

Oxfordshire's Best Start Family Hubs

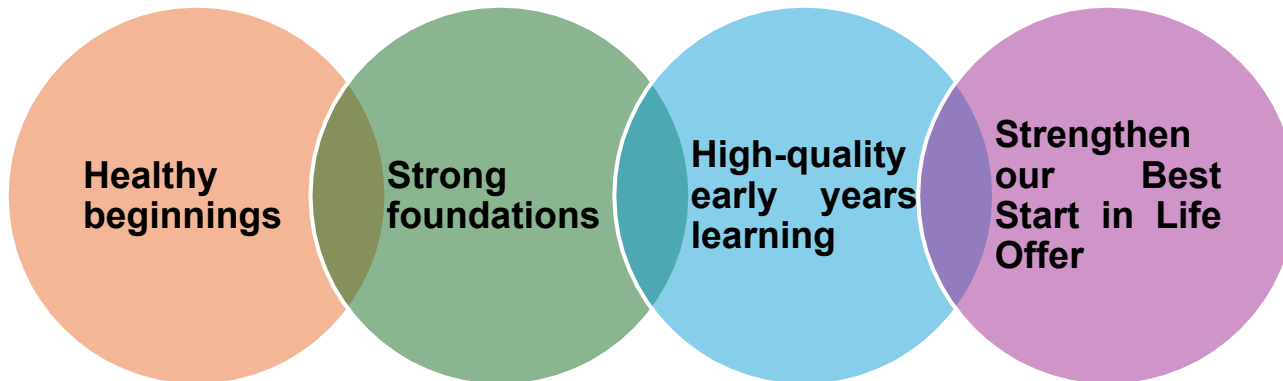
September 2026



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Oxfordshire's Best Start in Life Plan

- In July 2025, government published the **Giving every child the best start in life strategy**. This is the government's strategy for **improving child development** and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5-year-olds in England have a good level of development (GLD) by 2028.
- As part of achieving the national target, each Local Authority has been given a local target for good level of development. In Oxfordshire it has been decided that we needed to have more ambitious targets, and therefore revised local targets (RLT) have been set to bring us in line with national performance and above the set local targets in 2026. Our revised local targets are therefore;
 - **All eligible children 79.8% (2% above Local Target)**
 - **All free school meal eligible children 59.8% (9% above Local Target)**
- Our Best Start in Life Plan sets out four priority areas



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Best Start Family Hubs

Best Start Family Hubs will be key in helping to achieve our local target and outcomes for babies, children, young people and families.

What are Best Start Family Hubs (BSFHs)?

Best Start Family Hubs (BSFHs) offer welcoming, inclusive, environments where every family feels valued and confident to ask for support. BSFHs will be open to all families with children aged 0–19 (or up to 25 for young people with SEND). While universally accessible, they will prioritise support for families with babies and young children, due to the critical time for cognitive, physical and emotional development.

At the core of our offer, in line with Government criteria, the hubs will provide supportive parenting advice, stay and play activities, help with children's learning and development at home, preventative and universal health services – especially for babies and their families – and early support for children with additional needs.

As well as the core offer, the BSFHs will offer holistic support to families and will ensure they are connected into the wider community offer, including, but not limited to, welfare advice, debt advice, early help, and help for those at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse.



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Best Start Family Hubs

The Best Start Family Hub Programme launched in 2025 with a range of activity completed to date



Best Start Family Hubs

The key next steps are:

Cuddesdon Corner

- Onboarding of Phase 1 staffing (Family Hub Practitioner roles)
- Development of summer offer
- Development of core and wider offer
- Mobilisation of parenting & home learning environment programmes

Primary Best Start Family Hubs

- Phase 1 Staffing offer for the four sites developed
- Phase 2 of staffing implemented
- Buildings confirmed and upgrades completed
- Development of core offer

Best Start Family Hub Network sites

- Identification of core offer requirements to inform grant process
- Development of grant process for VCFSE, including quality and reporting standards

