

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021**

# **Implementing Family Hubs**

## **Transcript - Welcome and Opening Address**

Speakers:

- Professor Peter Fonagy, Chief Executive of the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
- Will Quince MP, Minister for Children and Families, Department for Education

Peter Fonagy – [00:00:01]

I would like to welcome you and thank you for joining us today. It's wonderful to have you all here. My name is Peter Fonagy, and I'm Chief Executive of the Anna Freud and Head of the Division of Psychology and Language Sciences at University College London.

Rated as one of the top five psychology departments in global rankings, and it has very close working relationship with Anna Freud. I have the honour to introduce this important launch event about the National Centre for Family Hubs.

[00:00:40]

I'm delighted to be hosting this virtual conference about implementing Family Hubs against the backdrop of the autumn Budget statement, in which the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, announced the additional commitment of £500 million for family support, including £82 million to be given to further 75 local authorities to set up Family Hubs.

[00:01:11]

Today's event will launch the pilot of the Family Hubs Implementation Toolkit, a collection of co-produced resources aimed at supporting local authorities and other Family Hub providers to implement the Family Hub model in their local area. We have an extraordinary line up of speakers, and I'm grateful to all of them for making themselves available today to share with us the latest research, practice material as well as lived experience.

[00:01:49]

I'm proud that the Department for Education has chosen the Anna Freud to host and lead the National Centre for Family Hubs in collaboration with our evidence partners, the Early Intervention Foundation. We are promoting this model because of the impact we already know integrated models can have on infants, children, young people and families. Particularly on those who have experienced exclusion due to socioeconomic inequalities.

[00:02:25]

The world expert on business competition, Michael Porter, of the Harvard Business School in Reimagining Health Care, recommended a shift from today's siloed care organisation, by specialty and discrete services to organising around the clients' or families' needs.

[00:02:49]

He called such structures integrated practice units. The Family Hub is a kind of integrated practice unit where staff from different services work together, regularly as a team toward a common goal, maximising the family's overall outcomes as efficiently as possible. They are experts in their specialty but can coordinate easily to minimise wasted time and resources. They meet frequently, formally, and informally, to improve support and care, by establishing new protocols and devising better or more efficient ways to engage with families.

The Family Hubs Implementation Toolkit supports just this kind of integration. But the work is not done. The toolkit is in pilot phase, at the start of an iterative co-produced development schedule.

[00:04:04]

We want to use this event to hear feedback from participants on what is helpful, what is missing, and what needs to change to enable effective implementation of Family Hubs in all areas. Our approach as the National Centre, is to ensure that our work is practice-led, evidence-based and is informed by families' lived experience. This means we cannot do it alone. Fantastic practice already exists, up and down the country. And we want to spread this and generate a stronger evidence base through a process of co-production and continued learning. Bringing people together is our role.

The National Centre wants to bring people together and connect a variety of sectors. Whether it's working with partners from education, children's social

care, the mental health sectors, or voluntary and community groups. It is relational practice that informs the way we work.

[00:05:31]

Since we have been commissioned, we have prioritised listening to a range of voices that make up what Family Hubs are, and what they could become. A central access point to services and support that reflect the needs of the local population.

Today, you will hear from practitioners, evidence-based experts, parents, young people and local authority leaders who have helped to shape this toolkit, in a range of plenaries and workshops.

[00:06:16]

Since I first started training and practicing as a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in the 1980s, a lot has changed in both the social and policy arena, regarding the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the many people that are involved in raising children. And as a mental health advisor for government, I have experienced the frustration of non-joined up working and how much value integration can add to service offers.

[00:06:56]

The COVID 19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing inequalities within our society and has placed extraordinary pressures on families across the board and contributed to worsening mental health, particularly in young people. Whilst this launch event will not focus on the impact of COVID 19 specifically, we cannot ignore the current context in which we are living and how this is affecting the families we are talking about today. My clinical research career has been around the early years.

[00:07:38]

Evidence accumulated over decades speaks to the positive impact that early intervention can have on health and well-being and long-term outcomes for babies, infants, children, and young people as they progress into adulthood. In a study I was involved in, spanning 40 years, we showed that those individuals who had enriched input in their early years, when tested as adults, showed greater generosity and concern about the experience of the person they were interacting with, than those without enriched input.

[00:08:27]

What is more, their brain activity during the interaction reflected this. So, we can see the difference early experience makes. Many of us here today will have been part of the evolution of Family Hubs and seen the critical part that Sure Start and children's centres have played.

[00:08:54]

This focus on pregnancy and early years is essential but must respond to a changing context of complex local systems, understand the gaps in knowledge and ultimately find out what works efficiently and effectively for infants, children, young people and families.

Resources are limited for all of us. It behoves us to make sure that we have the use, to the greatest effect, of all of these. It's in this context that I'm pleased to introduce this event, which gives us the opportunity to think together about how to do this well.

