

1a. Origin of Concept

In July 2016 the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children’s Centres published a paper titled, Family Hubs: The Future of Children’s Centres-Strengthening family relationships to improve Life Chances for everyone. The focus of this report is on the role that Children’s Centres’ can potentially play as hubs for local services and family support.

In recent years, the idea of expanding Children’s Centres’ provision to provide holistic support which joins up services for the whole family is one which has received an increasing amount of attention and is now endorsed by the current government.

1b. Current 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. To achieve this, work will focus on six action areas.

Ensuring families have access to the services they need:

1	Seamless support for families	A coherent joined up Start for Life offer available to all families.
2	A welcoming hub for families	Family Hubs as a place for families to access Start for Life services and through the child’s early years and later childhood, and into early adulthood until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).
3	The information families need when they need it	Designing digital, virtual and telephone needs around the needs of the family.

Ensuring the Start for Life system is working together to give families the support they need:

4	An empowered Start for Life Workforce	Developing a modern skilled workforce to meet the changing needs of families.
5	Continually improving the Start for Life Offer	Improving data, evaluation, outcome and proportionate inspection.
6	Leadership for Change	Ensuring local and national accountability and building the economic case.

1c. Why Family Hubs?

A family hub is a **system-wide model** of providing high-quality, whole-family, joined up, family support services.

Family hubs deliver these family support services from pregnancy, through the child’s early years and later childhood, and into early adulthood until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

Family hubs aim to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children, through providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as home visits for families to easily access non-judgemental support for the challenges they may be facing.

Ealing Briefing Paper : Introduction to Start for Life Offer and Family Hub model

Family hubs use a whole family approach to provide a universal front door to family support services that is integrated across health (physical and mental health) and social care as well as voluntary and community organisations and education settings. A family hub is only possible when all these things come together.

The integration of services into a family hub model may involve changes to the structure of local service provision, and may also involve a shift in how support is offered to families.

1d. Family Hub Aims

- *To strengthen families* by providing help with the myriad challenges parents face; especially those which will hamper children's social, emotional and physical development and their educational progress.
- *To help prevent family breakdown* by:
 - Supporting families where parenting is particularly difficult, and ensuring access to early help to address problems which might otherwise escalate.
 - providing relationship support for couples at life's key pressure points and when parents find it hard to resolve conflict.
- *To support separating families* to reduce parental conflict and achieve workable parenting arrangements in the best interests of the children thereby preventing, where possible, the need to access the family courts.

1e. Family Hub Principles

Family Hubs, and the systems they are part of are characterised by these principles:

- An understanding of the importance of **Early Help and prevention**.
- Families with children aged **0-19 (and up to 25 for SEND)** have somewhere they know they can go if they need information, advice or guidance for family, relationship and other issues.
- Superb provision for **children's early years (0-5)** so their families get whatever help they need to give them the best start in life and ensure they are school-ready. Read Dr Callan's blog about [Family Hubs: Building on the Legacy of Sure Start Children's Centres](#)
- **Integrated** health and public health priorities, such as health visiting and maternity, with social services and Troubled Families programmes.
- A central **access** point to services and support, connected to all other delivery sites in the area.
- A **relational culture** embodied by everyone who works in the Hub.
- A **whole-family approach** which focuses on disadvantaged and vulnerable children.
- Parents can access **relationship support** when there is conflict, to help and rebuild an existing relationship or during and after separation
- The **voluntary sector and wider community** make an extensive and vital contribution.

The [Principles of the Family Hub model](#) document provides a concise explanation of what makes a Family Hub model.

1f. What is distinctive about Family Hubs?

Family Hubs provide a central access point for integrated services, whether this is a building named a Family Hub, a building with another title, or a virtual access point. It's important that families know where to go and get help, and that staff and volunteers are trained to respond sensitively and effectively to families' enquiries. The Family Hub model enables every region to make the most of the buildings/delivery sites they have available. Most commonly, a Family Hub is co-located with other services and signposts families to services within the same building but is equally integrated with services provided at other delivery sites (described by some as 'spokes' of the hub).

The relationships between the Family Hub, families and other delivery sites are equally important to ensure a whole family approach and, as far as possible, a seamless, integrated service. An indication that a Family Hub is working well is when a family need tell their story only once and services and people then work together to give that family the support they need.