Other key areas

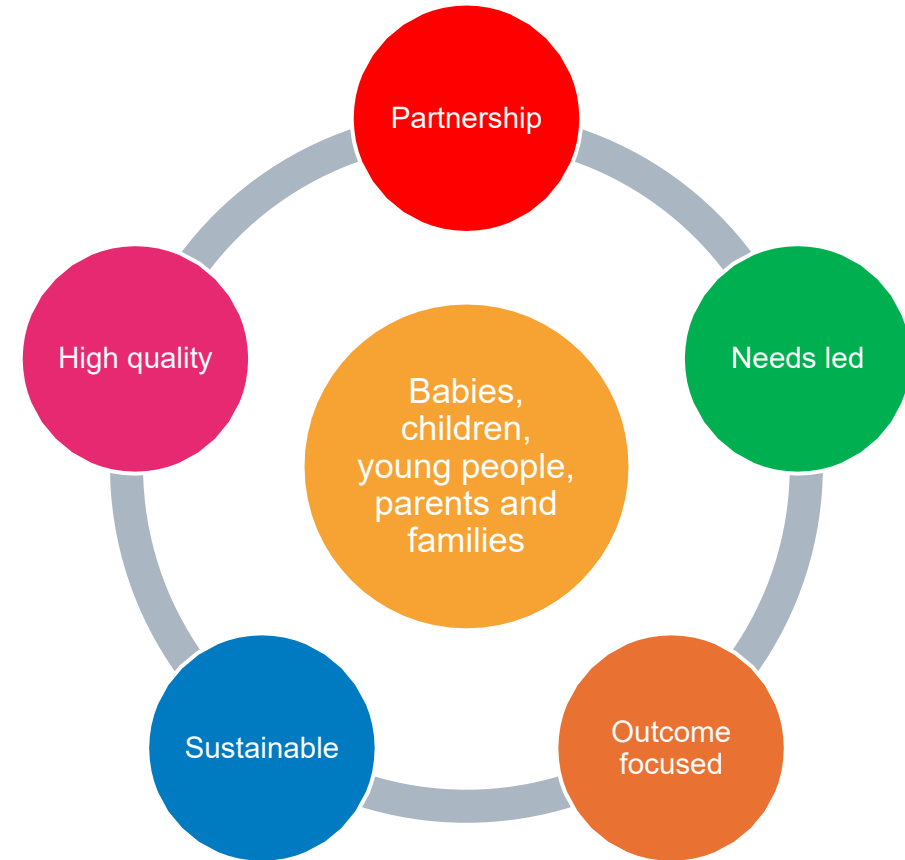
- Digital offer development (initial Phase 1 on OCC website and FIS)
- Workforce development strategy
- Outreach plan
- Monitoring & review data



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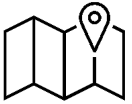
Vision for Best Start Family Hubs

- The vision for Family Hubs is that there is a network of provision across Oxfordshire for children and families to ensure their needs are met, which is underpinned by:
 - Access
 - Connection
 - Relationships
- This vision is underpinned by the following ways of working:



Strategic Direction of Travel

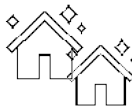
- The Oxfordshire County Council model for Family Hubs will include:



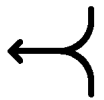
- **Localities** – These localities will bring partners together within the geographical footprint to ensure there is awareness of understanding of local services, developing an understanding of local need, and responding appropriately.



- **Best Start Family Hubs (Primary Hubs)** - These hubs will be the friendly and accessible places for families, where they can drop in for information, advice and signposting. A core offer will be provided, including services in relation to parenting & home learning environment programmes, services for children with additional needs and an offer for babies. Staff will ensure there is a warm referral to other local services, if required (such as youth service, benefit information).



- **Network sites** – These will be sites, either delivered by the Local Authority or the partners, which regularly deliver core services, such as play and learn, parenting and / or home learning environment programmes



- **Outreach** – For families that may be less likely to engage in a Hub or Network site, across each locality an outreach plan will be developed to identify the key cohorts of families and how they can engage in the offers of support available.



