

**From:** Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education  
Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health

**To:** Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

**Subject:** 24/00124 – Family Hubs Year 4 Grant Award

**Key decision**

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*
- *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m – including if over several phases*

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee 16 January 2025

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** Within the Autumn Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further year of funding for existing Family Hub authorities. A series of Key Decisions by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services accepted the original transformation grant funding for Family Hubs and adopted our new Family Hub service model.

The existing Key Decisions do not extend beyond the initial transformation period which end on 31 March 2025. Therefore, a new Key Decision is required to accept the additional year of Grant funding and to utilise that funding in line with the service model adopted under the Family Hub Model Key Decision.

This decision is for the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services but is reported to the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee as well, given the implications for Public Health funding.

The updated delivery requirements and conditions have been reviewed and are considered to be deliverable, in the context of grant money and timeframes.

**Recommendations:** As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I agree to:

(a) **APPROVE**, the acceptance of the Year 4 Family Hub Grant Award and the deployment of the grant funding in accordance with the grant conditions and the adopted service model;

(b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to agree the terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant agreements;

(c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health to deliver the requirements of the grant;

(d) **DELEGATE** authority of required expenditure to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to be managed in line with Council procurement rules;

(e) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In October 2022 the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services took [decision 22/00094](#) and Kent County Council (KCC) signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department for Education (DfE) which accepted the initial 3-year transformation grant funding. This decision set out the requirement for the development of detailed proposals, public consultation and appropriate governance ahead of a further Key Decision on the Family Hub model.
- 1.2 In November 2023, after the development of detailed proposals, public consultation and appropriate governance, KCC Cabinet took [decision 23/00092](#) to implement the Family Hub model across the county.
- 1.3 Alongside the Decisions in October 2022 and November 2023, two additional decisions were taken relating to the Start for Life expenditure for Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationships ([decision 23/00075](#)) and for Infant Feeding ([decision 23/00076](#)).
- 1.4 Contained within the 2024 Autumn Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer included an additional £69m for a further year of funding for existing 75 Family Hub authorities across the country. In December 2024, DfE confirmed that KCC

will be awarded £4,099,400 to continue the Family Hub transformation from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

- 1.5 DfE have now provided full details of the requirements for Year 4 including a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

## 2. Family Hub Grant Funding

- 2.1 March 2025 marks the end of the initial Transformation period which has seen the Council adopt a policy position that moved from our previous Open Access model, to the Family Hub model.

- 2.2 The Government's commitment to the Family Hub model has been reconfirmed by the announcement of a further year of funding for Family Hub authorities.

- 2.3 DfE have confirmed that the grant money for Year 4 will be split across the same strands of activity as previously dictated.:

- **Programme:** (14.7%) Funding for transformational activities linked to the three Key Criteria (Access, Connection, Relationships)
- **Capital:** (6.5%) Funding for adapting existing buildings, improving accessibility and enabling multi-agency working.
- **Perinatal Mental Health & Parent Infant Relationships:** (30.6%) For parents and carers with mild-to-moderate mental health needs or who would benefit from universal parent-infant relationship support.
- **Parenting Support:** (20.9%) Funding must be invested in services for families with babies aged 0-2 and must promote bonding and attachment. This includes evidence-based parenting programmes, peer support and community outreach.
- **Infant Feeding:** (12.5%) to promote breastfeeding and support parents to meet their infant feeding goals
- **Home Learning Environment (HLE):** (14%) to implement targeted, evidence-based interventions that train practitioners to support parents with the HLE and early language
- **Publishing the Start for Life Offer and Parent Carer Panels (PCP):** (0.8%) Funding to promote the offer in a variety of ways; PCPs to allow families to share their views and experience on the design and delivery of Family Hubs and Start for Life services.

- 2.4 The updated delivery requirements have been reviewed and the Family Hub and Start for Life programme's objectives remain broadly the same for Year 4, with some additions and amendments, as set out in 2.5 and 2.6. It is expected that local authorities are already delivering services set out in the initial phase of the programme and Year 4 funding allows the opportunity to consolidate, embed and enhance the Family Hub network and start for life services offer.

Local authorities are being encouraged to focus on the 'Go Further' options and to be ambitious in developing innovative approaches to enhance the offer and ensure it is reaching all families, particularly those most in need of services. The updated Delivery Expectations can be found here: [Delivery Expectations for Funded Strands 2025-26](#)

2.5 While minimum expectations and 'go further' options remain broadly the same, DfE have made the following small amendments to the funded services:

- **Early Language and Home Learning Environment (HLE):** Updated to reflect that funding is no longer related to COVID-recovery. The age range has been extended from 3-4 years to 2-4 years for more flexibility. Added peer support and community outreach as activities.
- **Parenting:** Clarified that support should focus on bonding and attachment for 0-2 year-olds.
- **Infant Feeding:** Amended guidance to allow parents to keep an open mind about breastfeeding until after birth. Parents should discuss feeding options, benefits of breastfeeding, challenges, and available support.
- **Perinatal Mental Health and Parent-Infant Relationships:** Added details on developing a local multidisciplinary strategy.

