

Date: 2nd November 2021

Implementing Family Hubs

Transcript – Panel - Family Hubs: From Vision to Impact

Chair: Dina Koschorreck, Parent Participation Worker, National Centre for Family Hubs

Speakers:

- Marc Rooney, Deputy Director for Family Hubs and Early Years Targeted Interventions, Department for Education
- Denise Beevers, Service Manager, Doncaster Local Authority
- Michael Coldwell, Professor of Education and Head of Research and Innovation, Sheffield Institute of Education
- Donna Molloy, Director of Policy & Practice, Early Intervention Foundation
- Andrea King, Clinical Director, Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families

Camilla Rosan - 00:00:01

We're going to move into our panel discussion now so we can restart and reset Dana. Well, you can introduce yourself again.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:00:15

- Thank you, Camilla. Yeah, I think I'll just start again for those who might have joined a little bit later. Hello and welcome everyone to the plenary panel, Family Hubs: From Vision to Impact. Thank you very much for joining us.

I'm Dina Koschorreck, a Parent Participation Adviser for the National Centre for Family Hubs, and I'll be chairing this event. First, I would like to thank all the speakers for joining us. We're very much looking forward to hearing your views on Family Hubs and some of your experiences so far, and we're also very keen

to get as many questions from the audience as possible. Before we begin, I would like to tell you all a bit about the event structure.

We will start by each panellist introducing themselves and briefly answering a question on Family Hubs. Each speaker will have about two minutes for that and then I will give them a signal. And after that, we will open up the discussion to the audience. If you have any questions for our panellists, please write them in the Q&A. My colleague will monitor the chat and the Q&A throughout the event, and I will pass your questions on to the speakers then.

So, thank you very much. First we will hear from Marc Rooney. Welcome, Marc. Could you please briefly introduce yourself and tell us what problems you think the Family Hubs can solve.

Marc Rooney, 00:01:49

- Hello everyone and thank you for joining us. I'm Marc Rooney, I'm the deputy director responsible for Family Hubs at the Department for Education, and on the question, as you'd expect civil servants to do, I'm going to refer back to the minister's speech this morning, which highlighted how local authorities are using the Family Hub model to make progress on those underpinning principles of improving access, connection and relationships and also clear on the importance of delivering on the critical Start of Life agenda, that Dame Leadsom has just spoke about on our work on Family Hubs.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:02:29

- Thank you, Marc. That was very interesting. Our next speaker is Denise Beevers. Could you also introduce yourself and tell us what difference you hope Family Hubs will make for children and families?

Denise Beevers - 00:02:44

- Hi, good afternoon, everybody. My name's Denise Beevers, and I'm a service manager in Doncaster authority for the twelve Family Hubs that we have in Doncaster. I was part of the implementation and development of the Family Hubs when we transformed our children's centres into Family Hubs.

I think, for me, the difference that the Family Hubs can make for families is being the place to go to for families it supports families to function effectively,

giving children the best start in life. We've heard that phrase a lot today, and that's certainly giving children the best start in life to live happy, healthy, and hopefully for the children to reach their full potential.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:03:33

- Thank you, Denise. And now we will hear from Michael Coldwell. Michael, could you also please introduce yourself and tell us what your hopes are for Family Hubs, and what difference you think they will make?

Michael Coldwell - 00:03:45

- Thanks Dina. Yes, so I'm fortunate to be working with Denise as part of the evaluation that we're conducting. I'm a professor of education and lead for the Sheffield Hallam University Evaluations, part the DfE Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund. You'll have heard from colleagues from Ecorys who are also working on that with other local authorities this morning. So, we've worked with Doncaster for many years on lots of different projects, most recently the Early Years Outcomes Fund Evaluation, and we've got lots of experience evaluating programmes with a local systems change focus.

My work, as an evaluator and a researcher, I've used lots and done lots of work around using models, theory of change, theory-based evaluation and generally models to evaluate quite complex programmes such as this. And most recently, we use this approach to evaluate something you may have heard of that Save the Children worked on, which has got some, some parallels and some learning, I think, their children's communities project for which we used a maturity model. Hallam are committed to working closely with local authorities in our area as part of our broader South Yorkshire Future Civic University work, meaning to support the education and wider outcomes for children and people across our region.