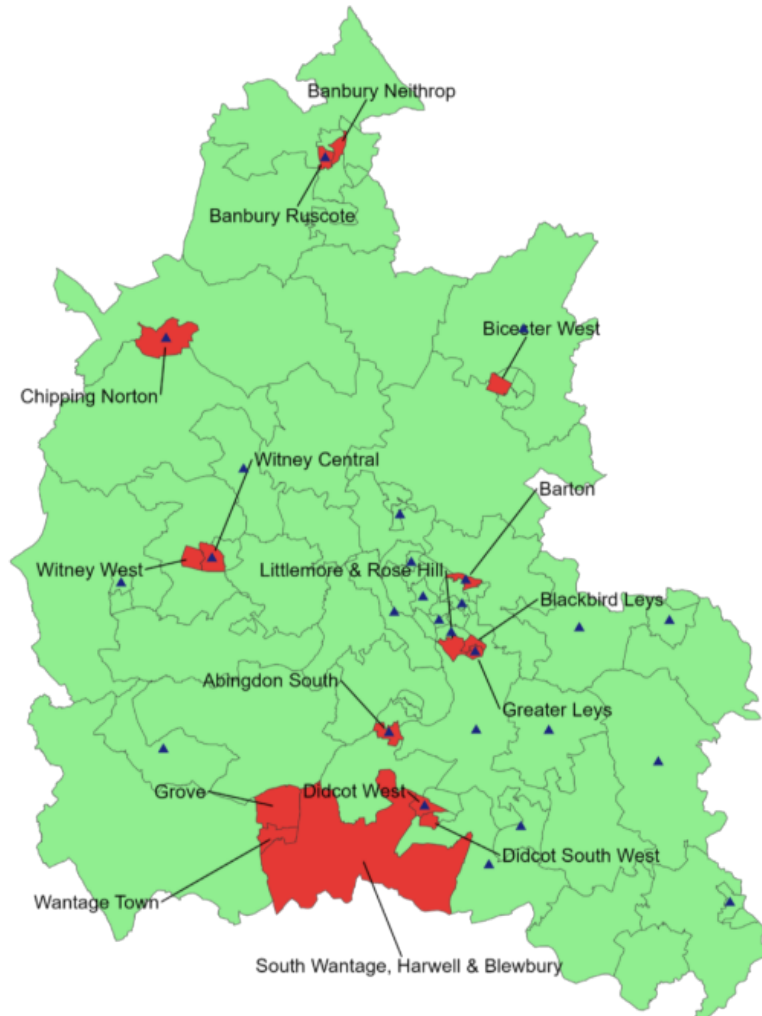
- **Digital** - The digital offer will provide families information on key topics, as well as links to local services. In time this will also include the delivery of key services, such as parenting and home learning environment programmes, information sessions and workshops



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Strategic Direction of Travel

Priority Areas Identified Across Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children's Social Care, and Early Help Datasets

