

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committees: Community and Children's Services – For information Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee – For information	Dated: 19/06/2025 01/07/2025
Subject: Families in the City update	Public report: For Information
This proposal: • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties	Diverse engaged communities Providing excellent services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Rachel Talmage – Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help – Families in the City Programme Lead Hannah Dobbin – Families in the City Programme Manager

Summary

This report introduces the Families in the City programme and provides Members with an update on progress. Families in the City is the Department for Community and Children's Services (DCCS) and partners' response to national government reform and changes in delivery of our services for 0–5-year-olds in the City of London. The programme will run in its current form until December 2025.

Since March 2025, a dedicated Families in the City team has been created, and the necessary infrastructure and governance to support the programme has been established. In addition, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been started and workstream leads are making progress on their action plans.

Recommendations

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. National Government reforms are driving transformational change in service delivery for children, young people and families. The Department for Education's (DfE's) Families First Partnership programme sets out expectations for local authorities to create an integrated system to 'support more children to stay safely with their families, and see better outcomes'. It requires local authorities to review and design a system that merges Tiers 2 and 3.
2. The current Children's Social Care and Early Help services are managed within the People Directorate and delivered by a team of social workers and Early Help practitioners. Services for children and families in the City of London are delivered across four levels of need: universal needs (Tier 1); additional needs (Tier 2); complex needs (Tier 3); and acute needs (Tier 4). These services cater to children and young people from 0–18 years and up to 25 years for care leavers and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
3. There is also a national policy drive towards family hubs which are expected to deliver services for children and young people aged 0–19 and to 25 for young people with SEND. We use the term 'family hub' to reflect national and local terminology. Services delivered as part of the family hub will need to align with the Families First model.
4. Some local areas received funding from the DfE to make the change to family hubs. The City of London Corporation (City Corporation) was not one of those to receive funding.
5. Nationally there is a drive to deliver Start for Life services. The DfE considers these services to support families with 0–2-year-olds, however, in the City of London, these refer to services for 0–5-year-olds and their families.
6. Locally, the Community and Children's Services (CCS) Committee has been informed and made decisions on the review and development of children's services in the City of London. Previous CCS Committee papers are noted in the background papers section at the end of this paper.
7. Members decided that the City of London's children's services that are part of the Start for Life programme and currently managed by The Aldgate School, will come in-house to the DCCS from 1 September 2025.
8. In March 2025, the DCCS established a new work programme called Families in the City. This aims to establish a comprehensive, multi-agency service offer that meets the needs of all children and young people aged 0–25 years in the City of

London. This is a unique opportunity to redesign and transform services shaped by the voices of City of London children, young people and their families.

9. Families in the City does not cover the consultation and development of a 0–2 childcare policy for the City of London. This is being led by the Education and Early Years Team and a separate paper has been submitted to CCS Committee (19 June 2025).

Current Position

10. A Families in the City programme team has been set up including the Assistant Director People as Programme Sponsor, the Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help as the Programme Lead, and a dedicated Programme Manager.

