

Case studies on the implementation of family hubs: Emerging strategies for success

The LGA commissioned Coram to develop a series of six case studies exploring various elements of family hubs delivery within councils in England.

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What are family hubs?

In July 2020, the then Prime Minister asked Dame Andrea Leadsom MP to chair a review into improving health and development outcomes for babies in England. [‘The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days’](#) report was published in March 2021, following an intensive period of engagement with parents, carers, sector professionals, volunteers and academics.

In the Autumn Budget 2021, the government announced around £300m investment into the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme that would provide support for 75 upper tier local authorities in England. The 75 councils pre-selected to take part in the programme were [announced in April 2022](#) and the Programme is jointly overseen by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE). This built on previous funding for Family Hubs, including £12m announced in 2021 for 12 areas to receive funding through the [Family Hubs Transformation Fund 1](#).

Some councils may already have Family Hubs, and these will look different in different parts of the country. For some, they may build on previous children’s centre and Sure Start models, whilst others may be in a newly developed building or make use of a network of other community facilities. Many will also be underpinned by a strong online offer that gives families information about local services and enables them to navigate the system.

Family Hubs are for families with babies, children and young people from birth until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities). The programme emphasises the importance of the first 1,001 days (from conception to age 2) for laying important foundations for children’s emotional and physical development and ensuring parents and carers can give their children the best possible start in life.

Family Hubs bring together multiple organisations in a ‘one stop shop’ with the aim of making it easier for families to access help and support. Partners work together in a joined-up way to deliver the right help at the right time. This can include a range of services, such as infant feeding support, parenting classes, health visiting, birth registration, baby and toddler groups, mental health support, advice on benefits, housing, and help to return to work or training.

These case studies capture the diversity of approaches to developing and leading family hubs and some of the successes that local government can celebrate and build on.

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council: forging partnerships to create services 'owned by all'

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council uses its strong partnerships with a wide range of local organisations to create a holistic network of support for families, and places co-production with families and services at the heart of service design and delivery.

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Background

Stockton-on-Tees provides a universal family hubs offer for families with children aged 0-25, delivered in four hubs. The council delivers a wide range of services for families, and the team emphasises the value of strong partnerships with local organisations. Family workers, school nurses and health visitors are all based in the hubs, with the buildings acting as a 'one-stop shop' for families wanting to find multiple services in the same location. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council was not selected as one of the 75 councils to receive additional funding as part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

Integrated services 'owned by all'

Stockton-on-Tees places parents and carers at the heart of service development. The council works in line with a co-production ethos, hosting in-person family hubs forums where parents and children are consulted on a range of matters, such as the readability of literature or whether hubs are offering all the services families want. These were established in October 2022 and have attendance of roughly 8-10 parents/carers per session. The forums have directly resulted in improvements for families, such as changing café trading times to accommodate those who access services in the evenings, after school and work hours. The council also sent out a survey asking families what they want from family hubs, receiving 568 responses, with analysis expected soon.

In line with Stockton-on-Tees' approach of creating services for all, co-delivered parenting programmes are provided for families, helping to build connections between the council and families. Stockton-on-Tees is also trying to create new partnerships with services, and enhance existing ones, an example of which is its joint training offer with Hartlepool Borough Council, the ['Safeguarding Children Partnership'](#).

Ease of access, community engagement and strong partnerships

Stockton-on-Tees values accessibility for families, with minimal bureaucracy and a mixed model of referrals and self-referrals. It uses community engagement workers to link with schools and raise awareness of hubs. Referral forms have been abandoned as these were seen as a barrier to accessibility for families, so professionals looking to refer families to services are encouraged to simply send an email or call people at the hubs directly. Families are also allowed to self-refer, and there is an average of 20-50 self-referrals per week.

Stockton-on-Tees conducts programmes to engage with different family members, such as fathers. For example, the council ran a 12-week, in-person Family Links parenting programme through its hubs to help fathers engage with their children. This group helped fathers to learn the fundamentals of parenting, teaching them to be a supportive and consistent presence for their children. At the beginning of the programme, most fathers had little to no contact with

their children; at the end of the programme, all fathers had intermittent or regular contact with their children. The team plans to run similar programmes through its hubs in the future.

