



Department
for Education

Family Hubs - Growing Up Well: Local Area Partner (Round Three)

Frequently Asked Questions

March 2022

V1 01/04/2022 – this document will be updated next Thursday (09/04/22) and will be published on the National Centre for Family Hubs website. Please request the latest version from project.growingupwell@education.gov.uk.

Aims and objectives

What are family hubs?

Family hubs are a way of joining up locally to improve *access* to services, the *connections* between families, professionals, services, and providers, and to put *relationships* at the heart of family help. They bring together services for children of all ages, with a great Start for Life offer at their core. How services are delivered varies from place to place, but these principles are key to the family hub model.

What are the aims of the Family Hubs – Growing Up Well project?

The Family Hubs – Growing Up Well digital project is a cross-government project that aims to improve how professionals across education, health and social care services collaborate and plan around families with children of all ages.

There are many behind the scenes challenges to achieve our ambition for family hubs – two of which are improving how information is shared between professionals across a range of services in a family hub, and how family's access and navigate services (i.e. their user experience) and these are key to strengthening the practical implementation of family hubs.

Therefore the project aims to leverage digital and data innovations to improve outcomes for families by improving how services are delivered and accessed. Products that are developed will be replicable and scalable so that they can be used by many LAs across England.

How does this project link to the Family Hubs Transformation Fund?

There is potential for the outputs from this digital project to support the delivery of the wider £300m funding allocation DfE and DHSC received at budget 2021, to open family hubs and Start for Life services in 75 areas. A beta tested product available in 2023 could possibly allow us to lay plans for wider adoption in these LAs in 2023/2024.

Are you working with other government departments on this programme?

Yes. This is a cross-government project funded by HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund that seeks to test innovative ways of working to address complex policy challenges across Whitehall. Other Government departments include: DHSC, DLUHC, OHID, DWP, HO and MoJ.

How many more LA partners are you recruiting?

We are seeking to recruit up to six more LAs to partner with us on the information sharing work strand.

Why are you recruiting more LA partners?

We want to ensure that the solutions we are developing can be replicated and scaled up so they can be used by many LAs across England. Working with more LAs will allow us to achieve this.

How does this project align to the vision of the wider family hubs programme?

An effective family hub acts as a single universal 'front door' for all services for families, making it easier for families to navigate what can be a complex system. Family hubs are organised into a network composed not only of the hubs themselves, but all the organisations and sites which deliver services as part of the family hub network. Therefore, this single front door should span all the relevant family services in a local area, including state and non-state actors (such as the voluntary, community and faith services).

This project aims to support this; the *connect a family to support* solution is intended to support family hub networks to execute the functions of the universal front door for services for families. The *connecting professionals with each other* solution is intended to enable professionals in those networks to connect with each other and provide most appropriate support for families in their care.

Delivery and timeline

How is the project being delivered?

The project is being delivered through an iterative, agile process that involves working closely with LA partners and frontline professionals across several stages to develop, test, and embed digital and data products. This process involves understanding and identifying user needs (discovery), developing and testing ideas (alpha); and testing the solution through implementation in a small number of local areas (beta).

LAs recruited through this round will engage in the beta testing and implementation phase (including an initial validation exercise).

When will the Beta phase commence?

We anticipate that the beta and validation phase will commence from May 2022.

How long will successful LAs be involved in the project?

Successful LAs will further develop, test, and embed the solutions in the beta and validation phase from May 2022 through to March 2023. Partner LAs will be expected to continue to develop and iterate the solutions in the live phase from April 2023 to March 2024. The capacity and transformation grant funding will not support product implementation in the live phase.

Will the information sharing solutions become mandatory for all LAs?

Implementation of the solutions will not be mandatory for LAs to implement once they are publicly available. However, we are working to ensure that they are replicable and scalable so that they can be used by many LAs across the country.

The solutions address known user needs and aim to solve practical problems local areas face in delivering accessible and inter-connected education, health and social care services for families with children of all ages.

Will you take forward both information sharing solutions into beta and live phases of the project?

The intention is to take both products into the beta phase. However, we may find that one solution may be more favourable and we will work with our LA partners to agree next steps.

When will the digital products developed be available more widely?

We anticipate that the solutions developed could be made available in 2023 or sooner.

What are the plans for the evaluation of the project?

The partner LAs will be expected to work together with DfE and our evaluation partner/s to carry out evaluation activity. This will require input from your teams, information and data from your service providers.

Funding

How much funding is available?

Successful LAs will initially receive up to £10k to onboard and support staffing resource for the beta phase (including validation). This is subject to change and is dependent on the length of time required.

All LA partners will have access to funding from the central Capacity and Transformation Fund, worth a total of £1.7m, to support their role and project activity. Allocation of further funding to support implementation will be subject to costed plans based on the requirements for implementation.

What is Capacity and Transformation funding and how can it be used?

The Capacity and Transformation Fund has been made available for LA partners to facilitate their engagement in the digital project. It can be used to support improvements to underpinning infrastructure and capabilities (e.g. product development, infrastructure and capabilities to further the project – i.e. staffing in key roles; information and data governance; digital maturity, service commissioning and design, workforce culture and skills) necessary to support the digital project.

The Capacity and Transformation Fund consists entirely of *programme funding* and will be paid using the Section 14 grant mechanism. The funding should only be used to support activity relating to the aims and objectives of the digital project and supporting the DfE to create replicable and scalable solutions that will support many LAs. The funding should not be used to solely support ongoing local activity within partner areas that do not align to the aims and objectives of the digital project and hasn't been agreed with DfE.

Can I use the funding to further develop existing 'in-house' solutions that work in a similar space?

No. The purpose of the funding is to further refine the solutions developed through this project through local beta testing and implementation (including validation).

When will the funding period end?

The funding period for the beta phase (including validation) will end on March 2023. After this the project will move into the live phase. Whilst DfE will continue to address any constraints identified at beta, there are currently no plans to fund further activity beyond March 2023.

Governance

The Family Hubs – Growing Up Well Grant Manager will undertake day-to-day grant monitoring and management, and will be the single point of contact for partner LAs. The

Grant Manager will monitor progress, commission progress reports, and will expect full engagement in monthly progress meetings.

Eligibility, Application and Assessment Process

Who can apply for the LA Partner EOI?

Only the **152 top tier LAs** may submit an EOI application to be considered for selection. For a full list of the 152 top tier LAs, please see Annex A at the end of this document.

LAs who are able to demonstrate that the **information sharing user needs** outlined on page 10 of the application guide are similar to their own.

LAs who meet the **minimum technical specification** outlined on pages 14-15 of the application guide. LAs who hold a **data maturity model** of 1, 2, 3, or 4. For information on assessing your data maturity model, please see page 7 of the EOI application form. LAs who are committed to providing staffing and resource.

How will EOI applications be assessed?

Applications will go through a three-stage process, which will involve a pass/fail qualifying stage where we will ascertain if you meet the minimum criteria (stage 1); ranking using level of need metrics with further consideration to rurality and also which information sharing workstrands LAs want to engage with (stage 2); assessment of a range of contextual factors to determine strategic fit (stage 3).

Who will be included in the panel and how is this decided?

All eligible EOIs will be assessed by a mixed policy and digital team within the DfE and reserve the right to contact shortlisted LAs to clarify aspects of their application before recommendations are made to DfE Ministers. DfE reserves the right to make the final decision on which LAs are successful and the distribution of any funding.

What supporting documents should be included in the application form?

Please use Section 6 - 'Supporting documentation' of the EOI form to provide any information that will support the assessment of your application, such as visuals of your current family/early help service model and landscape or your request for support form.

Can hyperlinks be included in the application form?

Yes, we would welcome you to include hyperlinks, especially if they link to your current services or data systems.

Product development

Solution 1 – Connecting professionals with each other

Will the LA need to host the solution?

We are still exploring whether LAs will be required to host the solution and we will continue to explore this during the current alpha phase. The initial thinking is that LAs will host the solution, however we are keen to learn more about LAs capability and hosting needs against the benefits of a DfE hosted solution. The alpha phase will provide the information to make an informed decision.

What are the underpinning pain points and user needs?

Professionals need to build a complete picture of a family, so they can offer support that best suits them. It can be difficult to identify and get in touch with the right professionals in order to find out more about the family:

- Support is needed from other professionals to build this picture.
- They need to know of any safeguarding concerns or risks.
- They need to know and understand what fellow practitioners have done in the past, along with the outcomes.
- They need to easily find all info relevant to a child's case to feel confident in the actions they are taking.

Professionals need confidence they are doing everything in their power to protect a vulnerable child or family:

- They need to give families suitable support and not duplicate what other professionals have done in the past

Solution 2 – Connect a family to support

Are there opportunities for developing some of the culture and language of this approach as it does not fit with our practice model?

Yes. We work closely with our LA partners to ensure our solutions, and the language we use, meet their user needs. However, we want to meet the needs of many LAs and we welcome any feedback you may have.

Will the LA need to host the solution?

We are still exploring whether LAs will be required to host the solution and we will continue to explore this during the current alpha phase. The initial thinking is that LAs will host the solution, however we are keen to learn more about LAs capability and hosting needs against the benefits of a DfE hosted solution. The alpha phase will provide the information to make an informed decision.

What are the underpinning pain points and user needs?

Professionals need to build a complete picture of a family, so they can offer support that best suits them. Professionals receive vague requests for support with little contextual or background information. This means they need to do follow up 'detective work'. This can happen because there is a lack of clarity around the referral process for those who are referring into services:

- I need to be able to focus on certain types of cases, so that I can prioritise and support those who have higher levels of need.
- I need to understand about a child's medical history and the professionals who have been involved.

Professionals need confidence they are doing everything in their power to protect a vulnerable child or family:

- I need to know if there are any safeguarding concerns or risks in that family.

Will the LA require to have a role in triaging all requests for support that come through this solution?

Whilst LAs will need to have some role in triaging (assuming that they are the provider for the family hub front door function, although this can vary), we don't expect to see all requests for support made through this form to end up sitting with the LA for action. This online form can be shared across local agencies and services within the family hub network as part of your family hub model.

Is there flexibility in how this solution is expected to be implemented and used locally?

Yes. There is flexibility in how LAs may choose to use this online form as we recognise that LAs will have different processes in place to connect families with support. At its core, this solution is an online form designed to try and elicit the right information upfront. If phone calls are the way you operate - it could perhaps be integrated as a step before or after a call, depending on what is helpful.

I can't see busy teachers and health visitors filling this out and going through all fields for every child or parent/carer in the family.

The purpose of beta phase will be to work with LA partners to further refine the online form to ensure it is practical, meets user needs, works in a real environment and simplifies how families are connected to support.

What if I don't know the answer to the questions about previous support, people involved, members of the family etc?

Not all sections of the online form will be mandatory. We are currently exploring 'Don't know' as an option and will be tested in the beta phase.

Will members of the public be able to make referrals using this form?

No. We are testing this online form for professionals only. It could perhaps be adapted in the future to enable public access, however we recognise that this carries a whole host of additional considerations and user needs.

What is the time lapse between the form being submitted and then it being sent to the relevant LA?

Once the form is submitted, the information will reach its destination instantly. It will depend on the final solution and how LAs integrate it with their existing systems locally.

Is this supposed to link into the children's social care/Early Help case management systems to retrieve this information?

For 'Connecting professionals to each other' – Yes, this will require integration with existing social care and case management systems.

For 'Connecting a family to support' - No, the form will be populated manually, and no data will be pre-populated.

How is this information populated and where does consent sit? Many local areas are investing in integrated health and care record systems.

For 'Connecting professionals to each other' – Information will be populated from existing systems and data storages. LAs will require consent from the owners of the data.

For 'Connecting a family to support' – Data will be manually entered by the users, consent is obtained as part of form.

How does it work when you already have an online form for early help assessment? Wouldn't we just be duplicating the process and confuse professionals of the relevant pathways?

The online form would act at the universal front door for service requests for all families, made by professionals, in a local area. Typically, this means it would have a lower threshold for action than the early help assessment and is more likely to be preventative/developmental and would not need to be related to the safeguarding of the child.

It could also be a request for help from any service a family needs, not just those normally associated with early help, and the lower threshold is more likely to result in referral to online self-help, or support provided in the community by the VCFS.

In cases where, after initial triage, the request did look likely to hit the threshold for early help, it could be escalated to this specific route. In practice, the form will provide much of the basic information needed for an early help assessment.

If you already have an online form for early help, which you are using as the front door for all the services a family could access, then you may not have a need for this solution; however you may wish to use components of it to improve your existing form.

Would requests for support be alerted to MAASH if it is for them due to safeguarding , rather than a universal request?

For 'Connecting a family to support' - Initially the form will be submitted to the location you specify. This will then need to be triaged before it is passed on to another team or department. The form could be submitted to multiple locations if required.

Developing solutions that connect local sources of support outside the LA rather than within is of interest to us and where most challenge is presented. Is this within scope?

We are pro-actively thinking about this, but no decision has been made yet on whether it is within scope of this project.

Does the form pull the information direct from our case management system or would this be a manual process?

For 'Connecting a family to support' - The entering of the data would be a manual process.

Annex A – Full list of top tier Local Authorities

Top tier LAs			
1	Barking and Dagenham	43	Essex
2	Barnet	44	Gateshead
3	Barnsley	45	Gloucestershire
4	Bath and North East Somerset	46	Greenwich
5	Bedford Borough	47	Hackney
6	Bexley	48	Halton
7	Birmingham	49	Hammersmith and Fulham
8	Blackburn with Darwen	50	Hampshire
9	Blackpool	51	Haringey
10	Bolton	52	Harrow
11	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	53	Hartlepool
12	Bracknell Forest	54	Havering
13	Bradford	55	Herefordshire
14	Brent	56	Hertfordshire
15	Brighton and Hove	57	Hillingdon
16	Bristol City of	58	Hounslow
17	Bromley	59	Isle of Wight
18	Buckinghamshire	60	Isles of Scilly
19	Bury	61	Islington
20	Calderdale	62	Kensington and Chelsea
21	Cambridgeshire	63	Kent
22	Camden	64	Kingston Upon Hull City of
23	Central Bedfordshire	65	Kingston upon Thames
24	Cheshire East	66	Kirklees
25	Cheshire West and Chester	67	Knowsley
26	City of London	68	Lambeth
27	Cornwall	69	Lancashire
28	Coventry	70	Leeds
29	Croydon	71	Leicester
30	Cumbria	72	Leicestershire
31	Darlington	73	Lewisham
32	Derby	74	Lincolnshire
33	Derbyshire	75	Liverpool
34	Devon	76	Luton
35	Doncaster	77	Manchester
36	Dorset	78	Medway
37	Dudley	79	Merton
38	Durham	80	Middlesbrough
39	Ealing	81	Milton Keynes
40	East Riding of Yorkshire	82	Newcastle upon Tyne
41	East Sussex	83	Newham
42	Enfield	84	Norfolk

85	North East Lincolnshire	119	St. Helens
86	North Lincolnshire	120	Staffordshire
87	North Northamptonshire	121	Stockport
88	North Somerset	122	Stockton-on-Tees
89	North Tyneside	123	Stoke-on-Trent
90	North Yorkshire	124	Suffolk
91	Northumberland	125	Sunderland
92	Nottingham	126	Surrey
93	Nottinghamshire	127	Sutton
94	Oldham	128	Swindon
95	Oxfordshire	129	Tameside
96	Peterborough	130	Telford and Wrekin
97	Plymouth	131	Thurrock
98	Portsmouth	132	Torbay
99	Reading	133	Tower Hamlets
100	Redbridge	134	Trafford
101	Redcar and Cleveland	135	Wakefield
102	Richmond upon Thames	136	Walsall
103	Rochdale	137	Waltham Forest
104	Rotherham	138	Wandsworth
105	Rutland	139	Warrington
106	Salford	140	Warwickshire
107	Sandwell	141	West Berkshire
108	Sefton	142	West Northamptonshire
109	Sheffield	143	West Sussex
110	Shropshire	144	Westminster
111	Slough	145	Wigan
112	Solihull	146	Wiltshire
113	Somerset	147	Windsor and Maidenhead
114	South Gloucestershire	148	Wirral
115	South Tyneside	149	Wokingham
116	Southampton	150	Wolverhampton
117	Southend-on-Sea	151	Worcestershire
118	Southwark	152	York