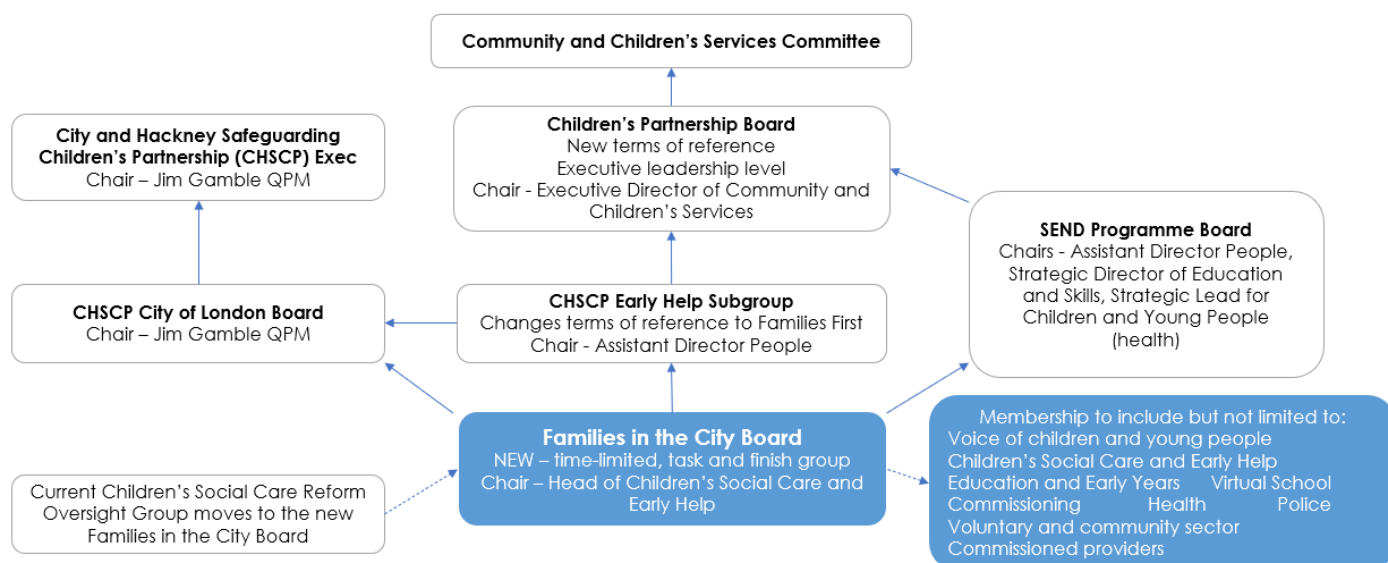
11. Three connected workstreams have been identified, each with their own workstream lead:

- Families First Partnership redesign – to respond to the DfE's reforms
- Start for Life development – to continue to develop our offer for 0–5s and their families and bring it into the extended 0–25-year-olds offer
- family hub development – to respond to DfE's drive to establish a centralised location for a range of services for families with children aged 0–25

12. Cross-cutting themes include:

- resident involvement
- equity, equalities, diversity and inclusion
- commissioning and partnerships
- performance and data systems
- HR
- finance.

13. The governance structure around Families in the City has been created (see figure below). A new Families in the City Board is driving the programme within the context of existing City of London governance arrangements. The chart below sets out these arrangements.



14. In terms of workstream progress, the Families First Partnership redesigned workstream is in the insight gathering and learning phase. The workstream lead has attended several DfE webinars and has an overview of the most up-to-date DfE guidance.
15. There is complexity in applying national guidance to our unique City of London context, so exploring this with partners will continue over the coming months. The DfE recognises that there is already continuity in support for families across Tiers 2 and 3, and conversations will continue with the DfE to ensure that the City of London is meeting national requirements, building on our existing arrangements.
16. The Start for Life workstream continues to bring the oversight and management of services for 0–5s and their families into the DCCS. No services will be lost as part of this process but changes to delivery, such as location, may be seen in some services. The focus throughout has and will remain on providing high-quality services to support improved outcomes for families with young children.
17. National government reform is shifting support for families into a family hub model. Family hubs aim to provide a central access point for support and services for children and young people from conception to age 19, or up to 25 for young people with SEND, and their families. The family hubs bring together services from local authorities and partners including Health and Public Health.
18. Family hubs look different across local authorities. They can be a physical building or a virtual access point. A family hub could be co-located with other services or provide service at delivery sites (sometimes described as 'spokes' of the hub).
19. As part of Families in the City, the family hub development workstream is underway. The family hub in the City of London will develop over the coming months so the planning and delivery has been split into phases.