1g. Further Information

Family Hub Network: <https://familyhubsnetwork.com>

2a. Importance of promoting early childhood development and support for families

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. This is of huge significance for the Ealing Borough Based Partnership **in addressing all the CYP priorities** – including providing children with the 'best start in life' (by promoting school readiness), promoting emotional health and wellbeing and preventing and intervening if mental health difficulties arise, and early intervention and support for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND),

An accessible integrated hub for family support will enable best access to early health interventions, including improving child immunisation, and support early identification of health needs such as child development concerns and maternal mental health issues. The strongly relational model will help to improve take up of health services, especially amongst disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore of relevance for other workstreams in the Borough Based Partnership (albeit for a longer term focus), as this [video](#) highlights, there is strong evidence that the **root causes of the major causes of morbidity in adulthood: cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression, have their roots in early childhood** due to the physiological programming that occurs as a result of chronic/toxic stress.

2b. Benefits in adopting the Family Approach Model

An opportunity to develop and implement a co-produced Family Hub model for Ealing

- We will develop a co-produced approach in developing and implementing the Start for Life/family Hub model in Ealing. This will include a cross-section of managers and practitioners from key agencies, representatives from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) parents/carers and young people in the Start for Life/ Family Hub governance, transition and delivery

More joined up offer for families, children and young people supporting earlier intervention

- Providing families with the integrated support they need to care for their children from conception, throughout the early years, and into the start of adulthood. This is to enable parents to establish a firm foundation for their children, from which to meet their full potential in life.
- This will allow greater access and uptake to sources of support, including early identification of need and uptake of health promotion interventions, including immunisation and developmental reviews.

Strengthening the voice and influence of parents/carers and young people

- We wish to develop a co-produced approach, including a cross-section of managers and practitioners from key agencies, representatives from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) parents/carers and young people

An opportunity for greater integration of service delivery and maximising effectiveness of existing initiatives

- As well as developing the six elements of the Start for Life/Family Hub model, we would like to use this opportunity to expand the reach, effectiveness, communication and delivery of the family hub model to include a wider group of initiatives already being developed within the borough. This will include:
 - Strategically aligning with NHS place based working and integration agenda
 - Integrate and align the paediatric, community and housing hubs in to the Family Hub model
 - Strengthen & greater alignment of early Help Services
 - Seek to tackle health inequalities, including seeking to address the cost of living crisis for families

Ensuring that families can access the information they need when they need it

- The family hub model, which includes providing digital, virtual and telephone communication ensures that information is well publicised and access points are well serviced, delivering a timely and helpful response, in a relational way.

2c. Ealing has the critical ‘building blocks’ to a Family Hub model already in place

We have considered the key components necessary to introduce the Start for Life/Family Hub model and are confident that we already have the main elements in place to successfully build upon and would recommend this option

Action Area 1: Seamless support for families: a coherent joined up Start for Life offer available to all families.

- We have in place the core elements of the Start for Life Offer we can build upon.

