

Family Hubs and Early Help Services Redesign Consultation

Information Document

The council has opportunities to develop services to meet the growing demand for services, while balancing unprecedented financial challenge.

Rising demand on council services such as those that keep children, young people, and vulnerable adults safe, combined with higher costs for fuel, delivering council services that keep our communities clean and our infrastructure safe means that balancing our budget has become increasingly difficult over the last few years, exacerbated by the impacts of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis.

We are currently spending more each year than we receive as income, meaning we must reduce our spend and/or increase our income to balance our budget. The Council plans to close a £44million funding gap for 2024/25 and ensure a balanced budget moving forward.

The council is taking this opportunity to be innovative and develop new ways of working that better uses an improving technological environment and meets the needs of an evolving population. We remain dedicated and focused on achieving better services for our children and young people in ways that are efficient and effective for the council. We are making positive progress in closing this gap by making services as streamline as possible and prioritising the services that are the most needed in our communities. However, more work needs to be done through meaningful engagement with service users and key stakeholders, with some difficult decisions needing to be made that could affect some services that our communities use and recognise.

We would like your view on our proposals and for you to help shape our services. You are the experts in your needs and your lives, therefore, your views are central to the way we want to plan moving forward.

1.1 Background

Early help refers to a wide range services that aims to provide advice, information, and support, as soon as possible, to tackle emerging challenges that effect children, young people and their families face from time to time.

Advice and information should be able to all families at times of parents and children's key life milestones such as during pregnancy, becoming new parents, starting nursery and school, transitioning to secondary education, dealing with adolescents and the transition to adulthood.

Some families also benefit from support at times of challenge, for example, concerns about child development, managing financial pressures, family health, relationship conflicts or breakdown, bereavement, dealing with the pressures of teenage life, and tackling poor mental health or substance misuse. BCP Council and its partners are a data rich organisation. This “data-based” information helps us identify where support might be best placed.

We want to add a more “family and community” needs lead voice to our approach, by listening and responding quickly to align support, based on what you as families and communities tell us is needed most, even when the data doesn't show us this as a priority.

Early help is for pre-birth up to 19 years old, and up to 25 years old if a young adult has identified Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

Early help allows the right conversations, with the right people at the right time to unlock support to meet families’ needs prior to issues reaching crisis point. It draws upon families’ own skills and promotes self-reliance.

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- listen to the voices of children, young people and families about their lived experiences
- identify children and families who would benefit from the service
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide information, advice, guidance, self help options and targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on improving the outcomes.

These services are provided by a wide range of agencies such as midwives, health visitors, other health providers, nurseries, schools, youth workers and a wide range of voluntary and community groups. The council operates several dedicated early help services such as children centres, some of which have become known as family hubs, youth services and targeted family support services.

1.2 Why are we consulting?

Children’s services are reviewing its service delivery model to make it more efficient and cost-effective for families and our partners to offer early help locally. The proposals could also save £1.1 million pounds across different sections of the early help service while maintaining a high quality of service in the community. These proposals mostly affect council services known currently as children centres and youth services.

We are not proposing to remove existing services but rather to remodel the structure of the service so that it delivers what children, young people and their families need in a more accessible, timely and cost-effective way.

1.2.1 Children centres to family hub transformation

To help councils to continue to deliver services that meets raising demand, while dealing with financial pressures, a Family Hub Transformation Grant has been made available to the council by central government. This 'one off' time-limited grant will be used to review and redesign existing children's centres and youth services, alongside partner services in health, into what will be known as 'family hubs'. These hubs will be more efficient 'one-stop shops' of services for families with children aged 0-19 (25 for SEND) delivered in the heart of the local community, as well as virtually, and will help them overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships as mentioned above.

We would like your help to decide how we might best use this grant to reshape services to better meet the needs of children and families across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

1.3 The case for change

The council is reviewing its service structures including how, and where, early help services are delivered to children, young people, and their families. Feedback from families informs us of a need to offer more equity in delivery offers across all of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and provide needs-led support where children, young people and families need it most.

Currently several separate teams support distinct groups of children, young people, or parents. Each has separate management arrangements and locations for providing services. These include:

- nine children's centres/family hubs
- 14 youth centres/advice centres
- mobile delivery vehicles
- a range of community bases and council buildings across the whole conurbation.