The real strength of Stockton-on-Tees' family hub model lies in its strong partnerships with stakeholders. One highlight is the multi-agency drop-in service. This is a monthly event which is hosted in one Hub, rotating each month, where a multitude of stakeholders come to talk to families. Service Lead Kellie Wigley described how she expected take-up to be slow for these events, but in practice they have been an instant success, with an average of 30 families attending per session. Between 20-30 services attend each session, including school nursing, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), the police, the fire service, drugs and alcohol services, domestic abuse services, and more. The team focuses on forging lasting partnerships with these organisations.

Areas for development and key lessons

The team advised other councils to build strong relationships with partners, to help deliver a holistic network of support for families. These partners can be health services, schools, police and fire services, or even other councils. The team believes it is vital to acknowledge that all parties are working towards the same goal, which is the betterment of outcomes for children and families. Putting aside divisions and pooling resources can help deliver these outcomes.

Going forward, the council wants to improve the services it has to offer. The team has already succeeded in providing a variety of services to a wide range of children and families and is now using family hubs to develop an offer of support for families with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

2. Salford City Council: using a strengths-based approach and listening to local families

Salford City Council is committed to listening to the voices of local families in the design and implementation of its family hubs. It focuses on what is going well for families to support them to build on these strengths and overcome difficulties.

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Background

Salford's family hubs provide services for families with children between the ages of 0-19, and up to 25 when young people have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They link in a range of children's services, such as antenatal, play sessions, and parenting support. Salford's Early Help service offers targeted support alongside its universal family hubs. Its family hub model has been in operation since 2018, with buildings previously used as children's centres repurposed as hubs. The council uses a localities model, with four localities each having their own locality manager, at least one family hub, and some satellite sites.

Salford City Council is one of the 75 councils that received additional funding through the family hubs and Start for Life programme. Using this funding, the council has invested in the 0-2 offer, perinatal mental health services, and the peer-to-peer infant feeding model. The additional funding has also expanded the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) programme, which works with volunteers to promote initiatives such as supporting children and young people into education, training and employment, and reaching diverse families and communities.

Listening to local families

The council employs a Family Hubs Coordinator to manage the early help/family hubs offer and to hear the voices of families, which informs service design and delivery. For example, by using children's art sessions as an opportunity to hear their views, Salford's Family Hubs Coordinator learned that families and children would like more play-based activities.

Salford City Council undertook an internal review in 2019 into what listening takes place with individual children, parents and groups of young people in family hubs. This review found that while listening took place, it happened irregularly, in isolation, and did not always inform the wider system. In response, the council brought in a set of questions to be asked to families following each Early Help referral, such as 'Where would you like to be? What would help you get there?' and asked staff to analyse the opinions of each child in their case notes. Salford also developed a training toolkit for staff to enhance their understanding of children's wishes and feelings and is in the process of establishing parent/carer panels for each family hub.

Salford's hubs cater for families from different groups. For example, one family hub was established specifically for the large Jewish community in Salford. This Hub is delivered by members of the Jewish community as part of Salford's commitment to co-production. Efforts are being made to ensure digital systems deliver advice and information for families, and there is a focus on finding new ways to improve outreach and engagement going forward.

Strengths-based approach

The council works with the whole family using a strengths-based approach, the [Family Partnership Model \(FPM\)](#). This model focuses on what is going well for families and supports them to build on these strengths to overcome difficulties, minimising any stigma associated with the process.

Salford City Council used the additional funding allocated through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme to invest in its Early Help Assessments, which identify the strengths and needs of children. These assessments focus on seven key areas – health, education, behaviour and routines, family and community, finances, housing, and safety – and help practitioners to identify the areas of greatest need. Salford also works closely in partnership with schools and health services. For example, the Salford Schools Partnership is a new model of Early Help which aims to enable timely provision of early intervention and preventative services, reducing the number of cases held and referred to children's social care and other specialist services.

Areas for development and key lessons

The onset of COVID-19 disrupted momentum for the council, and a rebuild of services was required. The pandemic created the challenge of identifying those babies and children who missed access to important services during lockdowns. Playing catch-up has been difficult for Salford, but there is a commitment to ensure no family is left behind.

The team believes that building upon the VCSE programme, a community-led service, will be crucial to continue capturing the voices of children and families, and to reinforce the co-production of services as the family hub model expands.

The team recommends building partnerships with local organisations that families interact with on a regular basis, such as health providers and schools. This helps to raise awareness of family hubs, generate referrals, and create a community network of support where families are signposted to services when and where they need them.