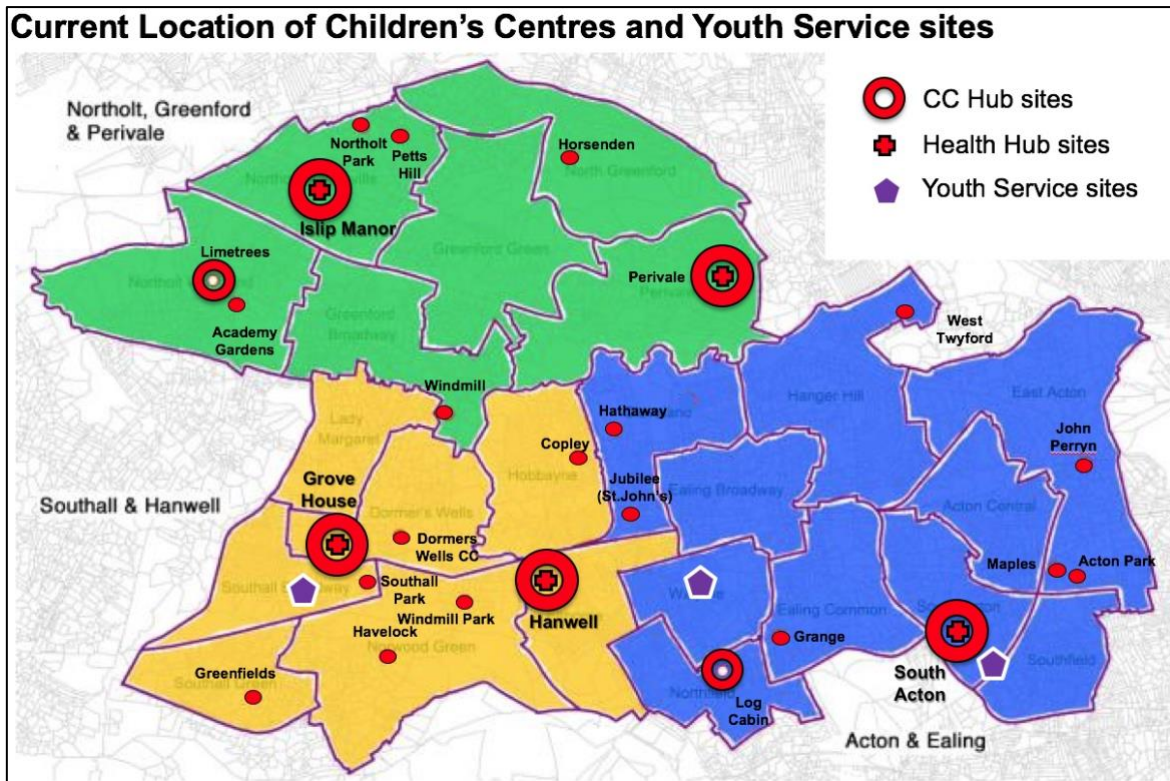
Core Element	Description
Midwifery	Ealing Residents have a choice of six hospitals in boroughs adjacent to Ealing. Ealing Children’s Centres provide the main delivery sites for Community Midwifery, Antenatal & Postnatal care & baby clinics
Health Visiting	Ealing has an integrated 0-19 Healthy Child Programme, Health visiting teams from the Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust are co-located within Children’s Centres, delivering 0-19 Healthy Child Programme. Joint governance oversees & manages performance & delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, the FNP, MECSCH and School Nursing. Universal Plus & Universal Partnership plus.
Mental Health Support	West London NHS Trust oversees Child & Adolescent Mental Health services in Ealing, comprising of Ealing CAMHS Adolescent & CAMHS Neurodevelopmental Teams.
Infant feeding advice with specialist breast feeding support	Ealing Early Start Team is working towards Stage 3 of UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) accreditation. A specialist local infant feeding clinic is available. Parents formula feeding are supported.
Safeguarding	Ealing Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESCP) is the statutory body with statutory, private & voluntary sector, ensuring there are adequate arrangements within & between member organisations to protect children from harm.
Services related to SEND	Ealing Service for Children with Additional Needs (ESCAN) is a multi-agency service run by the NHS & Ealing Council giving both families & professionals a single point of contact for information, referrals, assessments and appropriate help

Ealing Early Start has been cited as an exemplar of best practice for an integrated service in presenting a single cohesive service and creating ‘one ‘workforce and constructive relations with delivery partners commissioning community health, by the London Councils report-Beyond Boundaries-Research on the integration of early years systems and services in London (July 2022)¹

¹ Beyond Boundaries-Research on the integration of early years systems and services in London (July 2022) <https://londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/children-and-young-people/beyond-boundaries-early-years-integration>

Action Area 2: A welcoming hub for families:

- We are able to utilise our physical presence and workforce expertise in our communities. Children’s Centres & Integrated Youth Services will provide the physical network from which we deliver a wide range of services. Our Children’s Centres network comprises of 7 lead (hub) & 18 linked (spoke) centres; 5 of our lead centres form the base for our integrated health visiting & school nursing service Early Start (0-19)
- Ealing has remained committed to supporting the needs of the youngest in our community. This is consistent with the vision for the whole of the borough described in Future Ealing which is based on the determination of Ealing Council to continue to improve the lives of local people at a time of reduced funding.
- Children’s Centres offer critical support to children aged 0-5 years and families in reducing social and health inequalities, increasing school readiness and identification of early needs.
- The sites used are multi-use and multi-functional. Not only do children’s centres provide their statutory offer, all sites offer health and maternal services and the majority of sites host a PVI nursery on site. We also work with partners to ensure the sites are used to host a range of Education and IAG services e.g. benefit/ housing advice to parents, legal advice, cost of living advice and food bank referrals, ESOL classes. 10 sites are located on School Premises.
- Early Start SEND Inclusion Team offer targeted and specialist support to families of children with additional needs including social communication differences, speech and language difficulties, Autism, Down’s Syndrome, hearing loss, vision difficulties and complex health and medical needs offering their support for all centres, and with the early Start SLT team run a comprehensive programme of specialised support.
- We believe that the family hub model will further strengthen our partnership work and co-production with our CVS partners.



