

# FAMILY HUBS CONTRACT AWARD

Strategic Commissioning



## I. PURPOSE

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 those with SEND aged 25.

The Family Hubs offer a range of support from a universal offer to extra/early help and safeguarding and SEND support for families. This is creating a growing network of agencies who are building together an integrated offer locally for families. This is in turn building on the proud history of Sure Start Children's Centres in Plymouth.



The Family Hubs are currently delivered by three commissioned providers: Barnardo's, Lark and Action for Children, and delivered from 12 buildings (9 Family Hubs and 3 Children's Centres). Three are co-located with Wellbeing Hubs. There are no performance issues with the current providers which would preclude the award of new contracts.

## 2. PROGRESS TO DATE



Plymouth's Children's Centres were originally contracted to be delivered by the current providers in 2014.

In March 2021 the decision was taken at Plymouth City Council's Cabinet to award a no-cost collaborative contract (Early Help Innovative Partnership), as a means of transforming the Early Help and Targeted Support offer to children and families in Plymouth. One element of this work was to begin the process of creating Family Hubs across the city, taking the next step in adapting from the Children's

Centre model to a broader age group. The plans drew on feedback from young people, families and practitioners who highlighted that early support was difficult to navigate, was not adaptable to their needs and was not easy to access locally, early and easily, particularly when families faced multiple challenges.

The contract to lead this work was awarded to a local partnership made up of the following local community and voluntary organisations and work progressed to think about our shared ambition for Early Help:

- Livewell Southwest
- Harbour
- Action for Children
- Lark
- Hamoaze House

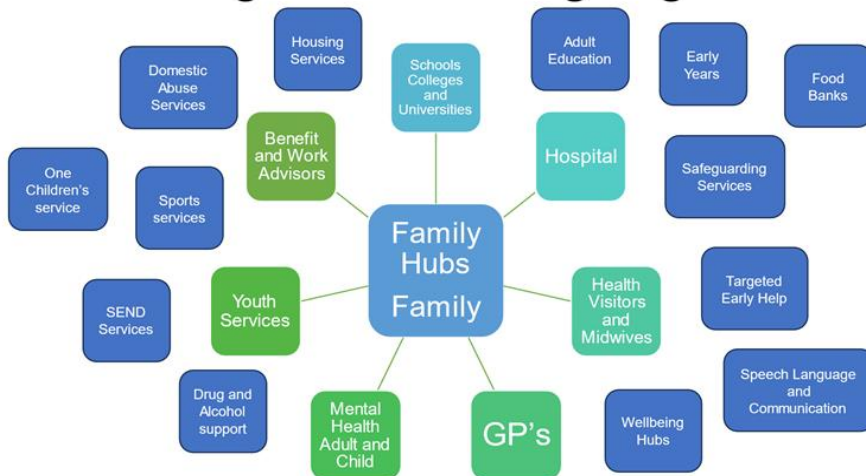
In 2022 Plymouth was successful in being one of the 75 local authority areas in England to receive a share of the Government’s Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme funding for 2022 – 2025. The programme focused on the first 1001 days of a child’s life and measures including parenting support, the home learning environment and infant feeding.

In February 2023 Cabinet agreed a 2-year award of a new Emerging Family Hubs contract to Action for Children, Barnardo’s and Lark, to formalise the conversion process from Children’s Centres to Family Hubs. The service specification was revised to focus on the emerging Family Hubs model, and to also make best use of the Start for Life grant funding, which Plymouth received to support the first 1001 days of a child’s life.

9 Family Hubs are now open, with one more to follow in early 2025, with the network of associated support coalescing around the Hubs:

OFFICIAL:SENSITIVE

## Networks established Working and building together



Please see Appendix I for information on the work carried out by the Family Hubs over the last year.

The current Emerging Family Hubs contracts expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The current services offer a wide range of support underpinned by intervening as early as possible through open, universal services (such as midwifery, health visiting etc) accessible via Family Hubs buildings and other community locations including schools and teams within the Council Targeted Support Service:

- A virtual offer is in development for parents and practitioners (e.g. Solihull Parenting Programme);
- Single Point of Access (no wrong door) approach, to build trusted relationships with families through meaningful engagement, so that families disclose early when they need help;
- Focused effort on engaging fathers/male carers (seeing good levels of engagement in dad & toddler groups);
- Tell My Story Once approach to assessment;
- Support open to pregnant families and those with children & young people 0-19; adults without children in their care can access support via Wellbeing Hubs (some of which are co-located with Family Hubs);
- Peer supporters – developing this approach, through which parents encourage other parents to engage with the offer;
- Working with Community Builders to maximise engagement with the offer (dedicated Family Hubs Community Builder funded until the end of March 2025);
- Safe Families –support includes host families who can provide overnight care for children where this support isn't available within the parent(s)' own network;

