



Family Hubs Needs Assessment

Executive Summary



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



- Children on the periphery of exploitation.
- Financial security, particularly as the impact of cost of living takes hold.
- Secure housing.

Education



- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes, particularly around communication, language and literacy related needs – and particularly for families with Black children.
- Attainment at KS2, particularly for those accessing free school meals.
- Outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs (SEND), particularly in mainstream schools.



What families have told us...

Some families find it much harder than others to access the information and support they need. Often, this is because families and professionals are not aware of the many activities, services and thriving community networks that exist within Bedford Borough's local communities, including the children's centres. Many families do not speak English as their main language and this remains a barrier across many key services.

Other families, particularly those who are experiencing a range of challenges, or those who may have had poor past experiences, feel more comfortable accessing community led services where there is more capacity for individual support or in smaller groups. Some parents/carers lack confidence and/or hold preconceptions about Children's Centres that prevent them from accessing support there. There are some excellent examples of community led provision and outreach work that are supporting families to obtain support they otherwise may not have accessed.



Families suggested a range of support they would like to see from Children's Centres and Family Hubs and these align with national expectations. It is very clear from the needs assessment that many parents are not able to access services at the time they are on offer. Families need more flexible opening hours, a physical and virtual offer and more help to find trusted information and support. Families would welcome being able to access a wide range of whole family support from Family Hubs. Holiday activities and after-school care/clubs are commonly highlighted as a gap.

Parents need the workforce to be welcoming, non-judgmental and proactively curious about the challenges they might be having. This will support the building of trusted parent-professional relationships and create an environment conducive to sharing 'difficulties' when they arise. Particular groups, such as dads, parents of children with SEND and those isolated e.g. by rurality, language, culture, lack of car or working hours need more opportunities to develop online and physical peer support in local venues.



Dads contributing to the needs assessment did not commonly use social media for information and support. They need physical opportunities to meet other fathers (with and without their children) to build confidence in their parenting role and for mutual support around common challenges. There are a range of families who have multiple difficulties who would benefit from greater outreach and community led support, who often live in deprived areas of Bedford Borough.

Areas to Develop

In the light of the needs analysis, areas for consideration in developing Family Hubs include:

1

Improve accessibility of information and raise awareness of what is on offer and how to access it.

Flexibility around opening hours and hybrid delivery, including holiday activities and wraparound support.

2

3

Workforce development to build a consistently welcoming, proactive, culturally sensitive and relationship building approach across all services.

Continuing to strengthen professional networks and the workforce's ability to know what support is available for whom.

4

5

A greater focus on building family hub 'spokes' through outreach and working with trusted community groups and venues - taking support out to communities and to vulnerable groups.

6

Facilitating peer support opportunities, particularly for support of seldom heard or isolated families.

Continue to develop co-production as 'a way of working' including going out to parents where they are.

7

8

Considering ways of normalising the use of Children's Centres to familiarise families with what is on offer at an earlier stage, building on co-location with maternity services and potentially birth registration.

Continuing to share information across agencies to understand emerging issues and to measure performance.

9

10

Importance of the third family hub focusing more on older children and working with community groups, schools and young people to identify and develop an appropriate venue/mobile option and operational model. There is a need to provide easier access to a wide range of support for parents and older children including building emotional wellbeing, help with homework clubs and support the growing number of older children with SEND.

Bedford Borough Population Data - Snap shot



High population growth
over the last ten years



Around 11,000 children aged 0-4

Around 34,000 children over five years old



Around 2,223 babies
are born each year



Nearly 1/3 of births are to women of
ethnic minorities, nationally this is 1/4.



Most 0-4 year olds live in Queens
Park, Cauldwell, Goldington and
Kingsbrook wards.



Around 5,600 0-15 year olds live
in relative low income families



Some of the 10-20% most deprived
areas in England are in Castle Newnham,
Harpur, Greyfriars and Cauldwell wards.



Numbers of looked after children and children with Special
Educational Needs (SEN) statements and Education and
Health Care (EHC) plans (at 2019) have increased.



Fewer young people are not in education,
employment or training (NEET) than
comparator local areas in the same
deprivation decile (IMD2019).

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please contact us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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Informacja

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Per Informazione

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Website: beststart.bedford.gov.uk