Action Area 3: The information families need when they need it: designing digital, virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family.

We have key services and virtual communications we can build upon:

Ealing Family Information services: Ealing's FIS offers advice and guidance for children, young people and families on local services, childcare, childcare funding, family support, parenting and much more.. The team also manage Ealing's Local Offer website www.ealinglocaloffer.org.uk for children and young people aged 0-25 and their families living with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The FIS have a dedicated SEND Officer who can provide bespoke information and advice to parents, carers, professionals and young people who require support.

Ealing Families Directory: Comprehensive online directory of information & advice with can be instantly translated into over 100 community languages. Elements include; Childcare & Early Learning/Entitlements; Leisure activities including clubs, sports; Local Forums; Holiday & Food Programme (HAF) Details of key services i.e. employment, financial advice, family support; Services for families with children or young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and access to Ealing's Local Offer.

Young Ealing: Online information, advice and guidance for young people; Integrated Youth Service; Connexions Service; Youth Justice Service; Advice-Health, Housing, Relationships, Keeping Safe, Money and benefits, Transport and Travel.

We will seek to utilise learning and feedback regarding online communication/ participation developed during COVID: We will harness partners "every contact counts" approach; Establish Virtual Hub; Include social media, short & clear messages in video & in print in community languages ; Undertaking face to face work, forming "bridges of trust" with individuals in their communities through trusted community partners; Publicity awareness campaign & events in key public realm locations & presence within community events.

2d. High Level Support in developing the Family Hubs model in Ealing

- The Council is committed in the Council Plan to deliver the Start for Life/Family Hub model of delivery. Our Children's Centre network is the main vehicle of delivery due to their physical presence in the community.
Ealing Council Plan 2022-2026: A Fairer Start
FS1. 'Establish a 'Family Hub model' of delivery aimed at providing a central access point for integrated services, ensuring that families know where to get help, and that staff and volunteers are trained to respond sensitively and effectively to families' needs.'
- The Ealing Children and Young People's Board supports the development of the Start for Life/Family Hub model
- Ealing was not chosen by the DfE to receive funding to develop the Start for Life/ Family Hub model. However, the Ealing Borough Based Partnership has agreed to support a 'discovery & consensus phase' in order to co-produce a placed-based 'Start for Life/ Family hub' model of accessible and integrated early help and support for Ealing families. They have agreed a grant of £99,500 to support the first phase of the programme.
 - This will include a review of current service provision: delivery, service and data alignment and integration; review of organising/strategic geographies; how we communicate with families and qualitative engagement and understanding of the lived experience and perspectives of families and young people.
 - The recommendations from which will build consensus on the changes necessary and provide the foundation for the Start for Life Offer and Family Hub strategy and implementation plan.