### 3. PROPOSAL

The award of new contracts will enable the development of the Plymouth Early Help model to progress, which will in turn inform the most appropriate future delivery model and scale for the Family Hubs. Future options may include:

- Recommissioning the service via a contractual route – fee for service or outcomes-based funding
- Commissioning the service to an alternative delivery model – for example a CiC
- Bringing the service back into local authority-led delivery

A 2-year extension with the option for a further year would allow time for any procurement or transfer process to take place. As part of the contract award process, the service specification will be reviewed to refresh expectations as we move from Emerging to full Family Hubs. This will include a refresh of the performance indicators, to help inform a central Early Help data set. This will include:

1. **Referral Rate:** The number of referrals received per month/quarter.
2. **Referral Source:** Breakdown of referrals by source (e.g., schools, healthcare providers, social services).
3. **Initial Response Time:** Time taken to respond to a referral.
4. **Engagement Rate:** Percentage of referred families who engage with Early Help services.
5. **Service Access Equity:** Analysis of access to services across different demographics to identify and address disparities.
6. **Impact on School Attendance:** Changes in school attendance rates among children receiving Early Help.
7. **Parental Satisfaction:** Survey results reflecting parent/carer satisfaction with the services received.
8. **Child Development Metrics:** Improvements in key child development indicators, such as speech, language, and communication.

9. **Re-referral Rate:** Percentage of families who are re-referred to Early Help services within a year, indicating recurring or unresolved issues.
10. **Outcomes Tracking:** Monitoring the outcomes of Early Help interventions, such as improvements in children's academic performance, behavioural changes, and family stability.
11. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Analysis of the cost-effectiveness of different Early Help interventions.

The new specification will include the requirement for a range of ways of seeking the voices of those with Lived Experience. These should include:

- **Regular Surveys:** Conducting regular surveys/appreciative enquiry with families who have used Early Help services to gather feedback on their experiences and suggestions for improvement.
- **Focus Groups:** Organizing focus groups with parents, carers, and children to discuss their needs and experiences in more depth including the parent and carer start for life panel, Maternity Voices, Parent Carer Voice – SEND.
- **Feedback Forms:** Providing easy-to-use feedback forms at Family Hubs and other service points.
- **Online Portals:** Utilizing online platforms for families to provide feedback and rate their satisfaction with services.
- **Community Consultations:** Engaging with community leaders and organisations to understand broader community needs and perspectives on Early Help services.

The collected data and intelligence should be used to:

- **Identify Trends:** Analyse data to identify trends and emerging issues that require attention communities of need and geographical need.
- **Inform Policy:** Use data insights to inform policy decisions and strategic planning for Early Help services and commissioning of work.
- **Improve Services:** Continuously improve service delivery based on feedback and performance data.
- **Allocate Resources:** Ensure resources are refocussed/allocated efficiently to areas of greatest need and impact.
- **Demonstrate Impact:** Provide evidence of the positive impact of Early Help services to stakeholders and funders.

#### 4. INTERDEPENDENCIES

The award of new contracts will run alongside the development of the Plymouth Early Help model for the city:

*Early help is to ensure that every child and their family can access and receive timely, effective support from trusted sources. We aim to build supportive trusted relationships around families and communities, addressing diversity and equity to provide equal life chances for all children.*

The Delivery of Early Help is part of the One Children's Service Programme, and it aims to, in collaboration with all key city partners, build on the existing Early Help offer and delivery of Family Hubs to embed a network of services, processes and interactions that are able to understand, predict the need and respond together to help children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity.

**Plymouth's Vision for Early Help**

Plymouth's vision for early help is to ensure that every child and their family can access and receive timely, effective support from trusted sources. We aim to build supportive trusted relationships around families and communities, addressing diversity and equity to provide equal life chances for all children. We will do this by building any future change using the agreed strategic pillars:

**Universal and Specialist Services Integration**

- Leverage both universal services (education, health) and specialist services (parenting support, mental health, etc.) to create a cohesive support network.
- Ensure that children and families can easily transition between universal and specialist services as needed.