So, we're really, really pleased to be able to work with Doncaster on this project. So, what difference do we hope, do I hope? I think I'm going to answer that fairly broadly, which is looking at the longer term, we would hope to significantly improve the life chances of children, young people, particularly those currently marginalised and disadvantaged and in our evaluation that we will be hoping to look for, and to learn about how that occurs.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:05:43

- Thank you, Michael. And our next speaker is Donna Molloy. Hello Donna, could you please introduce yourself and tell us what problems you think Family Hubs will solve?

Donna Molloy - 00:05:54

- Hello, everyone. I'm representing the Early Intervention Foundation along with other colleagues today. And as you'll have heard, we're funded by the DfE to collaborate with and support the National Centre for Family Hubs. Our role is very much to provide the evidence about what has been shown to work in key areas such as supporting children's mental health, supporting parenting, family relationships and so on, but also crucially, working with the National Centre to provide practical advice and support to local areas on the process of developing a Family Hub model approach locally.

So, in answer to the question, I think well, to state the blindingly obvious. What Family Hubs can achieve all depends on how they're designed and what services are offered as part of this approach. I think the Family Hubs have the potential to improve and an important set of a crucial child outcomes if they provide high quality evidence-based support, Family Hubs can improve the quality of the home learning environment, improve children's behaviour, language development, reduce the risk of child maltreatment and so on.

And in particular, they provide a really valuable opportunity to reduce income related development gaps in areas such as children's learning that we know open up early and really matter in terms of children's long-term life chances. But of course, achieving these results isn't guaranteed.

Making a difference to outcomes is not easy, as I'm sure everyone listening today is well aware. And so, if the Family Hubs vision is to translate into impact services, we'd argue that local areas need to have a good understanding of the needs of families locally, including those who are less likely to access services and be able to identify the services most likely to make a difference and focus on high quality implementation, which is why the support being offered by the National Centre for Family Hubs feels so important in terms of making sure this commitment makes the difference that we all want to see. And we, my colleagues at EIF, are really happy to be part of this, and we're looking forward to supporting the work.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:08:08

- Thank you, Donna. And last but not least, we will hear from Andrea King. Andrea, could you also please introduce yourself and tell us what difference you hope Family Hubs will make for children and families?

Andrea King - 00:08:22:00

- Thank you so much, Dina. So, I'm Andrea King. Everybody, nice to meet you. I'm the new clinical director for the Anna Freud Centre, which Early Years is only one part of the clinical division, and we're really committed to the vision of Family Hubs, as you'll have picked up through the course of today.

In answer to the question Dina, I'm really hopeful and committed to the potential for co-production and co-design with local families through the Family Hubs agenda. I'm really hoping that together we can reach those families that just find it so difficult to ask for help, those who find it so hard to cross the doors of our services, and to be able to create an environment that's compassionate, that's welcoming, that's inclusive of all, and that provides a support that's available early in the life of the problem or the need and early in the life of the child, too. And we'll do that together through co-production and partnership.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:09:30

- Thank you, Andrea. Thank you, everyone. I would like to open up the discussion to the audience now if you have any questions, please pop them in the Q&A. Some questions have already been asked. So, I would like to ask, here's a question for Denise. What are the key things that have been critical to enabling positive impact for families from your Family Hubs?

Denise Beevers - 00:09:59:13

- I think, as people have talked about already today, I think by having a universal offer to start with and that is a welcoming environment for families. That's a place to start listening to the needs of the community, looking at the needs of what's there and then developing a service offer around that. I think key is whole family working. So, looking at the whole family, looking at the context in which the child is living in, what is impacting on that child's life?

Is it mental health? Is it poverty? Is it health issues? And really looking at those issues so that we can then evidence the impact of that. I think the other thing is, Andrea's just said, she's stolen my phrase about getting in early, so that's getting in early in the child's life, but also in the issue or the problem of where the child is. I think obviously partnership working is key to Family Hubs. And I think probably that's one of our biggest challenges.

And if that's what I was doing again, if I was starting again and developing the Family Hubs, I would make sure that those partnerships weren't just based on relationships, but it's based on governance, commissioning, and really tightening up those procedures. That has been, I think, a particular challenge for us.

But I think to evidence the impact of the things that we do, I was really heartened to hear Dame Andrea Leadsom say about the qualitative as well as the quantitative. And I think it's the parents' and children's voices that tell us what's working for them and what's not working for them.

