

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services

DECISION NO:

23/000/82

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); and*
- b) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
 - *the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;*
 - *significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Family Hub Early Language and Home Learning Environment (HLE) – Expenditure

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services, I agree to:

A) Approve the service development and activity increases for Early Language and Home Learning Environment, as part of ongoing development and improvement work, making use of Family Hub Grant funding where this aligns to KCC’s existing Start for Life commitments.

2). APPROVE the required expenditure to deliver this activity via Family Hub Grant funding up to £1,325,435 for the period ending April 2025.

3). Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services and the Director of Public Health, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to allocating resources, expenditure, entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

1.1 Following the September 2020 review by Dame Andrea Leadsom MP focussing on improving outcomes for babies and the first 1,001 days of a child’s life the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) developed a framework to support successful and ambitious local authorities to work with health partners to develop a Start for Life concept and Family Hub model.

1.2 The Family Hub model is committed to delivering high quality services for babies, children, young people (0-19 years and 0-25 years for children and young people with a disability) and their families by ensuring an extensive range of partner and community services working

collaboratively to deliver the best outcomes in person, virtually or through outreach.

- 1.3 KCC has met the initial deadlines set by the DfE, through preliminary activity by the Family Hub programme team and wider partners.
- 1.4 Our new Early Language and Home Learning Environment initiative complements our existing services. The new strategy that will be progressed using funding approved by this decision will ensure effective use of funding to target the needs of families with a focus on 3 - 4year olds, as outlined by the DfE, using evidence-based programmes to offer a uniform effective approach across the service.
- 1.5 The additional activity will involve increased staff costs and the purchasing of training materials and guidance based on Family Hub model requirements and best practice. The costs also include the development of our digital offer, which will utilise iPads in Hubs, Early Years settings and childminders to support and enable parents to access e-learning safely with advice and guidance at home to aid school readiness.
- 1.6 As part of the ongoing Family Hub programme a consultation to ascertain what support and services our children and families would want in their communities commenced on 19 July 2023 and, this is due to close on 13 September 2023.
- 1.7 The Department for Education sets out minimum expectations for the core services within the Family Hubs, these include:
 - 1.7.1 Parent-infant relationships and perinatal mental health support
 - 1.7.2 Infant feeding support
 - 1.7.3 Parenting Support
 - 1.7.4 Support with early language development and the home learning environment
 - 1.7.5 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
 - 1.7.6 Safeguarding
- 1.8 These core services are not subject to the outcome of the current consultation therefore it is appropriate to progress with this Key Decision to enable the delivery of improvements that both align with the Family Hub requirements set out by DfE and support Kent's existing service priorities and Strategies.

2. Sustainability

- 2.1 The funding allocated for Early Language and the Home Learning Environment (HLE) workstreams is for transformational activity. Therefore, it is essential that work undertaken enables investment into services and is sustainable.
- 2.2 At the core of all our Early Language and HLE activity is the positive impact that this innovative work will have on the families of Kent. We strive to make the services we offer accessible and consistent across the borough.
- 2.3 We will recruit and train practitioners to support parents with the HLE, which will support educational recovery and improve school readiness, to ensure a collaborative approach with existing Open Access Early Years workers and maintain a pathway of support for babies and children.
- 2.4 The activity, which is planned against these workstreams will ensure sustainability, by providing dedicated expert teams who will then train and develop the existing partnership workforce to ensure consistent and future delivery of best practice to achieve positive outcomes beyond the lifetime of the Family Hub transformation funding.

3. Financial Implications

Programme Strand	Year 1 Grant	Year 1 Actuals	Roll forward from yr. 1 into yr. 2	Year 2 Grant	Year 3 Grant	TOTAL Grant
	2022-23	2022-23	2023-24	2023-24	2024-25	
Early Language and Home Learning Environment	£554,442	£73,860	£480,582	£529,793	£241,200	£1,325,435

- 3.1 Projected spend for Early Language and Home Learning Environment is outlined above.
- 3.2 Funding for the financial year 24/25 is not yet confirmed and will be dependent on successful planning and delivery in the current financial year.
- 3.3 A total of £480,582 for Early Language and the Home Learning Environment has been agreed to be carried over into financial year 2023/24

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 The Council entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the DfE in October 2022 which creates obligations to meet specific deadlines and timescales set by them or risk losing further funding or funding claw back.
- 4.2 Access to the associated funding of up to £11m, depending on the type and level of transformation activity eventually progressed, is conditional on compliance with the terms of the MoU and demonstration of progress toward an effective Family Hub Model.

5. Equalities implications

- 5.1 Initial assessment and attached Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has identified minimal negative implications. Funding for these workstreams will enable transformation activity to enhance, improve and add to existing provision.
- 5.2 An EqIA in relation to this key decision is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.
- 5.3 Further EqIAs will need to be developed as part of future decision making in relation to individual aspects of Family Hub delivery once developed.

6. Governance

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member decision provides the required authority to allocate and spend Family Hub Grant funding on specific workstreams within the mandated Family Hub plan set out by DfE. The decision build upon the previous 'in principle agreement' to Family Hub development decision-making and allows for the implementation of service improvement in the relevant area.
- 6.2 Detailed service development and spend activity to progress the Early Language and the Home Learning Environment work is delegated in accordance with the Executive Scheme of Delegation.

6.3 This service specific decision is without prejudice to the wider Family Hubs consultation on the discretionary aspects of the Family Hub programme, which will inform the overall model when the relevant decisions are taken. These Future decisions on the model will influence how this specific service fits within the Family Hub system.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee consider the decision on.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

KCC has received significantly more funding for the development and transformation of family services within the Start for Life and Family Hub model, than any other part of the country. The sheer scale of the transformation and ambition of the authority provide an exciting opportunity to improve the wellbeing of future generations, from birth through adolescence to adulthood.

To keep the development of the Family Hub model in KCC on track we need to progress key workstreams and expenditure of carried over monies and planned year two expenditure. An important part of this is the expenditure outlined in Early language and the Home Learning Environment. This is necessary to meet delivery targets and access ongoing funding as part of this programme.

Agreement of this Key Decision will enable this to happen and to deliver improved and enhanced services for children, young people and families across the county in line with the outcomes set out in the DfE guidelines.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date