. Plymouth is successfully transforming the city's Children's Centres (supporting families with children aged 0-5) into Family Hubs, offering support for families with children from pre-birth to 19 or up to the age 25 for young people with SEND.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that:

1. Three new Family Hub contracts are awarded to Action for Children, Barnardo's and Lark for a period of 2 years from 1st April 2025, with the option to extend by a further year, until 31st March 2028. These will replace the current Emerging Family Hub contracts. The total contract value for 2025/26 is confirmed as £2,443,693 and indicative contract value for 2026/27 is confirmed as £2,199,323.75.

This is to enable time for the city's plan for the development of early help and preventative services in the city to be developed and embedded, which will in turn determine the future delivery model for Family Hubs from 2027/28. It will also enable closer scrutiny of the use of buildings and joint working across Council services and partners. The Family Hubs would form a key part of developing the vision for the delivery of our preventative and early help services for the future in Plymouth.

In the October budget the Start for Life grant funding received for the last 3 years has been announced to continue for local authorities currently in receipt of funding for one year from April 2025 to March 2026. The exact amount of grant funding is yet to be confirmed. Any further grant settlement beyond 2026 will not be known until after spending review in Spring 2025.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Re-procuring new contracts through a full procurement process.

This has been rejected for the following reasons:

- The next 2 years will be a period of significant change in the local Early Help system – until this period of redesigning and trialling new approaches has concluded it is very difficult to design and procure a new service fit for the future needs of the city. The future funding envelope for the service is also not clear and this would impact the success of any procurement at this stage.
- The current providers have been in place since 2014, operating as Children’s Centres and Emerging Family Hubs, with providers well embedded in the city and known and trusted by families and professionals; this will provide stability during a period of change
- The current providers have been instrumental in the design of grant funding bids and provide expertise in delivery of services for expectant parents and parents of children aged 0-2 which will be a key focus of grant funded delivery if the Start for Life funding is extended.
- This will allow for the Family Hubs to open and embed as part of the new Early Help TOM and in line with grant funding requirements and outcome measures, while longer term partnership, commissioning and contractual arrangements for Early Help are developed.

Ceasing the contracts and service delivery was rejected for the following reasons:

- There would be no community based early help and support offer for families in Plymouth through our remaining registered Children’s Centres or 10 Family Hubs sites which would be likely to have a detrimental effect on outcomes for families and lead to increased demand for more intensive forms of support.
- There would potentially be DfE capital grant clawback costs on the former Sure Start Children’s Centres that may outweigh any benefits in ceasing to use buildings

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

- The Corporate Plan to ‘keep children, adults and communities safe’; and
- The Plymouth Plan 2014-2034 ‘to create the conditions where children, young people and families can thrive, assisting them to build resilience through the early development of good physical and emotional health and by equipping young people and parents with the skills to improve their wellbeing’.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The revenue budget for the Family Hubs is held in Strategic Commissioning, and the proposed core contract values for 2025/26 are built into the financial forecasting.

In addition for 2024/25 Start for Life grant funding of £1,190,175 including £72,547 for capital projects was received but it is not anticipated that the capital funding will be available for 2025/26. The revenue funding is linked to the Family Hubs and specifically supporting the first 1001 days of a child’s life. This funding is to be extended from 1st April 2025 for a year, and we are awaiting confirmation of the amount of the grant.

Financial Risks

The core revenue budget for the Children’s Centres/Emerging Family Hubs/Family Hubs has been reduced over several years in line with the Council’s available budget. The three providers have worked flexibly and creatively with the Council to adjust to this, with a focus on maintaining service delivery.

Start for Life grant funding has enabled additional services to be delivered to support children in their earliest years. The autumn budget confirmed that grant funding will be paid for a further year from April 2025, but at this point the amount of funding has not been confirmed.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The Family Hubs aim to provide the option for support for Plymouth families in a location that is close to their networks, whether linked to where they live or their child's school. It is intended to reduce the need for families to travel significant distances to be supported. The Family Hubs contribute to the Net Zero Action Plan for the Council.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The Family Hubs enable support to be offered to a broad range of families, including services for children and young people with protected characteristics. The Hubs aim to understand the holistic needs of families, including the impact of child poverty on their emotional and economic wellbeing.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Family Hubs Contract Award							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment							
C	Climate Impact Assessment							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Early Help Case for Change							

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Emma Crowther, Service Director Integrated Commissioning

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 26/11/2024

Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Mary Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) approved verbally

Date approved: 29/11/2024