

CABINET

Subject Heading:

Site Selection for a Family Hub

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Oscar Ford, Lead Member for Children and Young People

ELT Lead:

Tara Geere, Director of Starting Well

Report Author and contact details:

Daniel Silva, Assistant Director of Early Help and Partnerships

daniel.silva@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

Havering has a statutory duty under the Children's Act to provide support as appropriate within our local area. We successfully bid for funding under the Family Hubs and Best Start in Life Programme to establish a Family Hub site which must be identified by January 2026, prioritising disadvantaged communities to maximise reach and accessibility. The hub will offer integrated support across health, education, and social care, including delivery of parenting programmes, home learning interventions, and mental health services. Delivery in line with guidance will be flexible, community-based, and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on co-location of services, digital access, and continuous improvement through local governance and collaboration.

Financial summary:

The Family Hub Development Grant allocated to Havering from DfE is £153,555. Guidance on spend is focused on three main areas;

-Development of workforce capacity including training to deliver the Evidence Based (EBI) Parenting and Home Learning Environment (HLE) interventions

-Marketing strategy- Clear communications, information and branding to support the promotion of the local Best Start for Life Offer

-Development of an online/digital offer

Is this a Key Decision? Significant effect on two or more Wards

When should this matter be reviewed? May 2026

Reviewing OSC: People OSC

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

SUMMARY

The Department for Education (DfE) has awarded Havering a Best Start Family Hubs Development Grant of £153,555. This funding will help establish a Local Family Hub to deliver parenting and home learning programmes from April 2026. The aim, in line with national guidance, is to improve early childhood development and help children thrive at school, with a target for 75% of children to reach expected development levels by 2028.

The grant requires us to identify at least one Family Hub site by January 2026. The site must be in a disadvantaged area, accessible, welcoming, and able to host parenting programmes and co-located services. The enhanced family hubs offer will need to be in place from April 2026.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Cabinet to agree a recommendation to select St Kilda's Children's Centre in Romford as the main Family Hub for phase one of the programme with satellite hubs at Ingrebourne Children's Centre and MyPlace Youth and Community Centre, both in the Harold Hill area, in order to ensure sufficient reach and delivery across the breadth of the offer.

Following a review of local data, service and demand needs within the Borough, this recommendation is based on St. Kilda's central location, accessibility, existing infrastructure, and high service usage. The site meets the criteria set by the DfE and offers opportunities to expand our existing services and partnerships.

We also propose that, alongside St Kilda's as the main Family Hub, Ingrebourne Children's Centre and MyPlace Youth and Community Centre, both in the Harold Hill

area, are utilised as satellite family hubs during this initial phase to ensure sufficient reach and delivery across the breadth of the offer.

We recommend that the sites for service delivery remain under frequent review to ensure that maximum potential reach is being achieved and that all appropriate community venues are being utilised.

REPORT DETAIL

1.The Department for Education (DfE) have allocated funding to Havering Council through the Best Start Family Hubs Development Grant as we were one of the local authorities not previously funded to deliver the existing Family Hubs programmes.

1.1 The development grant is to provide extra capacity for local authorities to prepare for the delivery of parenting and home learning programmes for families from April 2026. The aim is to improve children's early development and set them up to thrive at school, in support of the target to have 75% of children in England reaching the prescribed Good Levels of Development by 2028.

1.2 A key objective of the grant terms and conditions is to identify at least one Best Start Family Hub site by January 2026 from which to deliver the parenting and Home Learning Environment (HLE) interventions for families from April 2026.

1.3 To inform the potential family hub locations, an analysis of local outcome measures and data has been utilised from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and wider sources. This includes data on:

- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) by ward or LSOA
- Levels of Good Learning Development (GLD) including vulnerable groups
- Free school meal eligibility
- Take up of funded early years childcare provision
- Healthy weight indicators
- Prevalence of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)
- Transport and accessibility

1.4 The 0-17 population for Havering based on mid-2024 estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) is now 63,777, up from 61,295 in the mid-2023 estimates, a 4% increase year on year. Children and young people continue to make up 23% of the total population of Havering (same as 2023) with the number of 0-5 years figure now totalling 20,968.

1.5 There are well-researched links between deprivation and vulnerability, clearly showing that children who grow up in deprivation are more likely to have poor physical, social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural health and development outcomes.

1.6 Children living in deprivation are also more likely to be exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as domestic abuse, housing instability or parental or their own substance misuse.

1.7 Appendix 1 presents a ranked list of Havering wards based on indicators of child development risk, including Free School Meal eligibility (FSM), Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), Good Level of Development (GLD), and prevalence of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The data provided is all from the Havering Data Intelligence Hub.

1.7 The findings in the data show that Gooshays and Heaton are indicated as the wards with the greatest levels of need when it comes to child development. These are neighbouring wards within the Harold Hill area of the borough. Havering Park, also within the north of the borough, is within the top five wards with greatest level of need.

1.8 Ingrebourne Children's Centre and MyPlace Youth and Community Centre are both located within Gooshays ward and are accessible by bus routes to and from Heaton and Havering Park wards.

1.9 Utilising children's centres and community centres will enable us to ensure a breadth of services across the 0-25 age range and help to avoid barriers to accessing services through stigma associated with children's centres being only for babies and younger children. Our youth services are already well established as being delivered from MyPlace which gives a good foundation for delivering family hub services from this location.