That is so key. So, when we're looking at our outputs and outcomes, we like to think of a basket of all the different things that we've got in there that matches the service delivery and the services that we've provided for the families and children of Doncaster.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:12:08

- And is there anything you'd do differently if you were starting again to increase the impact?

Denise Beevers - 00:12:15

- I think partnerships are key. As I said earlier, I think it's partnerships that I would certainly consult with partners more. Perhaps that might be a mistake that we made, to make sure that they understand the value of the Family Hub, the value for us all.

We had to saying in Doncaster when we first started, "they needed to be on the bus with us", and I'm not sure everybody was quite sure where we were going on this bus. So, I think if I was doing it again, it would be great to get them on the bus, so that they can come on the journey to where we're going and we're still going there. We're still progressing on our journey.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:12:59

- That's really interesting, thank you. And, Michael, maybe you want to take this question. What's the key learning so far from your work on Family Hubs?

Michael Coldwell - 00:13:11

- Thanks very much, Dina. So, at this stage, we're just in the kind of starting out stage of the evaluation and it will be mentioned this morning that our feasibility study report was just published today as well. So, I'll refer to that in a little bit, but I wanted to sort of take on one of the things that Denise just finished on there.

What we've tried to do at the start of the evaluation I think again, this is mentioned this morning is using an approach, a theory of change based approach. You didn't have to use that, but an approach similar to that where you start to think through what are we trying to achieve? How are we going to get there? What resources are you going to use? What are we going to look for to see if we're going in the right direction and actually working through that together as a partnership with a group of stakeholders and almost the process of sitting in a room or on a Zoom call, working that through and surfacing where there's agreement, where there's tensions, where there's disagreement that can really help in that partnership building type approach.

And it really helped us in designing the evaluation. I think the second thing and again, Denise mentioned at the basket of indicators that anybody who is heard more previously from Denise and the team at Doncaster, which is really data rich, and you know, data of all kinds, from engagement, intermediate outcomes been able to map onto longer term and higher level outcomes as well.

We wanted to focus, I think, on a couple of issues. And then again, maybe the learning here could be something we could support and work with the wider learning from the from the Anna Freud Centre as well.

And firstly, looking at strengthening data intermediate outcomes, working on enhancing an already developed survey so that we can use more robust measures as part of that to help us with understanding some of those intermediate outcomes, particularly around family and children well-being measures.

And secondly, focussing down on what are the clear impact measures, one of the ones we really need to focus on to ascertain impact and what kind of ways can we do that? And in our evaluation, we're not looking for a one size fits all. We're trying to use where we can, different kinds of comparators We're looking to use, we're not using randomised controlled trials in ours, but also a theory-based evaluation. You know, what does the theory tell us we should see if things are succeeding using these measures.

And I think just two final things, one, just again, reiterate what Denise said the implementation process evaluation, the direct work in the Family Hubs to understand what's going on is really crucial and to help us with that, we're really, really delighted to be working with a peer researcher. So, this is a member of staff within Doncaster working with us on helping to design, deliver and work on the evaluation.

So those are things that I think are interesting learning for how we're designing the evaluation going forward and really looking forward to continuing.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:16:29

- That's really interesting. We know you will be looking at value for money as part of your evaluation. Can you also tell us a little bit about that?

Michael Coldwell - 00:16:38

- Yes, just very, very briefly. So, I'm not the expert on this in our team. There's a lot of great information in our feasibility report, just very broad brush terms, I think. So, we'll be looking at identifying and then quantifying the

inputs and resources. So, we're talking about staffing and non-staffing. I think it's important for us to do that because Doncaster, as I've mentioned is very data rich and we've got to get a good start on that.

We also need to be able to assess the contribution other not so direct services. So, where there's inputs, for example, from voluntary sector services, things that might not be so visible. So, we need to try and surface those and work out a way of deciding how we would cost both the direct and those indirect outputs. And then once we've allocated and looked at the costs, obviously we need to look at those outputs and outcomes we've just talked about.

And again, for example, typically outcomes for individuals that have been benefiting, but also more broadly, perhaps for the wider area, allocating those to these inputs and potentially doing that on a site by site level.

So being able to see, you know, are there particular sites, particular hubs which are performing differently than others using this, this method. And absolutely crucial in that is identifying differences in needs. So, it's not the case that every family outputs or engagement is the same because there may be some that have got much greater and more complex needs and are being reached and provide services and others who, you know, are perhaps a bit easier to reach and work with. So, we need, on a cost-benefit perspective that's something we need to work through. And then using the methods that I just talked about in my previous answer, to try to measure the additionality, what is it that is going on over and above what we might have expected without the Family Hubs?