2e Phased approach to developing the Ealing Start for Life/Family Hub model

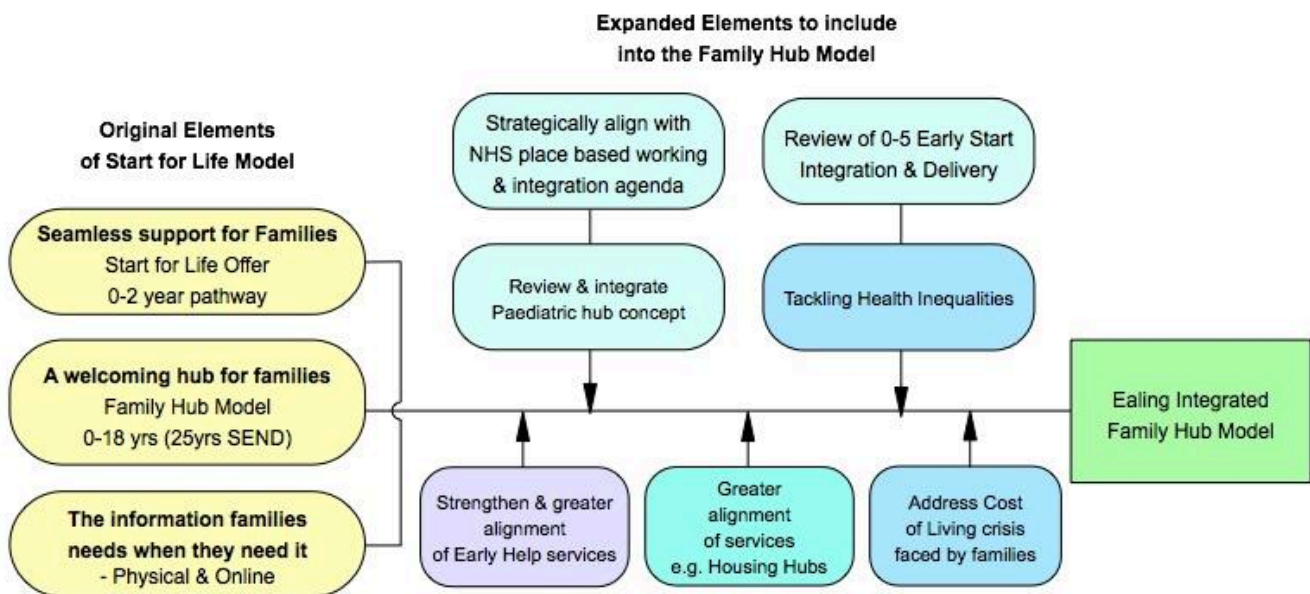
We often seek to transform or integrate services without acquiring a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of residents and frontline staff. Furthermore, we rarely have the opportunity to ‘get on the balcony’ to understand how services are currently being delivered, what is working well and how things could be improved or aligned better.

As part of the ‘discovery phase’ we will gain rich qualitative insights into the lived experience of families in Ealing, particular disadvantaged families, understanding issues, concerns, but more importantly sources of strength and support in the community. We want to start where families are by really listening. We hope this will help to build trust in order to involve and engage Ealing parents in this work going forward, which will be critical for its success.

We will gain a better understanding of integration initiatives such as Early Start (children centre/health visiting/maternity), the paediatric hub pilot in Greenwell PCN and the Single Point of Access integration pilot for CAMHS/social care. We will also review other frontline services including the range of early Help providers, and other developments, such as the council’s ‘community hubs’ which offers financial support out of libraries, and ‘housing hubs’ based in housing estates in the borough. Place-based initiatives such as Primary Care Network Integrated Network Teams and social prescribing. We will explore with partners how best we can align this work and strengthen our relationships across departments and agencies and the geographic alignments with strategic plans such as the borough’s 7 Town’s Strategy.

This discovery process will assist in establishing a consensus to the approach and priorities, which will inform and be articulated through the Ealing Start for Life/Family Hubs strategic and operational plans. We seek a strong co-production model, with an emphasis of joint partnership with parents, young people, voluntary and community sector, together with the multiple public services that support families in Ealing.

Family Hubs model - An opportunity for greater integration of service delivery



As well as developing the three original elements of the Start for Life model, we would like to use this opportunity to expand the reach, effectiveness and delivery of the family hub model.