20. Phase one of the family hub development is due to finish on 1 September 2025 to align with Start for Life services being overseen by the DCCS. This process is underway with a clear, structured plan being implemented.
21. From 1 September, a virtual access point for the family hub will be provided via the Families Information Service website. Information is currently being gathered on what support and services are available for families and how they can access them – for example, the referral mechanism - to inform the website content. Options for a temporary physical presence to support the virtual information offer are being explored.
22. Services will be delivered in person at various sites across the City of London. Partners, including Health and Public Health, are working together to explore what this will look like, and to ensure that residents still have access to the support and services they need.
23. The family hub provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships with the voluntary and community sector. Positive conversations are underway with the Shoreditch Trust. The Trust's We Connect in the City programme of co-designed and co-delivered creative and wellbeing activities – integrated with its broader programme of health and wellbeing support and signposting for City of London adults and young families – will take place at the Aldgate Centre. The programme is funded by a Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund grant over two years, with local commissions and additional grant funding. Opportunities for joining up are being explored to avoid duplication and ensure a co-ordinated offer for families.
24. A long-term vision for a family hub building, which some families have told us they would like to see, requires further consideration and analysis to determine need and viability. Exploration and thinking around this are in the very initial stages and will continue into phase two of the developments after September 2025.
25. Full EIAs are being developed for the Families First Partnership and family hub development workstreams. The Start for Life workstream will be integrated into the family hub development EIA. These will remain as a live documents to be considered at Families in the City Board meetings and at other appropriate involvement opportunities.
26. The voices of children, young people, parents and carers are central to Families in the City. Existing insight and feedback are being collated and will inform developments. To provide a co-ordinated approach to involvement specifically for Families in the City, a Family Design Lab will be launched.
27. The design lab is due to launch on 2 June 2025. Young people, parents and carers who live in the City of London or access services for 0–25-year-olds and their families will be invited to join the design lab and give consent to be contacted about involvement opportunities as they emerge throughout the duration of the programme.

28. The design lab aims to bring the point of engagement forward in the development process so that, as the programme moves at pace, ideas can be tested with an engaged group of young people, parents and carers. A project brief and summary plan for the design lab is provided in Appendix 1. This is a live document so captures progress at the time of writing.

29. Involvement opportunities will also be explored for families who are not members of the design lab to ensure that wider engagement is offered and feedback and ideas are captured.

Options

30. There are no options for the Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee to consider.

Proposals

31. There are no proposals for the Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee to consider.

Key Data

32. There is no key data for the Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee to consider.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

- **Strategic implications** – Families in the City aligns with objectives within the Corporate Plan 2024–2029 to deliver excellent services and a diverse, engaged community. It will align with the vision of the Children and Young People's Plan. The Early Help Strategy is due to be revised in 2026, this will be done taking Families in the City developments into account.
- **Financial implications** – Families in the City is using a DfE grant to fund the Programme Manager until December 2025. There is no additional funding available for the programme at this point. Financial implications will remain monitored, and additional funding will need to be sought if necessary.
- **Resource implications** – these are still being assessed.
- **Legal implications** – developments will need to ensure that the City Corporation continues to deliver all statutory functions and requirements.
- **Risk implications** – a risk and issues log has been set up for the programme and will be reviewed at Families in the City Board meetings.
- **Equalities implications** – EIAs are being developed and will remain as live documents for the duration of the programme.
- **Climate implications** – none.

- **Security implications** – none.

Conclusion

33. Families in the City provides the City of London with an opportunity to transform services for children, young people and families. It builds on our outstanding children's services (as rated by Ofsted inspection September 2024) and delivery that already exists. Work will continue at pace to drive forward change in the City of London. The voices of children, young people and their families will remain central to developments through a range of involvement activities. Partners are on board and will continue to work together with the shared aim of delivering the best possible services and support for families.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Family Design Lab project brief and summary plan.

Background Papers

- 5 May 2023 – public paper asking Members to note that an independent City of London Children's Centre Services Review would take place
- 13 December 2023 – non-public paper on the City of London Children's Centre Services and Family Hub Development
- 11 March 2024 – non-public paper on the City of London Children's Centre Services Review
- 11 November 2024 - non-public paper providing an update on the City of London Children's Centre Services.

Rachel Talmage

Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help
and Families in the City Programme Lead

T: 020 3834 7622

E: rachel.talmage@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Hannah Dobbin

Families in the City Programme Manager

T: 020 3834 7622

E: hannah.dobbin@cityoflondon.gov.uk