And then we can use that valuation method to put a number on it, but more detail from my colleagues and I hope if there's any questions on that. Forgive me already for me being fairly broad in my answers.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:18:55

- No worries. Thank you, Michael.

Marc, what's the difference between Family Hubs and Sure Start?

Marc Rooney - 00:19:04

Hi, I might just actually very briefly pick up on something that Michael has said there before I answer this one, because I was about to give an answer, this one sentence answer about the difference that Family Hubs can make and problems they can solve.

And Michael, has just mentioned the document that that minister also mentioned that we published on the work we've been doing with evaluation partners and local authorities, which is almost if you like, a 164 page answer to that question. At the very opposite end of the spectrum from the one sentence pitch, and I would recommend it as an example of the kind of co-production between central government and local areas that Dame Andrea mentioned earlier on too.

So, the difference between Family Hubs and Sure Start. So, the thing I would say, first, is that we and the local authorities we have been working with, we very much see Family Hubs as building on what has been learned from Sure Start, rather than something we should see as a completely different sort of intervention. And of course, Sure Start itself, evolved considerably over time and varied from place to place.

So, I'm cautious about making a really simple comparator. And what we can say, the sort of simplest central difference is that Family Hubs bring together services for and to support families from conception with that strong emphasis on start for life all the way up to young people at 19 or 25 with special educational needs. And the minister set out in his speech, how local authorities we've been working closely with the over recent times are using that approach to then improve the quality of the service offer through that integration across those principles, which we've spoken about.

So, I think the actual truthful answer is quite complicated in terms of, you know, the difference. Which brings me back to the document I mentioned at the start where we really getting into the detail of how local authorities are approaching this challenge and we are working with them.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:21:12

- Thank you. Donna, what is your view about the quality of the evidence base around Family Hubs and integrated family services?

Donna Molloy - 00:21:23

- I think unfortunately, the evidence in this space is much more limited than we would like. And generally, there's a lack of national monitoring or evaluation about the impact of Family Hubs and integrated family services more generally. And we often see that attempts to review the evidence in this area do time and time again tend to find little empirical evidence of impact on child and family outcomes.

Although there is a body of qualitative evidence which tells us that families and practitioners involved in delivering these services are very positive about them, as Denise and others have mentioned. And I think much of this is because robust evaluation of complex, community based systems that involve multiple agencies is very, very difficult.

It's much easier to evaluate a very specific intervention. But this lack of evidence is important though and we did some work last year to look at different models of children's centres and Family Hubs and found it was very difficult to say what works best or how different versions might compare in this space. And there's been obviously a range of different local approaches and experimentation, but often without a common language or sets of metrics. And so, it is very difficult currently to assess the impact of different approaches.

So, this is why Michael's work and some of the work was being taken forward now feels so important. And it's really important as we take forward these new commitments and deploy new funding that we do take the opportunity to really start to advance the evidence in this territory. And as Michael said, really important to think about how we might develop more innovative evaluation methods and because some of the approaches and activities in this territory are just not well-suited to traditional methods of impact evaluation.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:23:25:04

- Thank you. There's a lot that we know from the evidence about what works to improve outcomes for children and families, but there seems to be a gap between what we know and what we do. What do you think are the barriers to implementation?

Marc Rooney - 00:23:41

- Difficult to do this one briefly but certainly there is a big gap between what we know from evidence and what gets commissioned and delivered for a whole range of reasons. And a lot of this is about constraints on resources. Many evidence-based interventions are expensive. There's often sometimes ideological barriers and a preference for locally developed services.

But I think perhaps more fundamentally, engaging with evidence and implementing effectively isn't easy, and it takes time and capacity, and improving outcomes isn't as simple as doing what works because nothing works everywhere and in all situations and for all children and families. And so, improving outcomes in this space involves carefully considering the evidence about support that's had an impact with wider considerations, such as whether something fits with a specific local context, population needs, the workforce that's available to deliver it and so on, and the conditions that are required for implementation in order to decide what to do.

And this is the really hard bit, and sometimes local areas lack good quality information

about the current system and what might need to change. And often, the time and capacity to think this through is in short supply when people are involved in trying to run a busy service and so on.