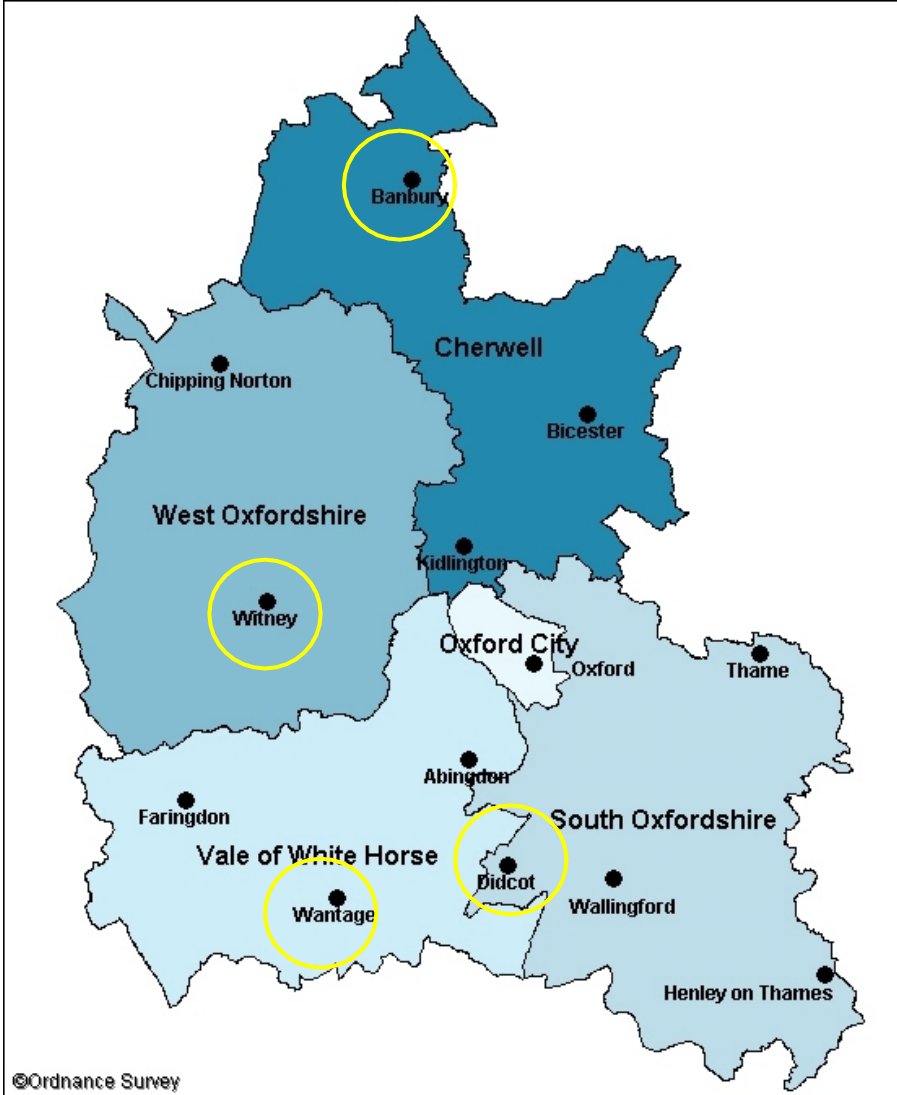


- As part of the scoping and analysis stage, research was undertaken to understand more about the Children's Social Care data. The study used four years of administrative data (2020–2024) from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Early Help services, and Children's Statutory Services (CSC) to assess patterns of vulnerability and service engagement. A decision-analytic framework was applied to map family pathways through the social care system and identify key intervention points.
- The MSOAs highlighted in red represent the top 16 areas with significantly higher levels of need. These were identified based on the volume of prevalence rate to MASH, referrals signposted to community services, and escalations to Early Help and Children Statutory services.
- The MSOA areas with blue markers indicating the availability of children's centres
- The following MSOAs: Abingdon South, Banbury Neithrop, Banbury Ruscote, Barton, Bicester West, Blackbird Leys, Didcot West, Greater Leys, Grove, Littlemore & Rose Hill, Witney Central, and Witney West, consistently emerged across all three datasets as areas of high need.



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Strategic Direction of Travel



- **Five Family Hub localities**

- These will follow the District Council footprint (West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, Cherwell District Council and City of Oxford).

- **One Best Start Family Hub in each locality**

- One Best Start Family Hub (Primary Hub) will be in each of the localities.
- These locations were identified following the social care research and the population analysis.
- We will work with partners to ensure the physical space is fully utilised, including by partners.



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Strategic Direction of travel

The proposed buildings for the Best Start Family Hubs:

Locality	Location	Proposed primary Best Start Family Hubs
City		Cuddesdon Corner (Blackbird Leys Children & Family Centre)
Cherwell	Banbury	Banbury Children and Family Centre
West Oxfordshire	Witney	Witney Children and Family Centre
South Oxfordshire	Didcot	Didcot Children and Family Centre
Vale of White Horse	Wantage / Grove	No building / site identified



BSFHs Core Offer

A Warm Welcome

All staff ensure every family feels welcomed, valued and confident to access support.

Navigation

Families are supported to navigate, connect and access the services they need.

Play & Learn

Engaging sessions delivered by practitioners and partners to connect families and support child development.

Parenting & HLE

Programmes focused on strengthening parenting skills and home learning, starting with 3–4 year olds.

Additional Needs Support

Inclusion Practitioners identify needs early and support improved developmental outcomes.

Healthy Baby Offer

Minimum offer supporting development reviews and connecting families to health services.



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BSFHs Wider Offer



Wider services

As well as the Core Offer, the primary Best Start Family Hubs will provide the minimum offer for each of the following areas, and we will ensure that over the three years we will deliver against the go further options (as outlined by the Department for Education).