[00:09:50]

And so, to start us off, I'm delighted and honoured to hand over to Will Quince, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Children and Families. To those of us working with children, he is the minister, and we are delighted to have such a brilliant and energetic person in this vital role.

[00:10:17]

So, Minister Quince, over to you.

Minister Will Quince – [00:10:24]

Peter, thank you very much indeed, and good morning and thank you for your kind words and for inviting me to join you today. I'm so excited to be here for this launch event, and I'm delighted to have been appointed, just a handful of weeks into the job as the new Minister for Children and Families at the Department for Education.

It's a role that I am hugely excited about and take enormous pride in. Education, and I think in particular early years, are at the very heart of the levelling up agenda. And this is that the most incredible opportunity to play my part in ensuring that every child and every young person can go on to achieve their potential.

[00:11:07]

And of course, not only does it start with, but at its very heart, is the family. The Children's Commissioner undertook a big exercise called the Big Ask, which launched in April of this year. It surveyed over half a million children, an incredible number. So, half a million children and young people, found that one of the things that they care most deeply about was being part of a happy home. And at the heart of a happy home is a loving family.

[00:11:41]

Now, I know that staff and professionals in local authorities, in education settings, in charities and health and community organisations work tirelessly to help families. And the pandemic over the past 18 months or so has made this challenge all the greater.

So, before I go any further Peter, I'd like to thank you, and in fact, all of you on this Zoom for all of your hard work and dedication. Because it's your drive and your commitment. It's so hugely important and it's valued not only by those of us that work in government, but by the thousands of families that you help on a daily basis.

[00:12:21]

I'm looking forward very much to working with you all as we look to improve the life chances of children and young people. So, let me start by saying why the government is championing Family Hubs as a way to do just that. And at their simplest, a Family Hub is where families and children of all ages know they can go and get help and support. They may go to a building, or they may access that help online.

Or maybe, most probably a mix of the two and the exact service offer will vary from place to place as it should, reflecting the needs of the local population. But will have a great start to life offer for parents, carers, and babies at its very core.

[00:13:02]

And of course, this in and of itself, as Peter alluded to, is not a new idea. We have had family services, family support units, children's centres for many years. But I think the Family Hub model builds on what we've learnt, what local councils and professionals have learnt and what families have told us about how to give them the best possible support we can, the support that they really very much deserve.

[00:13:29]

And this is, in my view, summarised in three principles that characterise and define Family Hubs. Access, connections and relationships. So, let me start with access. We know how crucial it is that families know where to go for support and that we make it as easy as possible for them to find help when they need it.

And Family Hubs bring together services to support families from conception, and all the way up to young people of 19, or even up to 25 for those with special educational needs and so can respond to the needs of the whole family.

[00:14:07]

They create a clear access point and a relationship with services that does not end as children get older. And Family Hubs allow for both physical and virtual services to be brought under one banner around which communications and outreach can be built.

So, that all important building of awareness and, absolutely critically, trust among families. And we've seen the value of online services and access points, and these are absolutely integral to this model. But we know that access to face-to-face services remain as crucial as ever, especially as we come out of the worst of the pandemic.

[00:14:51]

And so, the Family Hub building will very much remain at the heart of family help. So as an example of this, in my neighbouring county of Suffolk, in Suffolk County Council, which is one of our research partners, they've identified a need for better reach and engagement, in particular with vulnerable families.

[00:15:10]

And they're working to ensure that families see the Hub as a positive place to go for children of all ages, not somewhere that you just go when you have a particular problem. An effective hub almost acts as a single front door, a point of contact, making it easier for families to navigate, what can I appreciate be at times and certainly seen as, a pretty complex system.

So, that aim is to make the Family Hub a non-stigmatising access point for universal services, such as those absolutely crucial Start for Life services with additional help on offer for those who need it the most.

[00:15:52]

The second principle is about connection. Family Hubs make it easier for families to know how and where to get help. Then connection is key to ensuring that they get what they need. And now this is partly about co-location, so bringing services together on a smaller number of sites.

But while physical proximity can be important and helpful, that alone does not create the joined-up services that families need. That only comes from effective governance, professional development, data sharing, which is so, so important, and integrated assessment case management and shared outcomes.

Now, of course, this is not what the phrase "family hub" should call to the minds of those who use them. That's for the likes of us to worry about. But family should feel it in their experience, their lived experience as Peter said, of using the hub, they tell their story once and then they're connected to the multitude of support and help that they need.

[00:16:54]

And it's not just support through the local authority that should be available through the hub. The hub should connect families with services and support from others in a really joined up way.

And whether that is links to more targeted health services, links with schools, with education settings, the Department for Work and Pensions, from charities or community groups or even other parents, it's really, really important. And in my own county of Essex, some families received conflicting advice from professionals, and the County Council has sought to address this as part of the Family Hub model and trust between professionals and families has increased.

[00:17:34]

Now, this leads me to the final principle, which is one of relationships. Now, the Family Hub model prioritises the relationships that carry us all through life and building on family strengths, recognising that this is the best way to lasting change.