3. Essex County Council: leading the way with joint outcomes-focused commissioning

Essex County Council takes an outcomes-focused approach to the delivery of its family hubs and has commissioned HCRG Care Group and Barnardo's to provide 'proportionate universal' services for families.

Background

Essex has delivered family hubs since 2017, commissioning [HCRG Care Group](#) in partnership with [Barnardo's](#) to deliver a fully integrated range of early help and 0-19 services, as well as children's community health services in the west of the county. A 'proportionate universal model' is used, so that universal services are available to all families, and families who are in need of additional support are identified and offered this. Essex County Council did not receive additional funding through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

Family hubs are not thought of as buildings where services are delivered, but rather as a 'service without walls' that reaches out into the community it serves. Essex focuses on meeting families' needs in their home or in local and accessible community sites, including family hubs, building and capitalising on a strong network of support across the community. There is also a strong focus on delivering outcomes that matter, rather than only focusing on isolated activities; Essex wants to achieve lasting change for families and communities.

Putting families' voices first

Before HCRG Care Group was contracted to deliver family hubs, Essex County Council undertook ethnographic research to understand what families wanted from its services. One key learning was that families are 'sick' of retelling their story during multiple stages of contact with services. In response, staff now use the same electronic clinical record ('SystemOne') so that families do not have to retell their stories. Another learning was that Essex had an exceptionally high level of new mothers who were lonely, which has a significant impact on a developing baby. In response, Essex has designed its services to reduce maternal loneliness, which is an example of a desired outcome guiding service design.

The council emphasises hearing about what families want out of its services. For example, through regular consultation with families, the council learned that while some people appreciate a 'digital front door' to download resources and book appointments, many families preferred human connection, particularly those from disadvantaged groups. Such learnings have informed service design and will continue to do so in the future.

Essex's family hubs individually host multiagency advisory boards to work together and organise services that meet and support the specific needs of local families. The service collates information against what it calls '17 categories of vulnerability' (or Priority Groups), then maps these against where family hubs are situated, and creates a targeted action plan in that local area. Essex also uses service user groups, engagement coordinators, surveys and parent feedback sessions, as part of its philosophy to put families' voices first.

Safeguarding

Essex's approach to safeguarding has developed following the introduction of the family hub model. Previously, there were 12 separate providers each applying their own processes across the area. Now, there is one lead provider and four sub-contractors, all working to

Southend, Essex and Thurrock's Multiagency Safeguarding Procedures, and HCRG Care Group's processes. All staff receive the same training and supervision, with learning from case reviews shared in a consistent way. There is one incident management system ('DATIX') for reporting incidents, tracking responses and drawing on themes for learning purposes.

Joint outcomes-focused commissioning

The team wants the council's approach to act as a 'flagship' for family hubs across England, and to influence other councils to end the practice of working in 'silos'. The team encourages councils to be bold and always have families' outcomes in mind when designing services. Essex's outcomes-focused approach is enabled by a large dataset, monitoring key information such as population health data and health inequalities. There is also a community system of outcomes monitoring which means that any needs identified at the first visit are immediately addressed and met, with families linked in with relevant services.

Areas for development and key lessons

One challenge for Essex going forward is considering how to use its limited resources in the best possible way. The team wants to ensure that those families who need support the most can access it, and there is a concern that universal checks and targets may inhibit the council's ability to efficiently allocate resources to these families. The team therefore comes up with creative solutions, including the use of technology, and encourages other councils to follow this example to ensure resources are directed to those at risk of achieving the poorest outcomes, whilst also meeting statutory duties.

4. Cornwall Council: engaging rurally isolated families and collaborating with local services

Cornwall Council has strong partnerships with a multitude of local organisations, offering a range of services in its family hubs, and ensures that these services are made available to rurally isolated families through an outreach delivery model.

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Background

Cornwall's family hub model was developed by Cornwall Council's 'Family Hubs Transformation Group' (FHTG), reforming Children's Centres into services for a broader age range (0-25), with core delivery supporting both universal and targeted services. The FHTG devised an early framework for family hubs based on an extension of the existing Children's Centres model; the Early Help model; information and resources from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres/Family Hubs; and the Children's Commissioner's report on family hubs. This model was then built upon through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, and collaborative work with the National Centre for Family Hubs and [Foundations](#) (previously known as the Early Intervention Foundation before it merged with the What Works for Children's Social Care in December 2022).