The Financial and other assistance will be the priority area, to maximise the funding that has been allocated for Family Hubs from the Household Resilience Fund.

Services for children aged 5+ and young people

- Youth services – universal and targeted
- Youth justice services
- School attendance
- Holiday Activities and Food

Health and Wellbeing

- Health visiting (0-5)
- Public health (0-19)
- Mental health
- Maternity, midwifery and neonatal
- Nutrition and healthy growth
- Oral health improvement
- Screen time
- Smoking cessation
- Substance misuse support
- Vaccinations

Financial and other assistance

- Birth registration
- Debt advice, money and welfare advice
- Food support
- Fuel poverty
- Housing
- Parental leave and pay
- Social welfare advice services

Wider family support services

- Armed forces families
- Children affected by parental imprisonment
- Reducing parental conflict
- Support for adoptive, kinship and foster families
- Support for separated and separating parents/carers
- Targeted family support- family help

Safeguarding

- Domestic abuse
- Tackling child sexual abuse and exploitation

BSFHs and Parenting & HLE Programmes

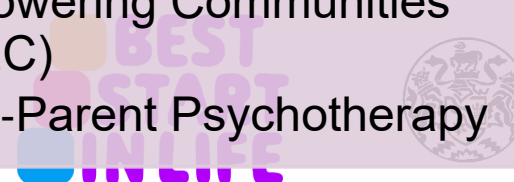
- As part of the multi-agency Family Hub Programme Board, a task and finish group has been underway to identify the programmes that should be delivered within the BSFHs and Network Sites. The proposed programmes that have been identified for delivery are:

Home Learning Environment Programmes

- EasyPeasy (digital offer)
- Early Talk Boost
- PEEP Learning Together
- Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL / Making it REAL)
- The Parenting Puzzle (Exemption request confirmed by DfE)
- Triple P Online

Parenting Programmes

- Triple P Online
- The Nurturing Programme (Exemption request confirmed by DfE)
- Keeping Your Child in Mind (parental separation/conflict)
- Empowering Families Empowering Communities (EPEC)
- Child-Parent Psychotherapy



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BSFHs and digital offer

- The aim of the Best Start Family Hub Digital Offer will be to ensure that we are able to extend the support far beyond buildings and support families with navigating and finding the help they are need.
- We will need to ensure that the offer aligns with the national Best Start in Life offer to help provide a seamless journey for the families.



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BSFHs and VCFSE

- Within Oxfordshire there is a diverse VCFSE providing support and services across a range of different ages.
- However, we recognise the VCFSE are increasingly experiencing barriers and issues to accessing funding for delivery of services. A key priority is ensuring that we strengthen the VCFSE and develop our relationships to extend the reach of high-quality services across the county and engaging key target populations.
- There are two keyways we are proposing we are able to move forward together

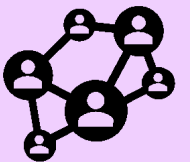
The Council also recognises that with the grant funding only being available for three years, we need to ensure that a key area of focus is supporting the VCFSE to continue to develop high quality services. Therefore, it is proposed that we provide funding for:

- Strategic infrastructure support – Funding and resource to an organisation (or consortium) that can proactively engage the wider VCFSE, support with communication, identify workforce development requirements and create capacity to engage in BSFH programme.
- Strategic locality leadership – A lead VCFSE in each locality to engage with the BSFH programme and provide clear communication and feedback with the wider VCFSE in the locality.



We develop a grant funding programme for the VCFSE (including community-run children's centres) for the delivery of the following services:

- Delivery of Parenting and Home Learning Environment Programmes
- Play and learn expansion
- Outreach
- Innovation/ seed funding

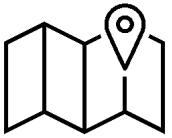


This grant funding opportunity would be open to all VCFSE organisations, including the community-run children centres.

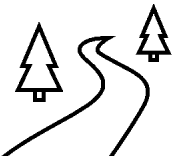


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BSFHs and Youth Services



- **Best Start Family Hubs role in navigating the youth offer** - Best Start Family Hubs will operate as part of a connected local system, where staff are equipped to confidently identify need and support families to navigate both universal and targeted youth provision. This includes enabling Youth Services to flexibly utilise Family Hub spaces to deliver targeted interventions, such as 1:1 support, within community-based settings.



