

Ealing start for life / family hubs discovery and consensus phase 2023-24

Importance of promoting early childhood development and support for families

National strategic context

'The Best Start for Life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days', was published by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) in March 2021, following the Early Years Healthy Development Review. Family hubs are at the heart of this vision for baby-centred services, designed to give every baby the best start for life.

The resulting vision sets out an ambitious programme of work to transform how families are supported. The goal is to ensure the very best support throughout these 1,001 critical days, setting babies up to maximise their potential for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing.

Local context

Support for parents to give their child the best chance to thrive, involves a strongly relational approach to promote core life skills to parents and children and reduce sources of 'chronic stress' in the lives of families, particularly by addressing the social determinants of health inequalities (poverty, employment, housing etc). Adverse childhood experiences have lifelong consequences for the child's social, emotional and physical health, educational attainment and economic productivity.

Support to develop the family hub model in Ealing

Ealing was not chosen by the DfE to receive funding to develop and transition to a start for life/ family hub model. However, in January 2023 the Ealing borough based partnership agreed to financially support a 'discovery and consensus phase'.

This was to facilitate research and consultation with key stakeholders in order to co-produce a place-based 'Start for Life/ Family hub' model of accessible and integrated early help and support for Ealing families.

An Ealing start for life/ family hubs steering group was formed to determine and oversee the development of activities. The steering group comprises of representatives from the council, health, national family hub representation, community and voluntary sector partners and parent/carer representation.

Co-production principles and practice underpins the development of the Ealing model and is embedded in governance and decision-making.

Our vision: It takes a town to raise a child

From the research undertaken in our discovery and consensus phase, we have proposed 'family hubs' strategic approach. A place-based way of joining up locally, the planning and delivery of family services. They bring services together to improve access, improve the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family support. Family hubs offer support to families from conception and two, and to those with children of all ages, which is 0-19 or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great start for life offer at their core.

This is not necessarily about one physical 'hub' but about better interconnections and relationships between existing people, places, networks and existing assets in the community, including staff and residents in the children centre network, youth clubs, general practices, schools, community centres, places of worship, etc.

What we delivered

The steering group, CYP Board and CLT group agreed and endorsed the approach and commissioning of key research in line with the proposal to the Ealing borough based partnership.

These are as follows:

- enabling Early Child Development in Ealing (ECDE) project. Research bringing a qualitative and context-sensitive lens to the lived experiences, perceptions and priorities of families with young children in Ealing 0-5, with a focus on factors and conditions which enable children's flourishing. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Conducted 13 focus groups (11 with adults and 2 with children) over 4 months, speaking to 87 residents across the 7 towns in Ealing. In addition, they spoke to several professionals involved in early years in the borough
- focus on service integration and place-based working. Isos partnership used their 'Beyond Boundaries' framework to develop a baseline for current service integration and develop a new approach towards building place-based community social infrastructures of care. 100 professionals across statutory and voluntary sector organization have participated in 9 themed workshops and 60 attended a workshop discussing the conclusions of the final report and looking at next steps for service integration
- local communities use of and access to virtual communication. Lead by Invuse and including Golden Opportunity Skills and Development (Gosad) community partners, parents and carers we seek to better understand our users including: what they need; where they struggle with the existing website and online content; key user journeys; virtual services they would use; Recommendations on virtual offer, which embeds user-centred principles and content design best practices into the way we create content so that it is based on user needs and is accessible
- 'good help' community consultation project with GOSAD and community partners, which focuses on what families would wish to see and describe as "good help" and together create a vision and values of good help-how 'good' should be experienced and operate for local communities
- development of bespoke family hubs interactive 'Earthlight' map to identify and map the organising geographies and locations of key partners planned or operating within the borough. Co-produced with partners, Ealing eGIS team and health data colleagues from NHS North West London
- participated in a national forum on the development of a common outcomes framework for children and families. Participated in new forum with links to children's commissioner child and family outcomes. Potential to incorporate in family hub model
- Established an EGfL start for life/family hubs page learning library to describe the 'discovery and consensus phase' and act as a source for all the commissioned research and other relevant research
- Learned from participation in CYP board away days, designed and facilitated by Leadership Centre, in developing a greater collective identity and alignment of vision of the CYP system in Ealing.

Next steps

The steering group has now formally closed. Ongoing work on this agenda will be managed and reported through the Early Years and Early Help Partnership Group which, in turn, reports to the Children and Young People's Board.

Contact

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