Cornwall's hubs are managed and delivered through Cornwall Council's integrated 'Together for Families' directorate, with delivery supported by the council's Early Help Strategy and Start for Life Delivery Plan. There are 23 family hubs located across Cornwall, divided across six locality areas. There is co-location of health services in some of the hubs, such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), midwifery, health visitors, maternity services and

school nursing. There is also collaboration with other local services, such as commissioned and voluntary community sector services. Inside the hubs, families can find a welcoming home-from-home environment, which includes: a reception area staffed by business support staff; spaces for health services/clinical interventions; and a kitchen for life skills training. While many services are delivered on-site, targeted early help services are also delivered through homes and community settings as an outreach offer.

Cornwall Council received additional funding through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, enabling investment in estates, governance, services and workforce development. Cornwall's hubs uses local commissioning arrangements to support the delivery of needs-led services. For example, the council commissioned [Home-Start](#) (a parent support outreach service) to address post-COVID isolation for both parents and children, encouraging the development of peer support networks and WILD (a support service for young parents).

Engagement with families

Families can find out about Cornwall's family hubs via the Family Information Service (an online/telephone information service) and through Cornwall's published [Start for Life offer](#). The council's multi-agency Early Help Hub (EHH) offers a single point of contact for all levels of family support, and this works in partnership with Cornwall's Multi-Agency Referral Unit (MARU), which is a contact point for safeguarding concerns. Family hubs and the EHH work together on contingency and safety planning to ensure a sustainable framework of support for families, and to reduce the chance of re-referral.

Many families are geographically hard to reach given the rural nature of Cornwall. COVID-19 prompted the development of different delivery models, enabling more engagement with rurally isolated families, as well as with fathers. New digital delivery models included: a hybrid offer with online support via Teams and WhatsApp video calls with young people; more support during the evenings; a number of evidence-based parenting programmes (including Incredible Years, Living with Parents, and Solihull Online); and a parenting help programme to support families with children accessing the 'neurodevelopment pathway', jointly delivered with CAMHS.

Cornwall aims to involve families in service design and decision-making. The council is working to develop its Parent Carer Panel to link with other parent voice groups, such as the Maternity Voices Partnership and Parent Carer Cornwall.

Early Help Assessments

Cornwall uses an Early Help Assessment tool as a framework for understanding need and planning support. All requests for help go through the multi-agency EHH and are then triaged to the appropriate service to offer swift and easy access to Early Help. Cornwall uses the Quality Assurance Performance Management (QAPM) framework to measure the success of its targeted Early Help and social work support in terms of quality and timeliness. Examples of Early Help performance measurement include case load audits, assessment completion timescales, and case audit outcomes.

Areas for development and key lessons

The team advised other councils to first focus on the values and principles that will guide them, and to be clear on their client group and what they want to achieve. This shared vision will help with later discussions of process and funding. For Cornwall, one challenge was that some family hubs buildings were too small to house the variety of services the team wished to have in one space; careful planning is required. Going forward, the team wants to learn with and help other councils to develop their family hubs in line with the Family Hubs and Start for Life

programme vision, which will be achieved in partnership with the National Centre for Family Hubs, Foundations and government departments.

5. Lincolnshire County Council: taking time to plan and build on what is working well

Lincolnshire County Council delivers services to children and families and has been judged as Outstanding in recent inspections. They have an ethos of partnership working and emphasise the importance of careful planning and sustainability.

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Background

Lincolnshire is relatively early in its family hubs journey, establishing its first family hub in June 2023. The council received additional funding allocated through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and spent time building a needs assessment to ensure that the additional resources would be targeted where they were most needed.

Lincolnshire has a thriving network of 48 children's centres, upon which to build family hubs provision. The needs assessment confirmed that these centres were in the right places for families to access a range of services, and that the funded streams had the right focus for Lincolnshire for their babies, toddlers and families.

In addition, Lincolnshire intends to offer wider family hubs services for families with children aged 0-19, to supplement other services such as 'Future 4 Me', a therapeutic offer for those aged 12+, as well as the 'Positive Futures' model, which uses sport and physical activity to engage with young people in deprived communities. The strategy therefore aims to join up pre-existing services as well as add to them, ensuring a range of children and young people can access support.