2.6 Guidance on the Family Hub model framework can be found here: [Family Hubs Model Framework](#). The framework has been updated as follows:

- Information about strengthening digital and data maturity in Family Hubs and integrating family hubs with wider family support programmes.
- A new reference to the "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance
- An update to the expectations under 1.2 single access point to refer to a "single or multi-agency front door".
- A new minimum expectation on data sharing requiring the local area to have considered data standards to improve interoperability and data sharing
- Information about how Family Hubs can be integrated with services such as Family Help.

2.7 The option to not accept the grant money has been considered. Given that the requirements are deliverable and align with the established Family Hub programme already operating in Kent and given the financial challenges the Council currently faces, it is not considered appropriate to decline the further funding from the DfE.

### 3. Governance

- 3.1 Acceptance of the Year 4 grant money is an executive decision of the Cabinet Member for Integrated Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Public Health, building on previous Family Hub decisions and recognising the clear connections between Children's Services and the Public Health activities delivered to communities across Kent via Family Hubs.
- 3.2 The terms and conditions have been reviewed and are considered to be deliverable within the context of the grant funding. The final decision to accept the grant money is being taken by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health.
- 3.3 The decision includes approving relevant delegations to Directors of Public Health and Children's Services to deploy the funding in support of the already approved Family Hub model. This delegation will include spend approval and operational direction to ensure appropriate delivery of the relevant services. Where substantive service change or significant commissioning activity is required, further Key Decisions may be required, subject to review of the details.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The DfE have confirmed that KCC will be awarded £4,099,400 to continue the Family Hub transformation from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The grant allocation for each Programme Strand has been set out in 2.4. The delivery requirements and conditions have been reviewed and are considered to be deliverable and in line with the prior Family Hub approach.
- 4.2 The funding will be used to ensure the sustainable and consistent delivery of the adopted Family Hub model across Kent. It is not expected to impact the pressure on existing revenue or capital budgets.
- 4.3 Full Council considered the Commissioned Family Hubs decision on 13 March 2025. Comments were made in relation to the use of Year 4 DfE grant money and a recommendation made that the Cabinet Member should explore the option of directly funding Seashells and Millmead from the Year 4 Family Hub grant money to deliver Family Hub services from their own resources.
- 4.4 The CYPE Cabinet Committee endorsed the proposals to accept the Year 4 grant, subject to review delegated to the Director for Integrated Children's Services. The ROD has been amended to facilitate the exploration by the Cabinet Member to utilise Year 4 money to fund core Family Hub Services, in line with our adopted service model and the provisions set out in the Memorandum of Understanding issued by the DfE, directly at Seashells and Millmead for the 2025/26 financial year only.

#### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 KCC has a statutory duty to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of Family Hubs to meet local need. KCC will continue to fulfil its duty to provide sufficient family hubs to meet need across Kent.
- 5.2 Acceptance of the grant money does mean that KCC is obligated to comply with the delivery requirements, terms and conditions that accompany the funding, as set out above.
- 5.3 The implementation of the Family Hub Programme is in line with the DfE Family Hub National Programme Guidance, available [Family Hubs and Start for Life programme: local authority guide 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#).

## **6. Equalities implications**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed for [decision 22/00094](#) which agreed to accept the initial 3-year transformation grant funding. An additional EqIA was completed for [decision 23/00092](#) which agreed to implement the Family Hub model across the county.
- 6.2 The most recent EqIA has been reviewed and updated. There are no anticipated adverse impacts that are associated with the acceptance of the year 4 grant money given the expectation that any future operations and activity will be designed to complement, develop and build on the established Family Hub arrangements.

## **7. Data protection implications**

- 7.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not expected to be required for the acceptance of the year 4 grant money. General Data Protection Regulations are part of current contract documentation and a Schedule of Processing, Personal Data and Data Subjects will be completed for any procured activity.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 Following the initial three-year funded transformation period, the DfE has confirmed a further year of Family Hub grant funding. A Key Decision is required to accept the additional year of DfE Family Hub grant funding. And to enable the spend of the grant money when the grant period begins in April 2025. Any delay to accepting the grant money, or the governance around the acceptance poses a risk to the Council's ability to spend the money.

The requirements and conditions set out by DfE have been reviewed and are considered to be deliverable in the context of the funding and associated timeframes. The requirements focus on embedding and enhancing the work completed in the first 3 years of the transformation and encourage innovation at a local level to meet local need.

- 8.2 The acceptance of the funding will involve commitments to deliver Family Hubs in line with the requirements and conditions set out by DfE. The funding will benefit the community through further transformation of the Family Hub model and Start for Life offer.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS:** As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services I agree to:

(a) **APPROVE**, the acceptance of the Year 4 Family Hub Grant Award;, and the deployment of the grant funding in accordance with the grant conditions and the adopted service model;

(b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to agree the terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant agreements;

(c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health to deliver the requirements of the grant;

(d) **DELEGATE** authority of required expenditure to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to be managed in line with Council procurement rules;

(e) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

**9. Contact details**

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