Some of these services are also run by voluntary organisations and the council supports them to undertake this work on their behalf. Reducing duplication would allow a wider, and more diverse, offer to emerge with the potential to extend offers beyond what is currently available.

While these activities successfully support many children, young people and families, reviews of the services (including feedback from service users) have shown that some families seeking additional help, find access difficult, processes slow and not always leading to the right support to meet their needs. Some families report not always being sure where to go for help or feeling passed between services which, in turn, can make their difficulties more challenging.

In addition, some venues used to support families can only cater for a specific group, or age range, of children. Demand for some activities or locations can be limited and/or not provide the service that families need most. Some families also report that they cannot access some of the services they need as they work during opening times, or their children are in full time day care or school.

1.4 Proposals

The proposals outlined below aim to transform our early help services into more effective and efficient Family Hubs for service users, while helping to reduce the council's budget deficit by £1.1 million.

The redesign of early help services proposes to combine several teams into a single early help system with 'locality teams'. These teams will be made up of professionals with different skills and knowledge, operating as multi-disciplinary colleagues out of family hubs and other community venues. Each team will have expertise in early years, education, young people's development, and family/parenting support.

These teams will be complimented by stronger links with partners working to deliver health or community services. They will continue to offer a wide range of services from groups activities, parenting programmes, one-to-one support and outreach services in communities and through community buildings. However, by combining services as multi-disciplinary offers, the aim ensures families can access one worker and be supported to access a wider range of the other support options in the same access point more readily without the need for signposting, referral or having to tell their story more than once.

In addition, we will review what services are delivered where, and place more focus on delivering services in the right locations to meet local needs.

We propose reviewing the overall number of dedicated children's centres (nine currently) and youth bases (14 currently) with a wider range of enhanced services. Opening hours of these family hubs will be extended to include evenings and weekends. Some services for young people will be transferred to be run by local voluntary and community groups, others will be provided through mobile provisions that will move around the conurbation with 'pop up' activities to engage with people in areas where they choose to gather.

We will develop some services to be available online and some will be delivered through partner venues such as nurseries, schools, or libraries. Some services that are not in high demand or effective in helping those families most in need of support, may be targeted to specific areas, run less frequently, or ceased. **Where changes to individual activities or groups change or cease, further consultation will take place with those directly affected.**

The new team structures will mean that the council can reduce the overall number of management posts and enable savings in line with budgetary pressures. Some of the buildings currently used for activities may see a reduced timetable of some services, or service redirected to other locations. Rather than replicate services and venues provided by voluntary sector partners, these partners will provide services through outreach provision including home visiting and community provision. This will allow for a more flexible delivery of services into the right venues to enable families to access services easier and reduces the cost of operating multiple buildings across the conurbation. **Any changes to delivery in specific buildings will be subject to ongoing consultation with service users at those sites.**

Proposals Summary

The proposed service redesign will aim to create:

- multi-disciplinary teams in a single location
- more flexible and targeted services to meet the needs of children, young people, and families where they can more easily access services
- services that provide support online, in nurseries, schools and community venues enabling accessibility to more children, young people, and families
- a reduction of the amount spent on management roles
- a reduction of the amount spent on running buildings
- an overall saving of £1.1 million to help reduce the council's budget deficit.

1.5 Have Your Say

Please give us your views on the proposals to help us ensure we continue to deliver this crucial service to children, young people, and their families, while achieving the savings necessary to alleviate the council's budget pressures:

- After reading the information in this document, please give us your views on the proposals by completing our [online survey](#)
- You can download a paper copy of the survey and find more information about the consultation at haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/early-help.

The consultation will close at **midnight on 10 March 2024**. If you have any questions or need the survey in a different format, please email familyinformation@bcpcouncil.gov.uk.

FAQ – Early help & family hubs

What is early help?

Early help or 'family help' refers to additional services provided by a wide range of professionals and organisations to children and their families when they need extra help and support. This may be in the form of advice, information or direct help that is in addition to all the normal services all children and parents may access such as health services and schools. All professionals that work with children and their parents and carers can provide this additional support, and good early help should be available in a timely manner when a need arises and aims to prevent problems becoming worse. Most commonly early help is provided by midwives, health visitors, school nurses, childcare workers, teachers, youth workers, family support workers or children's centre staff.