This is the idea, it's very much at the heart of everything that is done. The principle reflects what Josh MacAlister has heard in his work as part of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and captured in the Case for Change.

Family Hubs involve greater integration between the people, professionals and leaders that work with families. Local authorities with a hub model have used this to drive changes and improvement within their work with families, placing

a greater emphasis on relationships and sustaining these, as families and children grow.

[00:18:26]

So, an example of this is Leeds, where building on community strengths and enhanced whole family working by professionals is absolutely key to their practice model. And I was so impressed when I saw a Family Hub in action last year.

I visited the Berechurch Family Hub, which is in Colchester in my own constituency, and I saw first-hand the help and services they provide to Colchester's families and children. And it's a massively welcoming environment with passionate staff, and I could see that it was making a real difference to the people that were using it.

So, what I've talked about today is not a blueprint that's been designed from scratch in a Whitehall department. It is the product of professionalism, endeavour, leadership and innovation of those in Colchester and Essex and around our country, and the government very much believes in the Family Hub model.

[00:19:24]

So, what are we going to do now to drive this forward? So, one of the first steps we took was to establish the National Centre for Family Hubs, and this event today is a hugely important moment. The National Centre will provide expert advice and guidance and work with local authorities to champion the Family Hub approach.

I'm so grateful to the Anna Freud Centre and very much look forward to working with you. It's now all about delivery. We've been moving just now to the transformation funding that Peter mentioned. We've also announced a £12 million Family Hub's Transformation Fund, which will support around twelve local authorities in England to open Family Hubs.

And this first fund will enable us to learn more about the process of local transformation. It's really important that we build that evidence base and create valuable resources and learning for these local authorities who follow. Start for Life will be a key element of each of these projects, and I know you'll hear more about that from Dame Andrea Leadsom later on.

[00:20:32]

And I'm really pleased to announce that from today, the fund is open to applications from local authorities, and we've also published the

Transformation Fund Application Guidance, which includes further information around the three principles for Family Hubs, which local authorities may find helpful in designing and developing their proposals.

Now, as I've set out, if we are to achieve our ambitions for Family Hubs, there are many behind the scenes challenges to overcome, so that families experience that effective, joined up service. Now, data and digital are absolutely key to that, and we're working with a number of local authorities to identify solutions, and our department have already started to begin this work with local authorities, including in Bristol and Lancashire.

And I'm delighted to announce that Salford, Suffolk and Tower Hamlets will join this stream of work following a successful second round of recruitment for this project. Now, having a strong evidence base is vital in making change effective and taking the right approaches, and our investment in and evaluation innovation fund is building this evidence base to help us understand what really works for Family Hubs and ultimately to improve the outcomes for children and families.

[00:21:48]

And we've commissioned Ecorys UK to work with local authorities in Bristol and Essex, Leeds, Sefton, Suffolk and also Sheffield Hallam University to work with the local authority in Doncaster.

And we've today published some of the early learning from this work, which you will hear more about through colleagues at today's conference. So now for some even more exciting news, and Peter alluded to this too. You may have seen over the course of the past week, the Chancellor announced a significant £500 million package for families.

Now this includes a £300 million package to transform services for parents and babies, carers, and children in half of all of the local authorities across England. It will provide thousands of families with access to support when they need it and includes funding to create a family hub network for local authorities to publish their Start for Life offer, support for breastfeeding, parent infant relationships and parenting programmes.

[00:22:49]

And this package also includes a smaller number of pilots to trial and evaluate innovative workforce models needed to support babies and families. Altogether, this will provide thousands of families with access to support when they need it, and we are delivering on the Best Start for Life report and on our manifesto commitment to champion Family Hubs.

And I have to say how very grateful I am to Dame Andrea Leadsom for this hugely important review and for her dedicated commitment to this work. And I'm proud that this package also goes even further, to deliver on our manifesto commitment to champion Family Hubs and to provide vulnerable families with the intensive integrated support that they need through the £200 million expansion of the Supporting Families programme. Now, more information on these significant investments will come soon.

Now, I want support for families to be a golden thread that runs through government and Dame Andrea and I will continue to work collaboratively to ensure that the critical thousand and one days are central to our work on Family Hubs.

[00:23:57]

And we're also working very closely with other parts of government, such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with the Supporting Families programme and the Reducing Parental Conflict programme which is led by my old department, the Department for Work and Pensions.

[00:24:14]

To conclude, let me finish by saying this. That today's event and the launch of the first £12 million Family Hubs Transformation Fund is very much the beginning of a conversation on Family Hubs. We know that there is so much more to do, to learn, and to build working with you all.

That's what we've published today, it's very, very far from the last word. In fact, it's quite the opposite and we want to hear from you and work with you, to make sure that we realise the potential of Family Hubs.

[00:24:46]

It is a hugely exciting time, so thank you for being here. Thank you for playing your part in this important agenda, and I will now hand back to Peter and Camilla, who will take you through the remainder of the conference.