2.0 Whilst the greatest prevalence of need is identified as being in the north of the borough, there are also areas of need across all parts of our borough and particularly in the south (notably South Hornchurch and Rainham & Wennington wards)

2.1 This initial site selection process is the beginning of the move towards a family hub / community hub delivery model across the borough over the next two to three years, linked into work being led by Living Well on community hubs.

2.2 We are proposing that St Kilda's Children's Centre is the designated Family Hub for this initial phase of delivery, with Ingrebourne Children's Centre and MyPlace Youth and Community Centre identified as satellite family hub sites.

2.3 St Kilda's Children's Centre has the highest footfall of all the Children's Centres in the borough (see appendix 2), is easily accessible by public transport from all areas of the borough, is an accessible building and already overs a wide range of co-located services.

2.4 The location of St Kilda's Children's Centre, also means it is accessible to families in the south of borough who wish to access the Family Hub services during this first phase of implementation.

2.5 An implementation plan for the phased implementation of the family hub offer from April 2026 will be developed, with a focus on developing the offer within the three main areas of the grant funding.

2.6 Future locations for delivery of family hub services will be kept under review, particularly following the opening of the Family Welcome Centre in Harold Hill, which is scheduled for completion in May 2026.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision: The Department for Education (DfE) has awarded Havering a Best Start Family Hubs Development Grant with the condition that a site is selected for the delivery of a family hub by January 2026, with service delivery commencing from April 2026.

Other options considered:

Option 1: Retain Current Service Delivery Model; Maintaining the current delivery model is not a viable option, due to the funding criteria set by the Department for Education and the need to align with Families First (Partnership Programme – FFPP) reforms, which require a more integrated family help offer. Failure to adapt would risk non-compliance and missed opportunities to improve support for local families.

Option 2; Deliver one Family Hub site, excluding satellite sites; Although it is feasible to operate solely from one central Family Hub, this approach would limit our ability to address the significant levels of need identified in specific wards. By not establishing satellite sites in areas with the highest prevalence of need, we risk failing to reach the most vulnerable children and families who would benefit most from tailored Family Hub services. A single-site model may also reinforce barriers to access such as travel distance and perceived exclusivity, particularly for those in outlying or underserved communities. Therefore, while operationally simpler, this option does not align with our commitment to equitable service provision.

Option 3; Deliver Family Hubs from all possible sites across the borough; While our long-term vision is to establish Family Hub sites in every part of the borough, a measured, phased implementation is essential. This approach will enable us to reflect on lessons learned during each stage, refine our delivery based on emerging needs, and ensure that our partner organisations are equipped to provide high-quality services without being overstretched. Furthermore, a phased rollout allows time to assess and, where necessary, adapt future sites to guarantee they are accessible, inclusive and welcoming for all, with appropriate funding allocated to support these enhancements.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Department for Education (DfE) has allocated a Best Start Family Hubs Development Grant of £153,555 to Havering Council for the 2025–2026 financial year. This is a non-ringfenced grant issued under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. However, the funding should be spent in line with the following objectives:

1. Identify at least one Best Start Family Hub site by January 2026
2. Prepare to Deliver Parenting and Home Learning Environment (HLE) interventions from April 2026
3. Strengthen local plans for Best Start in Life delivery

This report recommends St Kilda's Children's Centre as the primary Family Hub, supported by two satellite sites at Ingrebourne and MyPlace. These locations have been chosen because they are situated in areas with the highest levels of deprivation, ensuring that support is targeted where it is most needed in line with the grant objectives. Minor adaptations required at St Kilda's Children's Centre will be funded through the allocated grant.

St Kilda's Children's Centre will extend its opening hours by 12 hours per week (an increase of approximately 30%), which will result in additional operating costs.(Approximately £12k)

The associated staffing costs, arising from the revised service model and introduction of shift patterns, have already been addressed through a recent restructure (Phase 2). This restructure secured the necessary budget to cover these changes.

Any ongoing additional utility costs are not covered by the grant and will need to be absorbed within core budgets. However, these costs are expected to be minimal (Approx 12k) and should not present a significant financial impact.

Risks:

The report does not provide a detailed breakdown of how the £153,555 grant will be allocated across its three core objectives. Additionally, there is no indication of the estimated costs for the minor adaptations required at St Kilda's Children's Centre, which creates uncertainty around whether the grant funding will be sufficient to cover these works without impacting other planned activities.

Legal implications and risks: There are no legal implications regarding this report.

Human Resources implications and risks: There are no direct implications to staff because of the family hub site selection decision. Any decisions that involve direct impact on staff will be sufficiently and appropriately scoped.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

Havering Council is committed to improving the health and well-being of all residents including those most vulnerable. The delivery of family hubs is driven by the 'giving every child the best start in life' strategy the overall aims of which is to provide support for families and more accessible early education and childcare. The core principle of family hubs is service integration and accessible, community-based support and intervention.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet, 14th January 2026

Appendix 1; Indicators of child development risk at ward level

Appendix 2; Children's Centre footfall data 2024/25

Appendix 3; Best Start Family Hubs Grant Letter 2025 to 2026