- **Joined up pathway from 0-19 (or 25 with SEND)** - The alignment of Youth Partnerships with the Best Start Family Hub locality footprint provides a solid foundation to develop a coherent 0–19 (or up to 25 for those with SEND) offer. This approach supports a more joined-up pathway from early childhood through adolescence, improving continuity of support and strengthening outcomes for families.



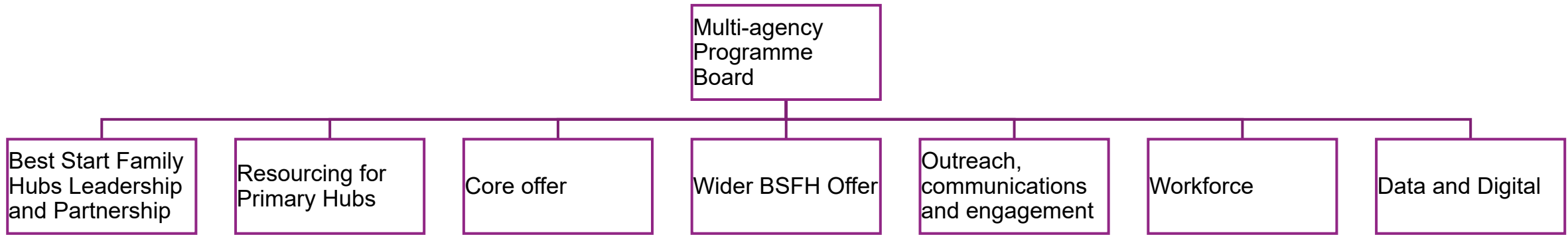
- **Shared footprints** - The work currently being undertaken with youth partnerships aligns with the same footprint as the localities for Best Start Family Hubs. This will provide the opportunity to strengthen the VCFSE in a joined-up way across the localities.



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Best Start Family Hub Programme Workstreams

Following the publication of the latest guidance from DfE the workstreams within the programme have been reviewed and updated as follows:



The Board includes representatives from: Children's Social Care, SEND, Early Years education, Public Health, Primary School, Early Years settings, Oxford Health, ICB, VCFSE.



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What does success look like?

- The key measures of success for Best Start Family Hubs are:
 - Increase in the percentage of children with a good level of development at 5 years old
 - Reduction in the percentage point difference between the proportion of children eligible or not eligible for Free School Meals achieving a Good Level of Development
 - Increase in the take up of 2-2.5 year health and development review
 - Percentage achieving good level of development at 2-2.5year review – outcome metric
 - Increase in the take-up rate of 2-year-old disadvantage childcare offer and of the 3–4-year-old 15 hours childcare offer



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Appendix

- VCFSE Funding proposals
- Programme workstreams in further detail



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Appendix 1 - VCFSE Funding priorities

Required areas	Rationale
Parenting and Home Learning Environment Programmes	There are currently a number of VCFSE organisations delivering parenting and home learning environment programmes across Oxfordshire. A multi-agency task and finish group has reviewed the existing local offer and is working to develop a clearer, more consistent offer for the future. Ongoing funding will be critical to ensure that these organisations can continue delivery and to support a more coordinated and sustainable approach. For example, the funding could be utilised for: • To cover the staffing costs to deliver the programmes • To provide creche facilities (reduce barriers to families attending) • To train staff in the delivery of the programmes • For refreshments, resources, room hire, etc. • Interpreters (where language may be a barrier to attending)



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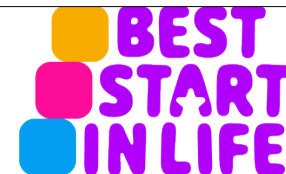
Appendix 1 - VCFSE Funding priorities