**No Wrong Door Approach**

- Develop a system where families can access support through multiple entry points.
- Ensure all services are welcoming, respectful, and encourage families to seek help without hesitation.

**Building Support through Multi-Agency Collaboration**

- Review the assessment tools used with families and create a Team around the Family approach to coordinate services.
- Enhance collaboration among local agencies, including health, education, housing, and employment services.

**Family Hubs Network**

- Utilise the Family Hub Network to provide comprehensive support from pre-birth to 25 years (for those with SEND).
- Co-locate multi-agency teams, including midwives, health visitors, early years settings, schools, and other relevant services.

**Trauma-Informed Practices**

- Embed trauma-informed approaches across all children's and adult services.
- Use trauma-informed lenses to understand and address the complexities of children's and families' lived experiences.

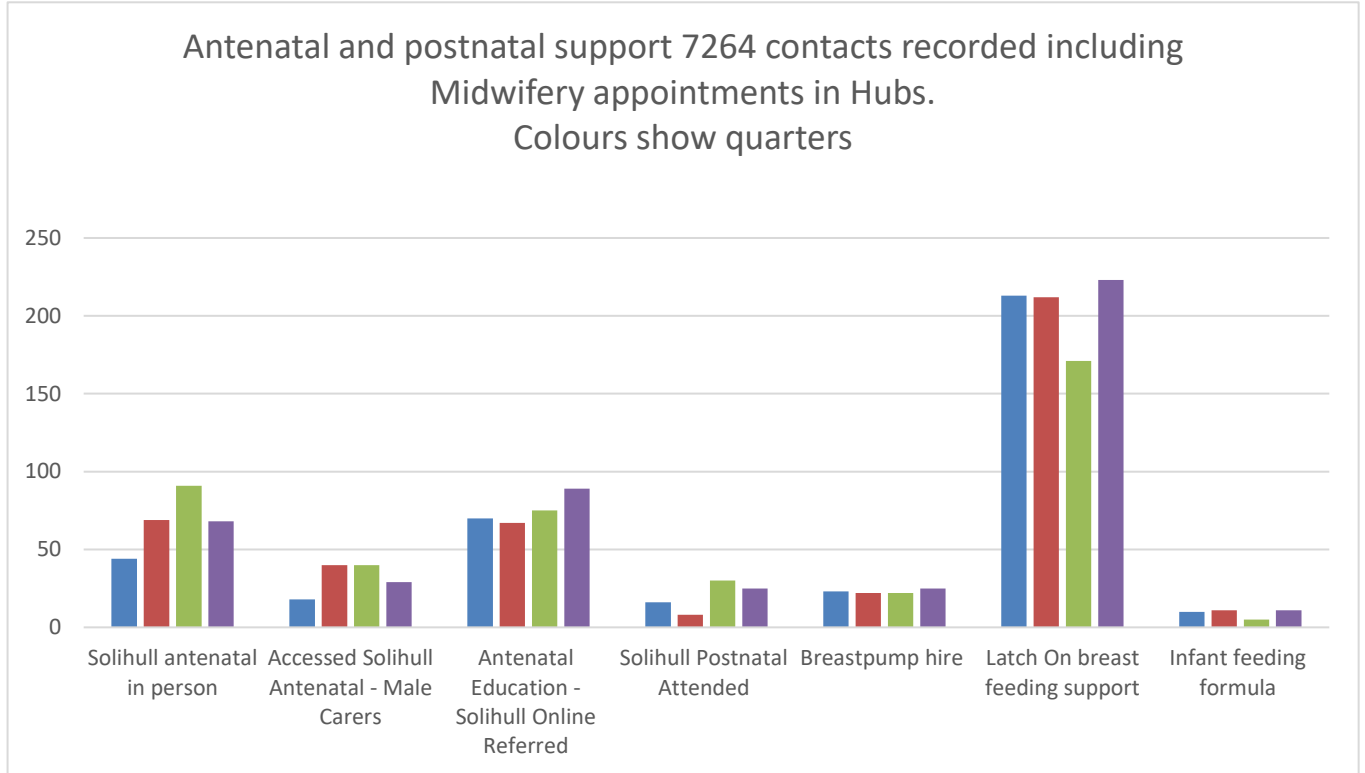
**Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)**

- Focus on local assets and strengths to foster sustainable community development.
- Promote the involvement of community members in developing solutions and support systems.