So, I think that's why the support that's been developed to help local areas both identify the problems that they want to solve through developing Family Hubs approaches and specify the services and interventions and activities will be included as part of that offer will be absolutely crucial as part of this process.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:25:23

- Thank you.

And, Andrea, how can Family Hubs tackle the hugely disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and families that face marginalisation or other vulnerabilities do you think?

Andrea King - 00:25:41

- It's a crucial question, Dina, and I can see some of that coming through the questions we're receiving in the chat at the moment. I mean, the key thing to say is that the impact of Covid has been extraordinary.

Particularly the impact of families living in poverty has been really significant. So, it's exacerbated those gaps that we already had, as Peter Fonagy so clearly described this morning. I think when we then turn our gaze more widely, and Dame Leadsom talked about this so clearly, to thinking about the breadth of protected characteristics and the experience of exclusion and marginalisation and othering in society, which is worsened in this period.

The impact of that is very real, both at the time, and later through life as well. So, being able to quickly respond to these things is really important. We might also want to add to neurodiversity and disability as crucial considerations for us in this time. So perhaps our starting point is to say, let's have that at the front of our consciousness when we're doing this design work around Family Hubs.

You've got the evidence base of analysis in the needs analysis and transformation planning, that's really helpful, you've got the evidence base in qualitative audit work. But there is nothing that substitutes a conversation with the people who are affected by these situations and these experiences our babies, our children, our young people, our parents and carers. So perhaps a few reflective questions are important. As a leadership system strategically, how representative

are we at local level, at national level, how we enabling that voice to be heard? As we look through the eyes of our children and our families, how hard is it to ask for help?

What can we do? What can we co-design together with our experts in the community, in our voluntary community space sector provision, particularly, you will be living this every day and will have expertise to bring? What can we do together in partnership? How hard is it to walk through the door of a Family Hub or any other set of services and begin that relationship? What can we do to create a more welcoming environment?

Do we rely on people coming to ask? Can we outreach? As Dame Andrea Leadsom described, and what does that look like, and do we partner with when we do this together? And what that comes back to is honest relationships

where we can talk about the things that are hard. We can talk about the reality of what it's like to be in our children's lives and the families lives at the moment and co-design how we can work together to improve that through Family Hubs.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:28:39

- Thank you, Andrea.

We have a question for Marc. When will the £82 million of funding announced last week be available? How will the government decide which local areas will receive funding and what will the application process involve?

Marc Rooney - 00:28:57

- All splendid and excellent questions. I'm sorry to have to disappoint with the kind of classic in due course a civil service answer, but so I mean, the one thing to say, but when will it be available? Well, if the announcement last week was about the spending review period, so we're looking at the next financial year and the three years hence. So that's when that will come into effect, but obviously, yes, everyone will want to know the answer to those questions, and I think we are absolutely going to be working on that as fast as we possibly can.

But at the moment, I can't give you any further information as to how we'll be selecting areas or taking that forward, but you can rest assured that government is very keen to move quickly. You've heard from the minister, you've heard from Dame Leadsom that we won't be hanging around, but we will provide as much information as we can, as fast as we can.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:29:57

- Thank you. Maybe you can answer, could you outline the relationship between the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework will there be an expectation that this will underpin the Family Hubs model?

Marc Rooney - 00:30:14:17

- So again, Supporting Families, of course, was the announcement last week of the extension of that programme, hugely important programme for government and absolutely. The Department for Education, Supporting Families is led by what we now like to call DHLUC, D-H-L-U-C, developing local communities. And yeah, absolutely. I think we are really conscious that as we move forward for Family Hubs, for local people who and by implementing all of these things, we need to be coherent as a central government.

And I'm happy to say that we're working very closely with our colleagues at DHLUC, I think in truth though like all of these things that we've spoken about today, this is an early step on a journey we're all going on. And I think there's a lot of commonality between the way in which we talk about Family Hubs and the things, the material you will have seen put out today and the kind of work and approach that Supporting Families has had over the years.

So, I think there's a lot of common lines between those two things. I don't see any tension in the way that these things have been set up, but we have still got, I think, work to do to make sure that this is received by people on the ground in a way which is coherent and joined up and we're working with colleagues on that.