What are family hubs and how can they help my children and family?

Family hubs is a new government initiative that was introduced as policy in 2021. It aims to bring all the services that can support families together to provide easier access and more seamless support. Family hubs aim to provide a welcoming and friendly environment for children, young people, and their parents/carers. Many universal services such as midwifery appointments, anti and post-natal classes, health visitor appointments and early child development sessions are provided at family hubs. A wider range of additional early help services can also be available to support families that need extra support around areas such as: good child development; early learning; age-specific parenting programmes; children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND); positive mental health for children, young people and adults; family conflict and breakdown; bereavement; housing; and, food poverty. Staff working at family hubs are very knowledgeable about other local specific services and how to signpost or refer families for additional help.

If a child, young person or family have several more complex needs, workers at family hubs can act as their 'lead professional,' helping to better understand the problems a family may be experiencing and coordinating a range of services to work together to provide a more comprehensive package of support. This means families should not have to find the support themselves nor tell their story more than once.

What is the difference between children's centres and family hubs?

Children's centres and family hubs are very similar and offer many of the same services for very young children. However, children's centres are focused on supporting families with children aged 0- 5 years, whereas family hubs will support families with children aged 0-19 years and up to 25 years old for young adults with a disability. Family hubs will also be open for extended hours into the evening and weekends so that older children and working parents/carers can access services more easily. Family hubs are working to ensure that professionals are better

connected and working as a single team so that services can be provided more seamlessly to families.

Is my local children's centre closing?

BCP Council is committed to developing and operating six family hubs that are currently operating as children's centres. As nothing has been decided, we want your view on where you want to see these centres and what services you would like to see offered from them. The three children's centres not chosen for family hub development are proposed to continue to offer some services to families but not the full range delivered through family hubs. Services that remain at these locations will be based on the local community need for early help services. Services are more likely to be targeted to families with the greatest need of support, and some sessions may only be accessed through a referral from a professional. Any changes to these services will take place in consultation with existing service users.

Is my local youth centre closing?

Where possible, places for young people to meet will remain open; they may be operated by organisations other than the council, by people who are skilled at working with young people in their communities. A programme of work has started to invite partners to offer exciting opportunities to work with local young people and this is something we are still talking to young people about. The council will focus on running two youth bases where targeted support for adolescents will provide enhanced support around issues such as: drugs; alcohol; emotional health and well-being; education, employment and training; healthy relationships; safe decision making; responding to crime and antisocial behaviour; what to do locally that's fun, safe and affordable; and, how to continue connecting with their local area as the young adults of the future. In addition, the council will be placing youth workers in family hubs to support young people and parents, while operating mobile buses that can travel and respond to where communities feel they lack provision for young people. This flexible youth work provision provided in response to the wishes and needs of our young people will provide mobile and agile offers at times and places that young people and communities feel are most important, including evenings and weekends. Trained and experienced youth workers can then move around the conurbation more readily and provide 'pop up' youth provision as and when needed.

Are existing sessions and groups that I attend at my local children's centre or youth club closing?

We will regularly engage with children, young people, parents, and carers to determine what services you value and need the most, and the services provided by the council will aim to respond to those needs. Where any programme or activity is to change or cease, service users will be consulted and engaged.

Will the services available be open to all children and families?

Yes, family hubs and early help services are available to all families. Most services will be available to all, but a few more limited services may be targeted to children,

young people or parent/ carers that are most in need. As a result, some services may only be available via a professional request. If you feel you would benefit from a particular group or activity, please talk to a member of the council team.

I work full time, and/or my children are in school, making it difficult to access family hubs. How will I be able to access the services available?

Improving access to services is a main priority for the family hub transformation. Family hubs will be open for longer and at weekends to support working families. In addition, we are developing an online 'virtual' family hub, where we will be developing access to a wide range of advice, information, and resources that families can access at home without the need to visit a family hub building.

The council is also developing a wide programme of 'outreach' family hub services, where it takes the activity or group to where children and families are every day. This may be activities in nurseries and schools, at the local library and even offering home visits and support when this is viewed as the most appropriate way to support a family.