Understanding current strengths and enhancing pre-existing services

The team knows the importance of understanding the context, strengths and barriers before jumping to quick solutions. Their strategy relies on engagement with families and the community sector. The team decided to invest in community development workers and listening to families as an essential part of planning, delivery and evaluation. Their programme will be flexible enough to respond throughout the current funded phase and beyond.

The council has identified 'seldom reached' families through their needs assessment, such as fathers, travelling communities, adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and military families, and uses specific communication strategies to engage with each of these groups. For example, following a county-wide piece of research on fathers, Lincolnshire developed a communication strategy which is open and welcoming, and assumes that the father is also a primary caregiver.

Lincolnshire uses the Supporting Families Programme Early Help System Guide to collate data and inform their transformation journey. Family voice is central to this, and they have developed a core set of questions for families which will measure their progress.

‘Three-pronged’ approach

Lincolnshire demonstrates the importance of evidence in the continuing development of its hubs. There is a three-pronged approach used in all 48 children’s centres, which will be applied to the 10 family hubs:

- Data is analysed and understood
- Family voice is listened to, analysed and responded to
- Practitioners and community members are listened to and involved

Lincolnshire uses an integrated management structure. No new posts have been established for the management of family hubs. Instead, a core team of managers has been assembled from different teams, who provide the experience and expertise needed to build on current positions. The team believes that this will ensure a sustainable transition to the family hub model, because staff already have sector-specific knowledge.

There is also a well-developed, multi-agency workforce development programme in Lincolnshire. There is a clear training pathway, into which the Start for Life and Family Hubs programme requirements are being built.

Local commissioning arrangements

Lincolnshire delivers many of its services via local commissioning arrangements and partnership working. For example, 85 per cent of early help and ‘Team Around the Child’ is led by partners. The council has had a commissioning team in place from the beginning of the family hubs programme. Many organisations are commissioned to help deliver services, including some from the voluntary sector. Lincolnshire has ‘ring-fenced’ a pot of money to work specifically with smaller organisations who can help to reach seldom heard families and communities and build community capacity to aid the sustainability of the council’s offer.

The main local commissioning contracts are for Development Officers (from Family Action), early years activities, and stay and play activities. The council is also looking at an integrated commissioning model with health partners focusing on parent-infant relationships.

Areas for development and key lessons

The team advises councils to take their time to understand the current context and robustly plan, dedicating anywhere between six months to a year for this process. This will help to ensure family hubs are set up in the right areas and are developed with the wishes and outcomes of families firmly in mind.

The team also advised councils to listen to lessons learned by others, perhaps by attending family hubs forums or conferences.

Finally, the team suggested that councils look at what is already going well in their area and then build from that; enhancing the offer is more important than dismantling and rebuilding it.

6. City of York Council: establishing a community network of support and thinking creatively

City of York Council treats family hubs as one part of a holistic, thriving network of support, proposing partnerships with organisations such as universities and libraries to best serve the needs of the community.

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Background

York is in the foundational stages of its family hubs journey. The council received funding through the Family Hubs Transformation Fund and are developing at least three family hubs. Head of Innovation Niall McVicar was keen to emphasise that while family hubs services will be delivered in physical buildings, he wants them to act as part of an overarching network of support for families. The team sees family hubs as one part of an overall service transformation, linking services up to meet local need so that there is 'no wrong door' for families in York. The team wants families to feel supported wherever they are in the community, not just when they are accessing family hub services.

System mapping and co-production

York is conducting a thorough systems mapping process before establishing any hubs and has adapted a tool developed by Foundations (previously the Early Intervention Foundation) for local use to assist this process. Niall McVicar described the council and partners as being in 'service transformation mode', as the availability of funding to explore family hubs has prompted the team to think about providing fresh solutions to long-standing problems. This requires gathering feedback from families who will benefit from the services. The council employs a Co-Production Coordinator, and their role is to have informal conversations with service users, feeding this data into future service design.

York has also received support from the National Centre for Family Hubs (NCFH), which ran several sessions with key stakeholders to share best practice and help facilitate thinking around the transformation of services. The NCFH also helped York to run an 'elected member workshop', which helped members of the council engage in the development of family hubs.