And obviously, in the material which we've produced today, there's lots of specific emphasis on the Supporting Families programme and how it comes together with Family Hubs, so more to do, I think. But you know, we are absolutely on that, and I think we've made a good start.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:31:51

- Thank you. Andrea, there's been little said today about school age children and where schools, youth work, youth justice services and so forth fit in with the Family Hubs vision. In addition, little has been said about reducing parental conflict work, which affects children aged across the zero to 19 age range.

Do we risk drawing all our resource into early years to the detriment of older children, you think?

Andrea King - 00:32:25

- So, the questions, there must have been about five questions in that, so forgive me if don't quite cover them all, but I'll do my very best now.

In terms of clarity together today, I think we've been very clear that the whole suite of children's needs from infants all the way through to young people and transitioning into adulthood is absolutely on the table for consideration today as part of what makes Family Hubs quite special. The role of schools will be crucial and for colleagues in the strategic leadership arrangements at local level. You know how important those conversations with school colleagues are, headteachers and governors and leadership teams. Also, schools will have a different insight into what it feels like to work in our children's shoes every day and are often a relationship of trust that's unique and pivotal.

For those children that fall outside of our mainstream education, that relationship with alternative education is also really, really important in terms of parental conflict, we talked earlier about the joint working, so Marc and colleagues have been talking about joint working with DWP colleagues and the fact that more resources are being made available and will be coming online very soon.

Additional training is scheduled on this particular area because it's so important. Thinking through to the spectrum of youth justice, there's a real connectivity there and youth offending colleagues will have a specific input to offer, which is looking back at the lives of the children and young people that they know very well what would have made a difference to them in terms of early intervention and support for families, so they'll be crucial stakeholders in this conversation.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:34:08

- Thank you.

Donna, someone from the audience says, I agree with local identification of needs and prioritising services based on those identified needs. But how do we ensure consistency and ensure public money is being spent on evidence-based programmes to support the most vulnerable in our society across the country?

Donna Molloy - 00:34:31

- I mean, I think the balance of focus and resource on Universal or more highly targeted services in each version of Family Hubs will differ depending on wider services, what's available already and what the need profile is across the local population. So, I think, you know, they are decisions that need to be taken at

local level. I think organisations like the Early Intervention Foundation and the Anna Freud Centre can do centrally is make sure the best evidence about what makes the most difference in terms of specific child and family needs is synthesised, brought together, and made very accessible so that those making decisions can draw on that as they design and plan their particular local model.

And there's various activities going on at the moment to think about how best we pull all of this together and make it really easy for people to refer to and use as they make those decisions and judgements about how best to deploy new resource and what the best fit is with the offer they have currently.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:35:38

- Thank you.

And there's a question for the whole panel, how will Family Hubs contribute to addressing problems of family marginalisation and racism? Who would like to take that question?

Michael Coldwell - 00:35:51

- Dina, do you mind if I just jump in and just follow on from Donna's points and then I'll let other colleagues get into that.

There is something I think from what we know about the implementation of misinformed practice. I think the role of mediation and brokerage is really, really important in bridging the gap between the evidence of what we know works and local implementation.

And so, I do think the role of the EIF, and the Anna Freud Centre is important, but I really, really think the role of local authorities to support one another in helping to understand how to do that and potentially looking at more localised brokerages, part of that should be something that we ought to look at. Sorry to jump in on that question, but I just wanted to advance on Donna's point.

Dina Koschorreck- 00:36:39

- No worries.

Does anybody want to chip in on their views on how will Family Hubs contribute to addressing problems of family marginalisation and racism?

Denise Beevers - 00:36:50

- I could go part way to answer that, Dina. In Doncaster, we've got a very small BAME community, mainly sort of white British, but we have got a couple of pockets within Doncaster. And what we've done in those areas is we've actually gone out into those areas because it's actually probably not a mile away from one of the biggest hubs in Doncaster.

But we realise that these families aren't coming into the Family Hub. So, we've taken services out to them wherever they need, it could be on the street, it could be outside a shop, it could be wherever. And that's where we've consulted with those families to ask them, using interpreters, we've done lots of interpreting leaflets and so that they can understand the things.

So that's helped us to understand what they like, to then begin to integrate them into the other Family Hub services, and it's all about building that trust up, isn't it? With any family building that relationship, building that trust. So, that's what we've done in some ways because it was quite a marginalised and still is, to be fair, this community. But we have got some families that have started to attend Family Hubs.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:38:12

- Thank you, Denise.

