

# £20m to provide more early help for vulnerable families



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Thousands of vulnerable or low-income families in England will benefit from a multi-million-pound investment to improve access to early education, health and care services.

Delivering on a manifesto commitment, the Government has today (Thursday 19 August) set out plans to elevate its Family Hubs programme, backed by £20 million of new funding, that will support councils to set up new Family Hubs in up to 10 new areas.

Family Hubs offer families, children and young people somewhere to access a range of support services, which can include early education and childcare, mental health support, meetings with health visitors or attending parenting classes, counselling or advice for victims of domestic abuse.

The hubs – delivered in person and supported virtually via online services – help families, children and young people more easily access the help they need, regardless of where in the country they live. They bring services together into one place, preventing parents and carers from having to search for different types of support that might otherwise be too hard to find, especially for those on lower incomes, helping build connections between families, professionals and voluntary services.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

It is absolutely vital that all families across England have access to the same high quality services in their local communities, no matter where they live. Services like these which offer early help and intervention can make a huge difference for parents and carers, levelling up opportunities for every child to fulfil their potential.

That is why we are championing Family Hubs, and this additional £20 million investment will drive forward this programme, helping to grow and expand hubs across the country so that even more parents and children can access the early health and education services we know can have a lifelong positive impact.

The £20 million announced today, awarded from the Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund, will include:

£10 million for the Family Hubs 'Transformation Fund', which will support local authorities to open family hubs in approximately 10 new areas of England. Family Hubs are already operating in several areas of England, providing vital support services to vulnerable families; and

£10 million to expand the 'Growing Up Well' digital project, designed to level up outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged families. This involves improving how information is shared between professionals working with families and children in these Hubs.

This builds on the Government's manifesto commitment to champion Family Hubs so that they help provide families, including those who are more vulnerable, with intensive support for their children, not just in the early years but throughout their lives. The Government has already invested £14 million to deliver on this commitment, including the introduction of a national centre for family hubs earlier this year, led by the Anna Freud Centre to scale-up the number of Family Hubs and spread best practice on what works well to Hub providers across England.

Dr Camilla Rosan, Head of Early Years and Prevention at the Anna Freud Centre, said:

We welcome this £20 million investment from the Government into the work of Family Hubs across England. This additional funding is an opportunity to expand the Family Hub offer across local areas so that more families can access high quality support as soon as they need it.

The Anna Freud Centre is championing this work through our

leadership of the newly founded National Centre for Family Hubs. The evidence is clear that early help is what makes the most difference to the wellbeing of children and their families, and Family Hubs will sit at the heart of communities providing this support. We will continue to work closely with local areas to learn from and share existing expertise about what works best for families. That way, we move one step closer to providing every child with a positive start in life from the very youngest age.

Many councils have already started to open Family Hubs, benefitting families across the country. They often operate an 'open door' approach, with families able to have better access to vital services and receive support from a range of professionals, including midwives, health visitors, GPs, schools or social services.

Today's investment follows publication of the Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days, led by the Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom and published by the Department for Health and Social Care in March 2021, which identified six action areas which will help to have a transformational impact for babies and their families.

One action area was to championing Family Hubs as a place where parents and carers can access Start for Life services. So the National Centre for Family Hubs will make sure councils understand how best to build a Family Hub network and to take steps at a national and local level to reduce the stigma some parents or carers experience when asking for help.

The Department for Education also recently launched a second round of recruitment for three more local area partners for the Family Hubs-Growing Up Well project.

Three additional local councils primarily based in disadvantaged areas will be recruited as part of the project to help develop data and digital products to support the practical implementation of Family Hubs. This will involve working with the Department to provide local insights to help develop digital solutions that reflect their community's local needs.

The project aims to improve how professionals collaborate and

plan for families, with a particular focus on improving how information is shared and improving access and navigation of services for families and builds on work already being carried out by both Bristol City Council and Lancashire County Council who were recruited in the first round of the project.

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