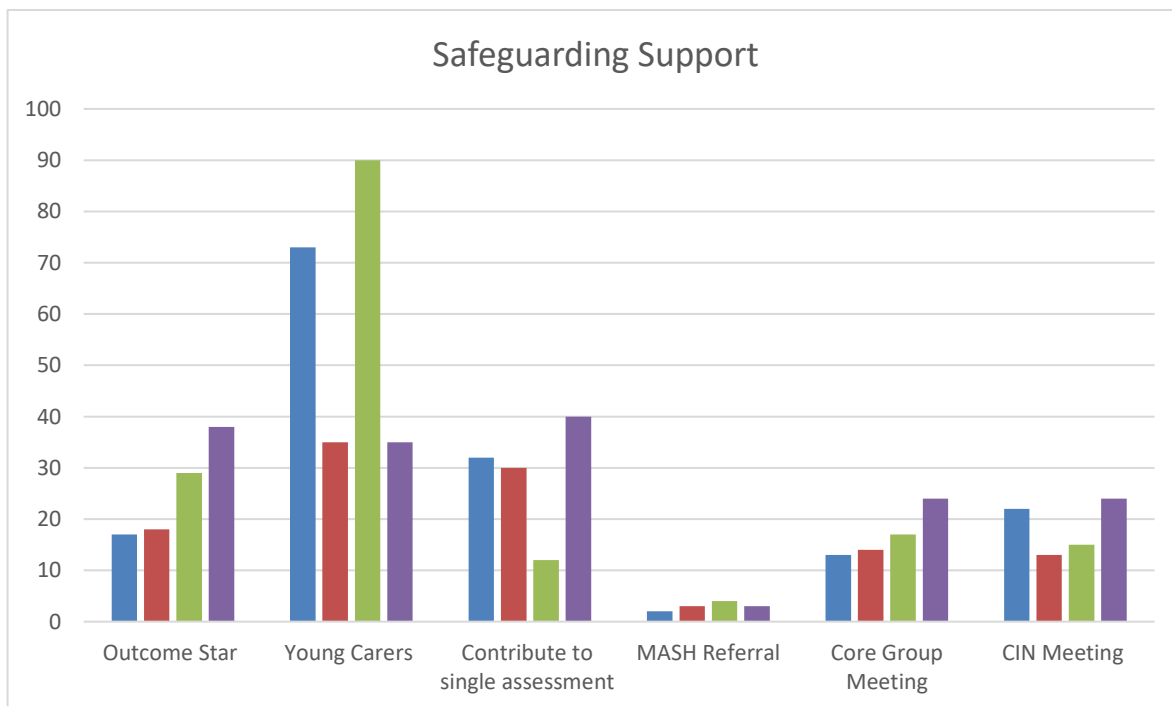
Our aim is to create a city-wide system of early help, that will improve prevention and provide self-help support options for families, children and young people from pre-birth to 19 and up to 25 years for young people with SEND.

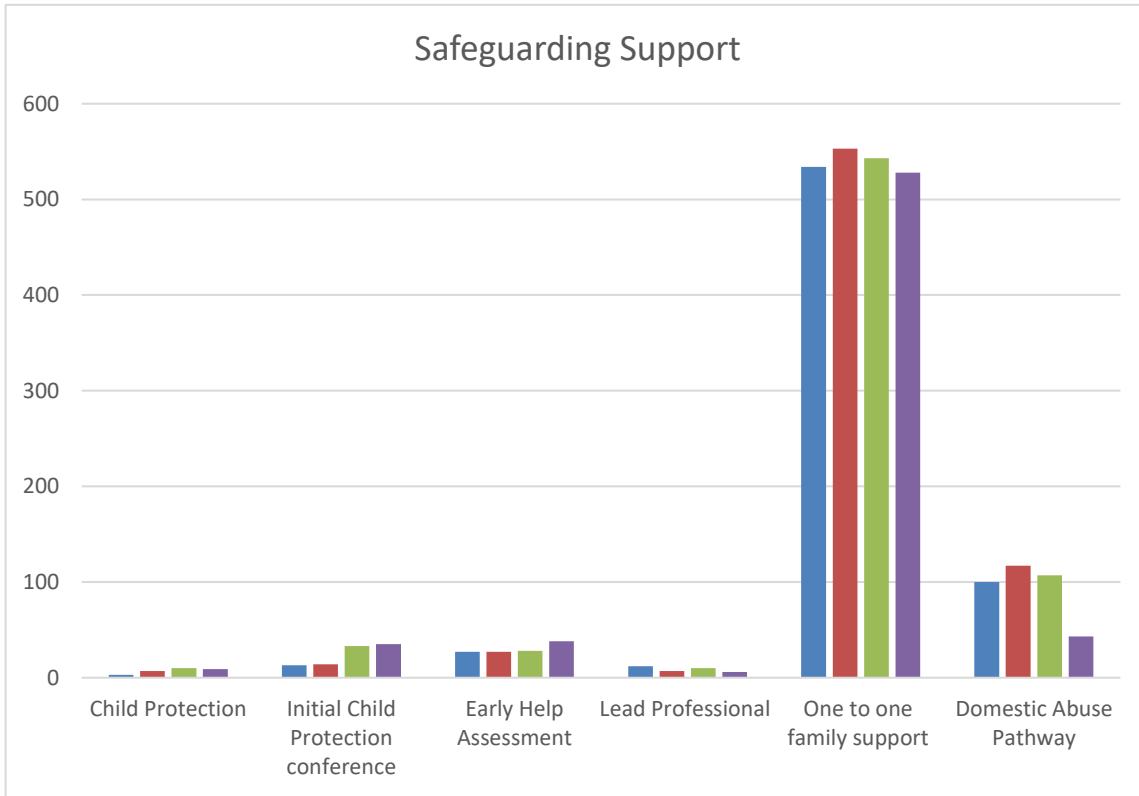
**APPENDIX I – WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE FAMILY HUBS OVER THE LAST YEAR**