Another question for Marc. Will Family Hubs become statutory provision, and will there be any inspection of Family Hubs?

Marc Rooney - 00:38:26

- I mean, local authorities have duties under which and powers under which they are taking forward these services. So, a lot of what is done through the Family Hub already has this kind of underpinning.

And I mean, interestingly, the conversation just then about the trade-off, if you like, between prescription around what could be said to be heavily evidenced things that work, versus the need to allow local services delivery to

continue to allow certain provisions reflect populations to allow for innovation. So, the kind that has spawned Family Hubs is one of the tricky things,

If I'm honest about how you build a government programme here and an inspection is that sort of, you know, is up to accountability for outcomes and for this public money. And all these things are incredibly important here and an inspection is one of the tools that you use at the more prescriptive ends, like, we know what should happen, and therefore we are putting in place a structure to sort of drive that through.

And I think you know what I would say about the Family Hubs I think as the minister said we're on a journey and this is an important day and important moment. But, you know, we've got years of work ahead of us. And I think a lot of what we do at the moment, the co-production.

So, for example, I've mentioned the evaluation. All of this is designed to improve our current knowledge of what's happening now and what best practice is, as we move through Family Hubs over a period of time, and I hope that this is a policy that goes on and a programme of work that goes on beyond the horizons that we are talking. You may find yourself bringing in sort of more prescriptive options of which an inspection will be one. But I mean, at the moment, I don't think we have plans to impose an inspection regime or bring that back specifically around Family Hubs.

The accountabilities that exist are the ones that are in the system at the moment. So not yet, but I wouldn't say that forever, you know, the answer would be no.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:40:36

- Thank you. Could you also tell us how do you think Family Hubs will link in with children's social care?

Marc Rooney - 00:40:44

- So, Camilla in her presentation talks about where Family Hubs are essentially targeted. But of course, you know, safeguarding has to be absolutely core to

what anybody does. So, who's working with families or children or in fact everybody has to have that at the front of their mind.

So, the connection, the principle around connection is where we would say is that where the right response to a problem that arises or what circumstance arises in the course of work that might be in the more universal space, requires a response from children's social care, from social work or escalation. You know, it's absolutely crucial that referral pathway and the join up between the front door and statutory safeguarding services is absolutely clear.

I think that whilst Family Hubs are, you know, as Camilla said, targeted and attempting to support families in one kind of way, that connection into those services has got to be central and clear and robust.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:41:56

- Thank you.

Andrea, somebody from the audience says, we all know that evidence-based support works if delivered to a quality standard. But there are many programmes and approaches that are not yet evidence-based. Will there be any support from the National Centre for Family Hubs for developing the evidence base for early signs of impact?

Andrea King - 00:42:23

- Thank you, Dina. I think Marc has already alluded to this in his most recent answer. There's a balance to be struck between the evidence base, which Donna has described so clearly and the opportunity to innovate in response to both local strengths and capabilities within the partnership system.

Most importantly, what our children and families need. So, the opportunity and commitment in terms of the National Centre is to partner regionally and to enable that support to be able to respond locally with innovation, whilst keeping an eye on what the impact is.

How will we judge the effectiveness of this? And I think Michael's described ever so clearly a kind of nuanced approach to that as we pick up new and emerging innovation from the Family Hub model.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:43:16

- Thank you.

Denise, someone would love to hear more about integrating the faith, community, and volunteer sector into Family Hubs. Some participants are saying how hard it can be to ensure good partnerships between local authorities and the sector. Could you say something about that, please?

Denise Beevers - 00:43:35

- Actually, that reflects back just on the point I made previously because it was the faith and voluntary sector that helped us to integrate with the other communities that I was talking about earlier.

So that's one of the ways where we've worked together and they're just one of our partners. I think I saw on some of the diagrams earlier this morning, people have put different partners and certainly voluntary and faith groups are part of our offer.

I wouldn't say it's fully integrated, and I think that's an area of perhaps we need to develop further. But we do work closely with some in certain areas and we do have voluntary groups that deliver services in particular.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:44:21

- Thank you.

Donna, you wanted to elaborate a little bit on what Andrea said about developing the evidence base, do you want to go ahead?

Donna Molloy - 00:44:33

- I guess, the point about support for evaluation locally is really well made because obviously developing better knowledge about how best to support

children and families in the UK isn't just about top-down, centrally commissioned robust impact studies.