York is building on its co-production workstream. While parents and carers have long been involved in the co-production of services in York, the team wants parents and carers to be involved in the ongoing governance of services and support, not just co-produce them.

Community network, 'no wrong door'

The team emphasised the importance of grounding family hubs in the community within York. To decide where their family hubs will be, they have been looking at where families go already, and locations families trust and value.

York is piloting two 'Family Navigator' roles, who support families to navigate and access services. Family Navigators operate from within family hubs, but also perform outreach services across the city. They play systems change role too by identifying where there are areas for improvement in how services link together. Additionally, York is adopting the 'Parent Champion' model, with parent volunteers acting as information givers to other parents and carers who may benefit from access to services. As parents in the local community, they understand the challenges of caring for children, which helps with cooperation between families and service providers.

Areas for development and key lessons

For York, sustainability and managing expectations are two key challenges on the horizon, especially once the funding from the Family Hubs Transformation Fund has been used. The most significant impact of the transformation will only become visible in the longer term. They are prioritising creating sustainable change by transforming how services work together so that the integrated family hubs approach goes beyond simply buildings. To meet this challenge, they are hoping to make use of the strong university presence within the city, through partnerships with both the University of York and York St. John University. They are exploring the possibility of funding a PhD student to conduct evaluations of Family hubs in a York-specific context, which will strengthen ties with the universities, and help to generate valuable evidence.

7. Overall summary

Some key themes can be drawn from an analysis of these six case studies. All councils are providing family hubs services for families with children aged between 0-19, and up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Most family hubs buildings are being converted from children's centres, though councils will generally continue to offer children's centres as part of their family hub network. Beyond the physical buildings, the family hubs agenda has provided councils with an opportunity to rethink how they design and deliver services to best meet families' needs.

The importance of strong partnerships was highlighted by all councils, whether with organisations who are helping to deliver the services, or with public bodies such as schools and GPs who can help signpost children and families to family hubs. Councils are making good use of local commissioning arrangements to help deliver services, with the voluntary sector often being engaged for this purpose. No councils are running all family hubs services on their own, and some are almost entirely managing their services through commissioning arrangements, such as Essex County Council.

Most councils underwent significant planning periods before setting up any family hubs. For example, Lincolnshire spent time developing a needs assessment to ensure that the areas of greatest need could access a family hub. Essex commissioned ethnographic research on what families wanted from its services before deciding to work with HCRG Care Group and Barnardo's to deliver its hubs. City of York Council is conducting a thorough systems mapping process before establishing any hubs and has used the Family Hubs Transformation Fund as an opportunity to think about its services as one interconnected network. Generally, the move towards family hubs has provided councils with the opportunity for service transformation and joined up delivery, with co-location of other services in hubs, such as midwifery, CAMHS, health visitors, maternity services and school nursing. The idea of family hubs acting as a 'one-stop shop' was popular, so that families can access support all in one place.

Incorporating families in service design and decision-making was a priority for all of the councils interviewed. Parent carer panels were being developed in all councils that received Family Hubs and Start for Life funding (as this is a requirement for councils receiving this funding), which helps to gather feedback from families about services. Some councils, such as Essex, undertook detailed research about what families wanted from their services. Others, such as York, emphasised a desire to include families in governance, not just service design.

The impact of the additional funding received through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme was interesting to note. Of those councils interviewed, three received this funding (Salford, Cornwall, and Lincolnshire), whereas three did not (Essex, Stockton-on-Tees, and York). It should however be noted that York received some funding through the Family Hubs Transformation Fund. Salford used this funding to directly improve its services, for example

by investing in the 0-2 offer, perinatal mental health services and the peer-to-peer infant feeding model, as well as Early Help Assessments. Cornwall also used this funding to improve services, but in addition chose to invest in its staff, governance and training. Those councils that were not provided with this additional funding were acutely aware of resource management, with those at York voicing concern about the short-term nature of the Family Hubs Transformation Fund funding, and those at Essex suggesting there was a need to manage resources effectively to ensure families in the greatest need received support.

Overall, there is a high degree of energy and enthusiasm about family hubs from council officers. They see the value of the hubs, and all councils are making great strides towards developing and improving their services, whether they received additional funding through the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme or not. The challenge for most councils is sustaining this momentum, and ensuring these services continue to be provided for families going forward. It is important to continue to research and assess the impact of family hubs, establishing an evidence base of best practice going forward.