Proposed area	Rationale
Best Start Family Hub – Play and learn expansion	We know that across Oxfordshire there are a range of VCFSE organisations delivering Play and Learn sessions. As part of Best Start Family Hubs we are committed to looking at how we can strengthen evidence-based sessions and expand this offer across the County. For example, this funding could be used to: • Train VCFSE and partners in developing and delivering evidence-based sessions • Development of a new regular play and learn session in a rural area • A SEND only Play and Learn session
Outreach	A key part of our Best Start Family Hub Offer will include the development of an inclusive and non-stigmatising outreach service, that embeds the early help approach and supports the building of trust and enables families over time to access wider services in the community. For example, this funding could be used to: • Fund an outreach service in an affluent area to engage those families that may not feel comfortable to attend a local play and learn sessions • Outreach with Traveller Families • Families within the Armed Forces • Families where there are emerging additional needs
Innovation / seed funding	As well as the above, we also want to enable creative place-base innovations that address local needs. For example, this funding could be used to: • Fund a mobile toy library to reach rural communities • Trial an online programme or session to engage families that cannot attend in person.

Appendix 1 - VCFSE Funding priorities

As well as the funding for direct delivery, it is proposed that the budget is made available to help develop the strategic leadership within the VCFSE.

Proposed area	Rationale
Strategic infrastructure support	Oxfordshire has a thriving VCFSE sector, with a diverse range of organisations providing services and support across different ages. With the development of our Best Start in Life Plan and our focus on developing partnerships with the VCFSE, we need to develop the strategic infrastructure support to our VCFSE working within Early Years and Primary School ages. This offer would complement our existing infrastructure provided by Oxfordshire Youth Offer and the offer from OCVA to the VCFSE. This Strategic Infrastructure Support will be able to support with: • Mapping and engaging the VCFSE • Ensuring that the VCFSE in this area are kept up to date and engaged in national and local policy development • Support in workforce development • Ensuring there is a clear feedback loop between the VCFSE and Oxfordshire County Council.
Strategic locality leadership	As part of the Best Start Family Hubs model, five localities will be established. Within each locality, it is proposed that a lead VCFSE partner is identified and funding provided to increase the capacity to engage consistently in locality-based governance and partnership meetings. This role would include clear responsibilities for fostering strong relationships with the wider VCFSE sector within the locality, acting as a conduit between organisations and the Family Hubs Partnership, and supporting the identification of shared themes, emerging needs and gaps in provision at a local level.



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Appendix 2 - BSFHs workstreams

Workstreams	Aim	Intended outcomes / outputs
Best Start Family Hubs Leadership and Partnership	To ensure that there is a clear system wide leadership and partnership to delivering of Best Start Family Hubs	• A fit for purpose Multi-Agency Programme Board • 5 Partnerships across the County building a detailed understanding of need, aligned to the Youth Partnerships
Resourcing for Primary Best Start Family Hubs	To ensure that the 5 Best Start Family Hubs are delivering in line with local priorities and DfE requirements	• Hubs are effectively staffed • BSFHs are located in the areas with highest need • BSFHs are delivering from fit for purpose buildings
Core Best Start Family Hub Offer	To ensure that the council is delivering in line with the government requirements, and also reflecting local need.	• Clear parenting & HLE Programme offer across the county • High-quality play and learn sessions across the county • Clear healthy baby offer across the county. • Best Start Inclusion Practitioners in each primary hub



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Appendix 2 - BSFHs workstreams

Workstreams	Aim	Intended outcomes / outputs
Wider Best Start Family Hub Offer	To ensure that the BSFH are delivering the wider offer, and where possible the go further	- Grant funding is available to partners to deliver the cost-of-living services across the county - There is a clear joined up offer across BSFH and Youth Partnerships to create a connected service for 0-19 (25 with SEND)
Outreach, communications, and engagement	To ensure that families and partners are shaping the BSFH offer and can access the services that need.	- Communications plan (linked to BSIL) - Engagement Plan
Workforce development	There is a clear workforce development plan, that covers both internal and external partners to ensure that staff are delivering in line with BSIL requirements and BSFH requirements.	- Workforce development strategy - Range of training provided
Data and digital	To develop our digital offer for families and partners and ensuring that the programme and all future progress is tracked and monitored to ensure we are in line with DfE requirements and local priorities.	- Improved understanding of local services and information - Families can access and engage in services in a range of different ways - Clear tracking and monitoring of progress.