And there are huge swathes of innovation and practise developed locally but haven't been tested because evaluation is hard and takes time and resource and capacity in all of those things. And so, the crucial part is not just the Family Hubs agenda, but more generally work across a whole number of central government programmes in this space has to be about supporting evaluation locally, helping those developing local services specify the outcomes that they're trying to change, how they're going to do that and what they can measure.

And certainly, at EIF we have a number of programmes which are working and that sort of way, as do many other organisations, just to say this is absolutely crucial as part of developing this whole agenda.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:45:34

- Someone is saying evaluations are complex. Please, please keep it simple. Let us spend time developing relationships with our partners and parents and then delivering against what we already know is needed.

Donna Molloy - 00:45:53

- I mean, just on that, of course, evaluation has to be proportionate, doesn't it? So, we don't need to evaluate everything and there are certain things we know when we don't need to constantly reinvent wheels and so on. I think all we would say about that is where there is significant investment, which is aimed at changing a specific outcome or set of outcomes for children of families, it is important that we know if that's actually happened.

So, we just need to make sure we organise this in a way that allows us to learn what has been achieved along the journey.

Dina Koschorreck - 00:46:26

- Thank you, Donna.

That was that, and I would like to thank you all, in particular Marc, Denise, Michael, Donna, and Andrea and everyone else who contributed as well as Paul for being the chat host at this event. I would also like to send a huge thank

you to Camilla and Claudia and their teams and the event team for organising this fantastic event. And I would like to thank the audience for joining us.

I hope we've given you food for thought and some inspiration. I now hand over to Dr Camilla Rosan, the Head of Early Years and Prevention at the Anna Freud Centre and also the strategic lead of the National Centre for Family Hubs.

Thank you.

Camilla Rosan - 00:47:05

- Thanks so much, Dina. That was a wonderful and beautifully chaired panel and some really, really helpful and some challenging and important questions there. As ever, throughout the day, we will aim to collate all the questions that we haven't managed to answer, and we'll put them into a question and answer document when we share the recordings of today.

So, we're coming to the end of what's been a very busy and engaging day, and it's been a very exciting one too. To bring together the last six months of work, but also start, you know, the journey of next steps and how we take all of this work forward.

So, thank you, everybody who's joined us today for all the engagement and the hugely valuable and important questions that's going to really help as we define things going forward. I just wanted to finish the day by...by sharing some slides.

Just to remind people about how they can get involved and connect with us. And so as I mentioned when I started, for those that went there, we have launched a new website today and some of the initial modules of our toolkit, which is on www.nationalcentreforfamilyhubs.org.uk

So, please do check us out there. We also have a newsletter which we're circulating every six weeks - Family Hubs in Mind. And you can sign up for the newsletter on our website, and you're going to get all the updates on our latest resources, events, news.

And we'll definitely signpost to the recordings for this event and the FAQs. And you can get in touch with us directly on our email NCFHenquiries@annafreud.org, or our telephone line.

And I guess particularly now we're moving into the next stage of our work, which is the kind of direct work with local authorities were wanting to set up and deliver their Family Hubs. So, if you are a local authority or Family Hub provider interested in working with us then please get in touch, and that's when we're going to aim to allocate regional coordinators.

Just finally, to flag our next upcoming events, so we have an event coming up next month on the second of December, which is Reducing Parental Conflict and Family Hubs webinar, so that's really going to be showcasing how we can bring the Reducing Parental Conflict programme and how it will work with Family Hubs.

And Patrick Myers, he's a wonderful colleague and a very impressive advocate for reducing parental conflict, is going to be co-facilitating that with Dr Emma Morris, who is one of our wonderful policy and practise advisors for reducing parental conflict. So, I think it'll be a really helpful event and hopefully we'll speak to some of the questions people have had about how the Reducing Parental Conflict programme fits in with Family Hubs because it definitely does.

And then we'll have a webinar on the ninth of January that will do very similar things and really showcase what Family Hubs can do to support implementing the Best Start for Life policies. So, these events are you can book them on our website, and we will signpost them if you sign up to our newsletter or get in touch with us.

Nothing more for me to say, other than another huge thank you to everybody and all the people that spoke today, all of you that engaged and came along, everyone else behind the scenes. It's been working on making this a reality over the last few months and fairly tirelessly in the last few days. It's really, really, very appreciated.

So, thank you all very much, and I hope you enjoy the rest of your day.