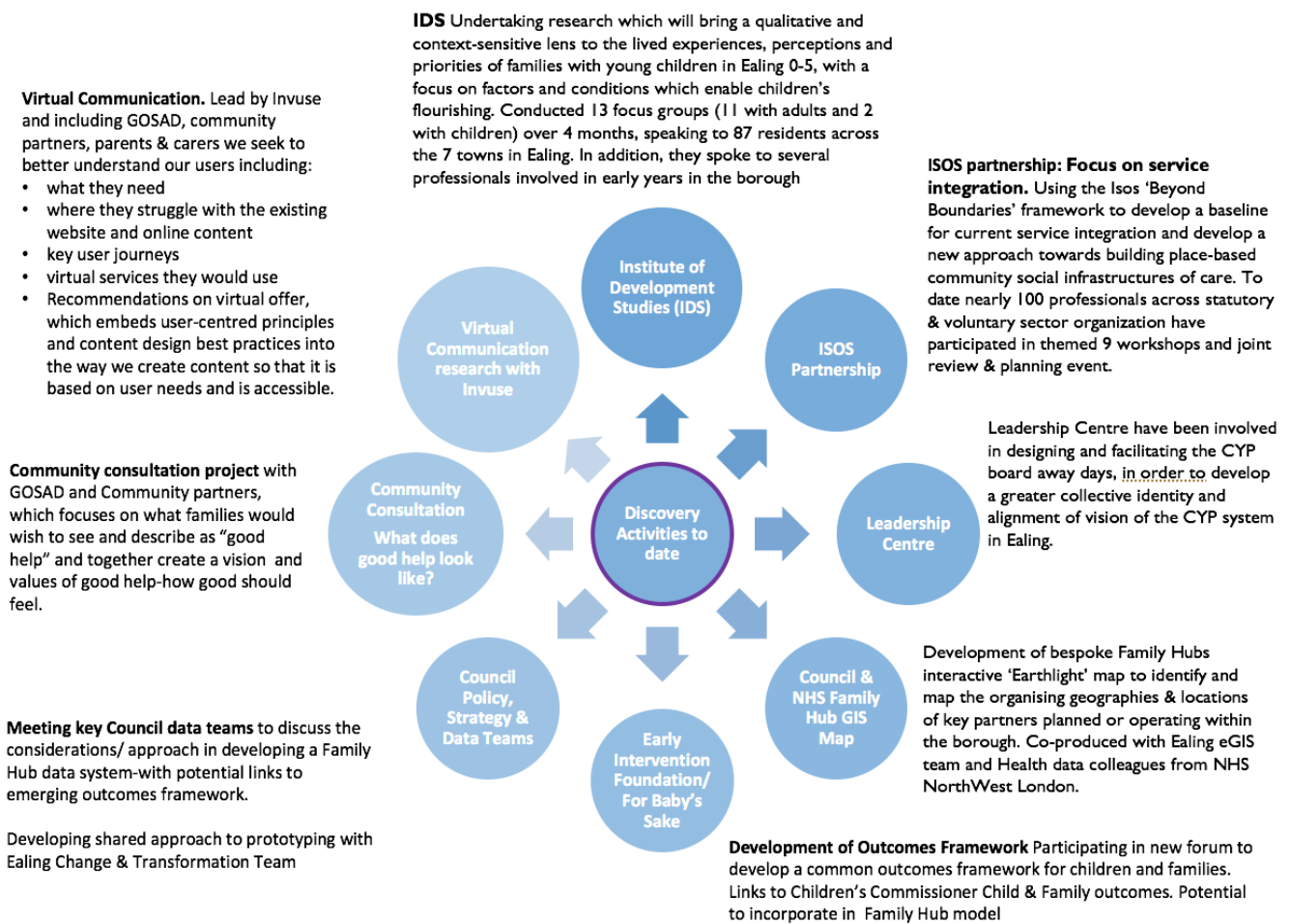
2f Governance of the Programme

An Ealing Start for Life/Family Hub Steering Group has been established, led by the acting Strategic Director Children and includes representation from parents/carers and the voluntary and community sector.

It is our intention that as we move into phase 2 of the programme we begin to develop a governance framework which will enable much more local representation reflecting the communities and services within the local Family Hub local geographies.

2g Research activities undertaken

The illustration below outlines the research activities we have undertaken



3 Vision and Roadmap for development (at December 2023)

Vision

“It takes a town to raise a child.”

Our proposed ‘Family hubs’ strategic approach, is 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.

Ealing Start for Life/ Family Hubs ROADMAP Summary Dec 23

Jan '23



Discovery & Consensus approach

Ealing agreed to strategically & financially support a 'discovery & consensus phase' in order to develop & co-produce a placed-based 'Start for Life/ Family hub' model of accessible and integrated early help and support for Ealing families.



Discovery & Research activities

The Ealing Start for Life/Family Hub Steering Group identified and commissioned a range of research & consultation activities

April '24



Review of Research & Proposals

A review of the research, policy, reports and data will lead to recommendations which will underpin the approach & objectives of the place-based pilot



Preparation for place based prototype

Utilising the review recommendations, a prototype area will be identified area partners invited to co-design & participate.



Undertake place based prototype

The prototype will take place including key elements of Council, Schools, Health, Faith, Voluntary & Community Sector partners, testing a new approach to place-based service delivery, including MDTs, and enhancing links with community assets.

April '25



Prototype evaluation & view of a wider roll out

Evaluation will be embedded throughout the first year of the prototype, informing developments and next steps, including scale up to other towns in Ealing

