

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Working Group – Family Hubs - Findings

Working Group Details, Findings and Recommendations	
Group Membership	Councillors Olivia Brown, Emily Harman, Peter Cooper, Sandra Mackrow
Methodology	<p>23 April 2025 - Working Group visits to two Family Hubs – Poole Old Town & Kinson and West Howe.</p> <p>9 September 2025 - Working Group meeting with Pippa Emerson, Head of Service, Early Help and Targeted Intervention.</p> <p>Various working group meetings with Democratic Services to scope approach to visits and meetings, reflect on visit and agree findings.</p>
Key Lines of Enquiry	
<p>The scope of the enquiry was set out by O&S councillors as follows:</p> <p>The government has helped to fund Family Hubs across local authorities in the UK, BCP has been a part of this initiative and is part way through the journey.</p> <p>The work done so far has been brought to committee for scrutiny, however, due to the size, ongoing nature, and scope of this project, the committee would like to work with the team further to understand how Family Hubs are progressing.</p> <p>As a committee we wish to understand how the roll out of Family Hubs has gone. We also want to know what is working and what is not and as stakeholders what, if anything, we can help with or be part of to ensure that Family Hubs in BCP are providing the best Early Help that they can. The group would like to speak to front line staff in Family Hubs and a manager responsible for the Family Hubs service.</p>	

Working group findings

The Working Group is encouraged by the thoughtful development of Family Hubs and the dedication of the staff leading them. It is clear that considerable effort has gone into creating a supportive and responsive environment for families, which was a central concern at the outset.

Community engagement is a visible strength, with hubs actively working to connect with parents, carers, and local organisations. The group recognises the importance of continuing to explore how these efforts can be made more effective and inclusive, and how they reflect the evolving needs of the communities they are serving. Clearer measurement of effectiveness would be beneficial, supported by improved data collection and feedback mechanisms.

Staff wellbeing has also been a key theme. The commitment of staff is evident, and there is a shared interest in ensuring that wellbeing is supported in a way that is meaningful and sustainable. The group has reflected on a range of ideas to support staff, including practical actions and the importance of listening to staff feedback.

Ongoing Engagement:

The Working Group would welcome regular engagement with Family Hub teams, framed as open and constructive discussions and visits rather than anything more formal or that would impact on workload. These conversations are seen as a valuable opportunity to share learning, understand challenges, and support continuous, collaborative improvement.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends that Officers:

1. Continue to build on the strong foundations of community engagement, with a focus on inclusivity and responsiveness.
2. Explore ways to support staff wellbeing that are informed by staff experiences and feedback.
3. Develop clear measures of effectiveness relating to Family Hubs, with key performance indicators focused on reach, inclusivity and responsiveness to evolving community needs, supported by improved data collection and feedback.

Note - These recommendations are directed to Head of Service, Early Help and Targeted Intervention, and Director of Children's Social Care.

The Working Group recommends that Cabinet:

4. Notes the scrutiny that has been undertaken on Family Hubs and the working group's finding of the strong staff commitment to community engagement.
5. Endorses continued support for Family Hubs, with future priorities to include investment in staff capacity, professional development and enhanced tools to evidence impact.

The Working Group recommends that the Children's Services O&S Committee:

6. Establishes regular, informal dialogue between the Committee and Family Hub teams to maintain transparency and shared understanding. This to be done annually by named rapporteurs and included on the committee's work programme. Agreed rapporteurs to maintain links to Family Hubs through independent visits and highlight any significant progress/ red flags to committee as arising to assist other committee members with understanding where any further scrutiny may be valuable.