The Family Hubs have had 29,546 contacts/activities with families over the last year, from initial contact and signposting to group work and 1:1 support.

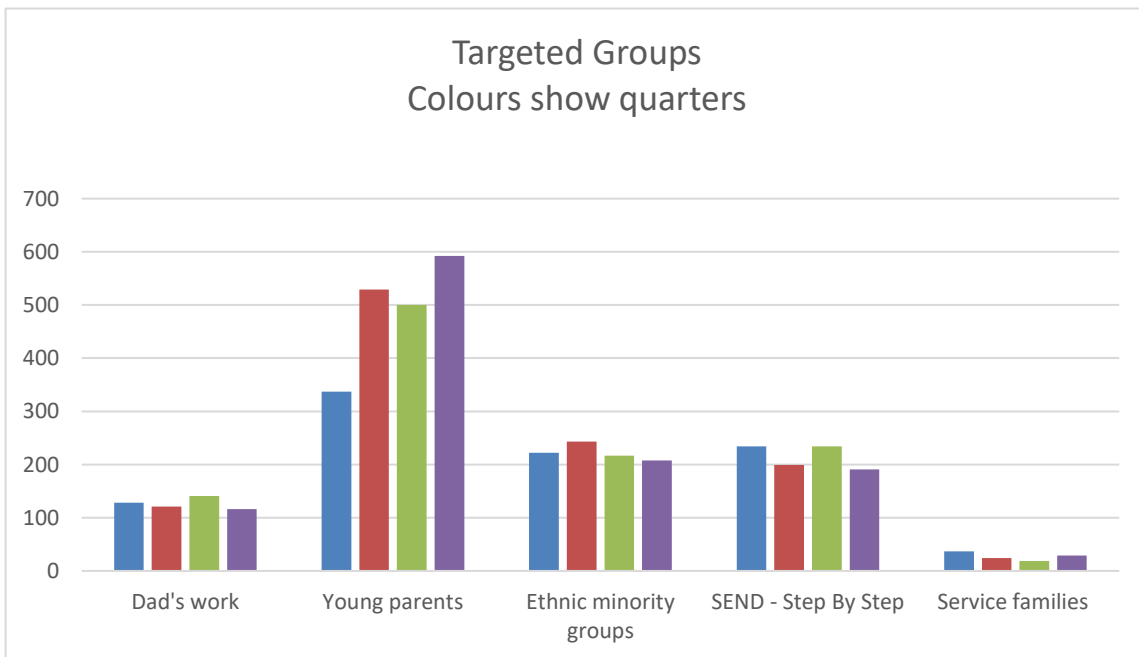


The Hubs work with Children’s Social Care as part of the broader system of safeguarding families, from tracking individual outcomes to being part of the holistic assessment of need:





The service is having steady success in working with fathers, and growing success in working alongside young parents:



As part of the Hub offer, services such as the DWP attend the Hubs regularly, to offer advice and support related to income. This is alongside the support from Hub staff related to economic wellbeing:

