

<b>Meeting:</b>	Executive
<b>Meeting date:</b>	12/09/2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Children Services and Education
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Bob Webb Lead Member Children Services and Education

## **Developing a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Family Hub**

### **Subject of Report**

1. Support to families for Children who have SEND can often be a very complex landscape to navigate, despite the best efforts of professionals to reduce handoffs. Support is often needed across multiple services and many different agencies, particularly where a child requires specialist interventions.
2. Whilst we have seen some improvement to support parents through a digital local offer, which puts a map of services in one place, the services themselves and individual specialisms often remain fragmented.
3. The development of a SEND Family Hub in the city would bring practitioners together across different disciplines and agencies within a single physical environment. This would enhance service offers, improve partnership practice, and ensure greater accessibility for families to specialist early advice.
4. A SEND hub will be developed and truly coproduced with families and voluntary providers to ensure it is built and flexibly develops over time from lived experience. As well as bringing together different agencies we will close the gap between professional disciplines and the voice of families by co-locating the parent carer forum and SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service) within the hub. This will give families a central voice in developing future support, interventions and services.

5. The hub will focus on three strands (see Annex A):
- a) **Provider Services** – Co-locating established provision to provide activity-based support (SNAPPY), Autism focussed activity (York Inspirational Kid’s Autism Hub) and Specialist Early Years Provision (St Pauls Nursery), whilst having multi use space for other voluntary organisations to access.
  - b) **Accessible Advice including Short Breaks and Benefits** – Co location of professional disciplines including Portage, health visitors, Educational Psychology, SENDIASS, YILTS, SEND casework officers, Specialist Teaching Team, a school SENCo drop-in, NHS therapist drop-ins, CAMHS, GP etc, to offer surgery style accessible support as well as work together across professional domains.
  - c) **Inclusive Outreach** – Providing professional advice, support and challenge across the city to ensure accessible early support provision in other key settings including other family hubs, Early Years and Schools

## Benefits and Challenges

6. We have undertaken some early engagement work with families to understand their views on the development of a SEND Family Hub. The Parent Carer Forum have shared their full support to develop a SEND Family Hub and have identified several ways **they feel** it would significantly benefit families in York.
- a) **Improved Access to Services:** Central signposting to relevant services.
  - b) **Availability of Support:** Easier access to both professional and peer support.
  - c) **Timely Assistance:** Improved More timely access to support while waiting for specialist services
  - d) **Joint Partnership Working:** Improved cross organisational working for the best interests of young people with SEND.
  - e) **Facilitation of Coproduction:** Greater opportunity to gain parent carer voice to inform health, education and social care services for young people with SEND.
  - f) **Maximised Resources:** Increased awareness and optimal use of existing provisions in the City of York.

- g) Streamlined Services:** Potential for minimising duplication of service provision.
- h) Efficient Use of Funding:** More effective and efficient use of SEND funding.

7. It is well documented that the SEND system across England is under significant pressure and that families across the country share their experience of struggling to access the right support and services. The development of a SEND Family Hub can make an important contribution to helping partners work together and provide early access to specialist support. There are two important challenges to identify at this stage:

- a)** We want our city to be an inclusive city and for children and young people of all needs to be able to engage in all the city has to offer. In creating a SEND Family Hub we need to ensure this is done in a way that can drive inclusion across the city. To address this we are looking to work with partners in health to create a new 'Inclusion Officer'. The Inclusion Officer would reach out from the SEND Family Hub to share learning and drive inclusive practice across the city.
- b)** It is important to remember that the SEND Family Hub sits within a wider SEND Development Plan. The hub will be a great vehicle to improve key parts of the system locally, but it will not address all the challenges we see locally and will take time to fully develop.

## **Policy Basis for Decision**

8. Creating a multi-agency Special Educational Needs (SEN) hub for children and young people is underpinned by several key pieces of legislation and policy. The Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Regulations 2014 introduced significant reforms to the way support is provided to children and young people with SEN and disabilities. The Act emphasizes the need for coordinated and child-centred approaches, mandating local authorities to work closely with health services, social care, and education providers to create integrated Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans. A multi-agency hub aligns with this by facilitating seamless collaboration among various stakeholders, ensuring that the diverse needs of our children and young people are met early and efficiently.

9. The SEND Code of Practice (2015), which offers statutory guidance for organizations working with children and young people with SEN and disabilities, reinforces the necessity for a coordinated approach. It calls for local authorities to foster partnerships across education, health, and social care to deliver better outcomes for children and their families. Establishing a multi-agency hub operationalizes this guidance by providing a physical or virtual space where professionals from different sectors can collaborate, share information, and co-develop strategies tailored to individual needs. This not only enhances the quality of support but also ensures that interventions are timely and effectively coordinated, reducing the likelihood of fragmented service delivery.
10. The establishment of a multi-agency SEN hub is firmly rooted in the legislative and policy frameworks aimed at improving the support system for children and young people with special educational needs in England. By promoting integrated service delivery, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and enhancing the personalization of care, the hub will significantly contribute to achieving the overarching goals of the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice, and related policy directives. This initiative represents a proactive step towards building an inclusive and responsive support network that prioritizes the well-being and development of our most vulnerable young people.
11. The development of a SEND Family Hub aligns with a number of key local strategies. In particular:
  - a) The council plan 'One city for all' (2023 to 2027) – In particular two of our four core commitments; Equalities and Human Rights and Health. The hub could realistically be expected to impact positively on all seven of the council's priorities for the families it supports.
  - b) York's Children and Young People's Plan – The hub would make a contribution for families it serves across all four priority areas; best start in life, happy and healthy, staying safe and ready for the future.
  - c) City of York Local Area SEND Partnership Operational Plan (2023-2025) – The hub would make a direct contribution to the four priorities set out in the operational plan:

- i. **Voice** – the voice of children and young people is paramount
  - ii. **Sufficiency** – the right support is in place in the right place at the right time
  - iii. **Early Intervention** – children and young people’s needs are identified at the earliest opportunity.
  - iv. **Transition** – effective transition is secured so that young people are able to live the best adult lives they can.
  
12. There is a developing Integrated Care System (ICS) Strategy which strengthens Children and Young People as a priority for which SEND is a key focus. Officers in the Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) are exploring the option to form a joint committee. This will formalise partnership arrangements and maximise opportunities to deploy joint funds to develop and deliver on shared priorities. SEND is potentially an area that could be included, and the creation of a SEND Family Hub is an opportunity to test joint planning and integration, setting outcomes together and with providers willing to collaborate.

## **Financial Strategy Implications**

13. The driving aim of creating the SEND Family Hub is to improve access to services and specialist advice and support at an earlier stage. By doing so this will improve outcomes for children and families. It will also provide an opportunity to identify potential areas of financial pressure in the SEND system that could be addressed by working differently. Throughout the development of the hub further work would need to be undertaken to identify specific area of financial pressure that could be addressed.
  
14. The creation of a SEND Family Hub would be a collaborative effort bringing together local authority resource alongside a contribution from health as well as jointly commissioned services and partner agencies. There may be an opportunity to build on the positive success of the York Community Fund (linked to the Hungry Minds initiative). This could provide a mechanism to develop alternative funding models to help Voluntary & Community Sector partners deliver and build better support in response to need, securing longer term funding shown to be possible through the example of The Place at Sanderson House: <https://theplace.york.ac.uk/>

15. At this early stage of planning, it is proposed to test two new roles:
- a) **Inclusion Officer** – The role of an Inclusion Officer working out of a SEND family hub is pivotal in promoting inclusive practices across the entire city. This officer acts as a central coordinator and advocate for inclusive education, health, and social care services, ensuring that best practices and successful strategies are shared with other family hubs and partners. By leveraging their expertise and the resources of the SEND hub, the Inclusion Officer will enhance the capacity of various stakeholders to meet the diverse needs of children and young people with special educational needs.
  - b) **Hub Front of House** – Learning from the Family Hub pilot activity so far shows that the front of house role in a SEND Family Hub will be crucial in creating a welcoming and supportive first point of contact for families. This role would be responsible for greeting and assisting families, providing them with essential information, and guiding them to the appropriate services and professionals within the hub and beyond. By offering a friendly and efficient service, the front of house staff play a key role in fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere that sets the tone for the high-quality support provided by the SEND family hub. It is envisaged that this element would be commissioned through the parent carer forum so that the first point of contact is through people who have or are closely associated to lived experience.

## **Recommendation and Reasons**

16. This report seeks approval to create a SEND Family Hub within one of our existing Family Hubs. We have identified that the Clifton Family Hub presents the greatest opportunity to deliver the SEND hub.
17. This will strengthen our local offer to families in time and ensure a more coordinated response to developing complex need.

## **Background**

18. A key impact of well-intended but unsustainable national policy in relation to SEND is that locally families often experience overlapping and disjointed pathways. For families these systems often place process and assessment above practical advice and support.

19. Developing a multi-agency hub of services to support children and young people with additional needs makes strategic and practical sense, primarily due to the benefits of integrated working. By bringing together professionals from education, health, and social care under one roof, the hub puts trust, relationships and seamless support at the heart of how we work together.
20. We would hope that by ensuring that families can access the support they need at an earlier stage this could help to reduce families needing to go through assessments. This would reduce the waiting time for those needing to go through an assessment process. Early and coordinated access to specialist advice and interventions not only addresses issues before they escalate but also ensures that tailored support plans are developed and implemented swiftly.
21. In the last year we have been developing a wider programme of Family Hubs across the city through the Raise York Network ([www.raiseyork.co.uk](http://www.raiseyork.co.uk)). At its heart the ambition of Raise York is to drive all partners to work together with children and families to improve lives.
22. We will use the learning from Raise York developments so far as a platform from which to develop a SEND Family Hub as set out in this paper. We will also reach out to other local areas that are beginning to develop this approach to learn from them what works well.
23. Our work to develop Raise York and a SEND Family Hub is in the context of closer joint working with health partners. In particular exploring opportunities to bring local authority and health services together in localities. We will ensure the development of our SEND Family Hub is connected with our wider ambitions to work together with health in local communities.

## **Consultation Analysis**

24. Co-Production will be at the heart of developing a SEND Family Hub. We have had initial conversations with key partners and forums representing families with SEND children and young people. The Parent Carer Forum has provided a letter of support outlining the reasons why they feel a SEND Family Hub is needed and the difference they hope this could make. A copy of the letter of support is provided in Annex B.

25. The Parent Carer Forum frequently encounters parents and carers struggling to access the right information at the right time due to various barriers, such as emotional exhaustion, difficulty engaging online, or simply not knowing where to start. The value of a physical location where individuals can walk in, be greeted, and receive appropriate guidance cannot be overstated. As there will be access to multiple services under one roof, this hub will help working parent carers minimise the time taken off to seek support. Additionally, the proposed outreach work will ensure that families unable to travel to the hub can still access necessary services.
26. We are designing co-production in from the outset in how the SEND Family Hub will operate. We expect to bring together various specialists working in the building into a SEND Hub 'committee' or leadership team. This would meet monthly to review what is working well and any gaps/opportunities in how the hub is working. Directly within these meetings would be representatives of SENDIASS and the Parent Carer Forum. This would provide a simple and clear means by which families are instrumental in how the hub develops and responds to areas of need.

## **Options Analysis and Evidential Basis**

27. **Option 1: Continue with current provision and digital local offer** – Failing to develop services and innovate for Children with SEND risks the system becoming more fragmented as demand increases. Families will become frustrated and missed opportunities for early support will increase demand on scarce statutory and specialist resources.
28. **Option 2: Develop a SEND Family Hub** – This will reduce fragmentation across organisations with the targeted outcome of a better customer experience in a complex landscape of services and support. It will provide the foundations for best practice to organically develop with the voice of families placed at the centre of decision making.
29. Although, it can't be the panacea for all complex system issues, it will make a significant contribution in creating an innovative think tank environment for improving future services.

## **Organisational Impact and Implications**



30. **Financial,**

The additional activity to create and run the SEND Hub will require revenue budget to fund the proposed new roles (x2) The final amount will be subject to final gradings but expected to be circa. £90,000 with a proposed 50/50 responsibility across Local Authority and Health. The financial burden to the LA will be met through existing revenue for staffing.

The current Family Hub at Clifton is funded by a combination of revenue budget and income from third party providers. Increasing the number of providers ensures the income is maintained longer term.

If any alterations or adaptations are required to the current premises to allow the operation of the new SEND hub, then capital funding will need to be identified within the Children and Education capital programme.

There will be an element of early years provision within the building which should protect the local authority from capital clawback associated with Sure Start capital grant which funded some of this facility.

31. **Human Resources (HR)**

There will be some requirement for HR support as the service begins to develop the front of house delivery model i.e. through a third sector organisation.

There are no immediate HR implications as the proposal is to create two new posts. This should not impact on current employees. Once the job descriptions are drafted, they will need to be formally evaluated to establish a grade outcome for both. Normal recruitment and selection processes will need to be followed to recruit to these posts.

32. **Legal,** the Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the general principles to which local authorities must have regard when exercising their powers and duties in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities. The key ideas include having the child and their parents being heard, participating, being kept informed and promoting integration of health and social care provision.

Childrens services is heavily regulated and inspected within a complex and extremely rigorous area SEND inspection Framework.

A SEND hub is likely to contribute effectively to the discharge of the Council's legal duties under the Act and provide the inspectorate evidence of strong and ambitious collaboration.

33. **Procurement**, The service is intending to provide accommodation for existing providers to deliver their services in one place. All the providers being considered are already supported in this respect. Bringing the providers in to one space provides some assurance for service continuity in the future should any single agency fail.

34. **Health and Wellbeing**, The challenges to both the system and to children and families noted in the proposal report are recognised by the Healthy Child Service (HCS), in particular, the lack of join up between services and the resulting delay to children and families in getting timely advice and support following the identification of developmental delay.

The HCS has recently created the role of Specialist SEND Health Visitor/School Nurse following a restructure. (Recruitment planned July 2024). This leadership role is to develop service practice but it's primary remit is in partnership and system development. This role would be well-placed to be a key member within the SEND Hub leadership team and to coordinate activity of other members of HCS staff in the Hub.

35. **Environment and Climate action**, whilst there is no direct impact, repurposing an existing building which is already well equipped to meet the needs of children with SEND avoids the need for a new build or substantially redeveloping an older building.

36. This is an accessible site on a cycle route and therefore convenient for active travel. Professionals based in a single building avoids the need to travel across the city with a positive impact. The building is 2-minute walk from a main arterial road accessible by park and ride and other bus services and close to the outer ring road. Where children are accessing specialist provider provision there will be no additional impact as services of this nature are already in a single community building requiring some travel across the city. The additional role of an inclusion officer will ensure we maximise opportunity for increasing inclusive support across the city within communities. Providing early help will reduce the need for specialist support in some cases reducing the need for multiple appointments which will have a positive impact on the environment.

37. **Affordability**, the proposals in this report ensure that children and young people with SEND have the best start and early help to support their development and opportunities in later life. Those that may struggle to access the service due to low income and/or access to transport will benefit from any outreach service that is developed and resourced,
38. **Equalities and Human Rights**, the Council recognises and needs to take into account its Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It is expected that the proposals in this report will have a positive impact on at least one group with a protected characteristic, and in addition to that on their carers, who the council also considers when assessing the impact of any proposal. A comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed once a full offer has been co-produced with families.
39. **Data Protection and Privacy**, data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) are an essential part of our accountability obligations and is a legal requirement for any type of processing under UK data protection and privacy legislation. Failure to carry out a DPIA when required may leave the council open to enforcement action, including monetary penalties or fines.
- DPIAs helps us to assess and demonstrate how we comply with all our data protection obligations. It does not have to eradicate all risks but should help to minimise and determine whether the level of risk is acceptable in the circumstances, considering the benefits of what the council wants to achieve.
- The DPIA screening questions were completed for this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed for the options set out in this report, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed where required, on the approved options from this report.
40. **Communications**, there are no communications implications at present, though engaging families, and stakeholders in the development of the hub, and in shaping and sharing key messages will be an important element of the project if proposals are approved.
41. **Economy**, the recommendation in this report supports the creation of two posts. In addition, professionals working at the centre will contribute to the local ward economy.

## **Risks and Mitigations**

42. The provider services in this model, particularly SNAPPY and YIKS currently have inherent risks associated with small voluntary organisations that rely on the good will and passion of individuals. There are single points of failure which are of concern as these services reduce demand on statutory provision. Bringing providers together to work alongside each other, with the potential to share resources and skills reduces the risk of a single point of failure to sustain them in the long term.
43. Both organisations rely heavily on voluntary contributions with very limited funds. It is hoped that being part of a much more collaborative system may give way for opportunity for larger grant application and/or funding opportunities that arise through government departments. Pilot funding can often favour collaboration between public services and voluntary organisations where there is a strong representation of parent and child voice.
44. Dedicating an existing building (Clifton Children Centre) for the exclusive purpose of a SEND family Hub, will displace a small number of existing professionals, including partners. It is believed the impact of this can be minimised as the project is developed utilising other community provision including the new Clifton Explore Community Hub.
45. The proposed building has extensive adaptations built into its design and therefore does not require further major works to meet the needs of SEND. This would be required of other buildings in the City making other sites cost prohibitive in delivering these ambitious proposals.

## **Wards Impacted**

46. This provision will provide improved access to services for all families of Children with SEND across the city as a central base in which to gain the collective expertise of numerous partners. There will be some direct access to support through surgery type events and direct provision. It is envisaged the events will be replicated through other family hubs in the city through the coordination of an

inclusion officer and specialist provision is already made accessible where appropriate through supported transport.

47. As part of this work, if approved, there is ongoing assessment work required to map limited existing users of the building which may require relocation. It is expected that provision which requires a local base such as maternity would be suitably relocated locally. It is expected that the Family Hub concept would continue to be delivered through our Explore contract as with other Family Hubs in the City with further accessible space being accessed (when available) in the SEND hub.

## Contact details

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## Background papers

### Annexes

**Annex 1:** SEND Multi Agency Local Offer in 'One Place'

**Annex 2:** Letter of Support from Parent Carer Forum

## **Annex 3: Equalities Impact Assessment**