



Hertfordshire
Family Centre
Service

Hertfordshire Family Support Service

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2022 - March 2023



This year's Annual Report demonstrates another successful year for the Family Support Service. Through staff and volunteer's hard work and dedication large numbers of families across Hertfordshire have engaged in the service, which has positively impacted their lives.

"We need groups like this, especially as a new mum. It is amazing that the sessions are free, I've been able to make friends and feel less lonely. It has helped my mental health. We really enjoy attending Active Rhyme Time on Wednesdays, my baby doesn't stop smiling!"

Annual Parent Satisfaction Survey, December 2022

"When I first sought help back in 2022 I could barely get out of bed. Now, after everything you have helped me with, I can see a light at the end of the tunnel."

Parent voice from targeted 1:1 support





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Who We Are

Hertfordshire's Family Support Service is part of the Family Centre Service. We help families from pregnancy through to when a child reaches the end of Primary School (aged 11 years).

Our purpose is to support children to have the best start in life, develop well and thrive.



Our Work Focuses on 5 Key Priorities



Priority 1: Healthy Lives, Healthy Relationships

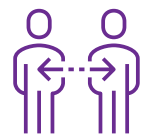
Outcome Bee: Be Healthy,
Be Safe, Be Resilient, Be Happy



Priority 2: Raising Aspirations & Volunteering

Outcome Bee: Be Ambitious,
Be Resilient, Be Independent,
Be Happy





Priority 3: Narrowing the Gap

Outcome Bee: Be Ambitious, Be Resilient



Priority 4: Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Outcome Bee: Be Healthy, Be Safe, Be Resilient, Be Independent



Priority 5: Public Health Messages

Outcome Bee: Be Healthy



The Family Support Service

Being a parent is one of the most challenging, rewarding and important roles anyone can have. All children deserve to be supported so they can grow up happy and healthy.

We provide early help to families before problems escalate by offering:



1-1 Support



Parenting Groups



Emerging Needs Support



Universal Services



The Last Year

Over the last 12 months families have faced multiple challenges arising from the aftermath of Covid-19 and an increase in the cost of living. In direct response to this, the Family Support Service has been an active partner in Hertfordshire County Council's Building Life Chances Programme.

The Building Life Chances Programme has involved working in collaboration with a variety of different partners and is made up of a wide range of initiatives including crisis intervention funding, community projects and financial advice that will support families in or at risk of disadvantage.

Through this additional funding 26,208 children have engaged with the additional universal sessions delivered by the Family Support Service across the county.

With the funding that the Family Support Service received through the Programme and additional funding, families were able to:

- **Gain greater access to universal play and learning groups**
- **Benefit from Parent Cafe drop ins**
- **Access food vouchers**
- **Apply to a Winter Essentials grant**

These additional benefits have enabled families to address inequalities intrinsically linked to the cost of living this year.

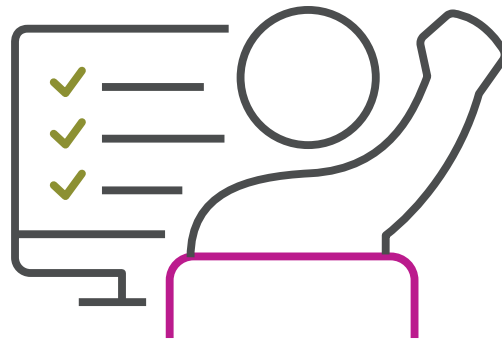


Annual Parent Satisfaction Survey

Each year we run an Annual Parent Satisfaction Survey with service users to ask how we're performing. This year's feedback from families was extremely positive and it was good to see an increase in awareness of our service.



1,598
PARENTS
COMPLETED
THE SURVEY



94.2% AGREED
SUPPORT + GUIDANCE
MET THEIR NEEDS



97.2% AGREED
FAMILY CENTRE SERVICE
INCLUSIVE + WELCOMING



72.8% SAID
NO BARRIERS
TO ACCESSING
SUPPORT



86.7% AGREED
FAMILY CENTRE SERVICE
IS AVAILABLE WHEN &
HOW PARENTS NEED IT

Accessing Targeted Family Support

There is a designated portal for families and partners to make referrals into the Service. This alerts the Family Support Service teams to:



Make contact with the family



Begin the process of identifying their needs



Work in partnership with the family



Design a plan to build on their strengths, skills and resilience to improve their children's outcomes



PRIORITY 1

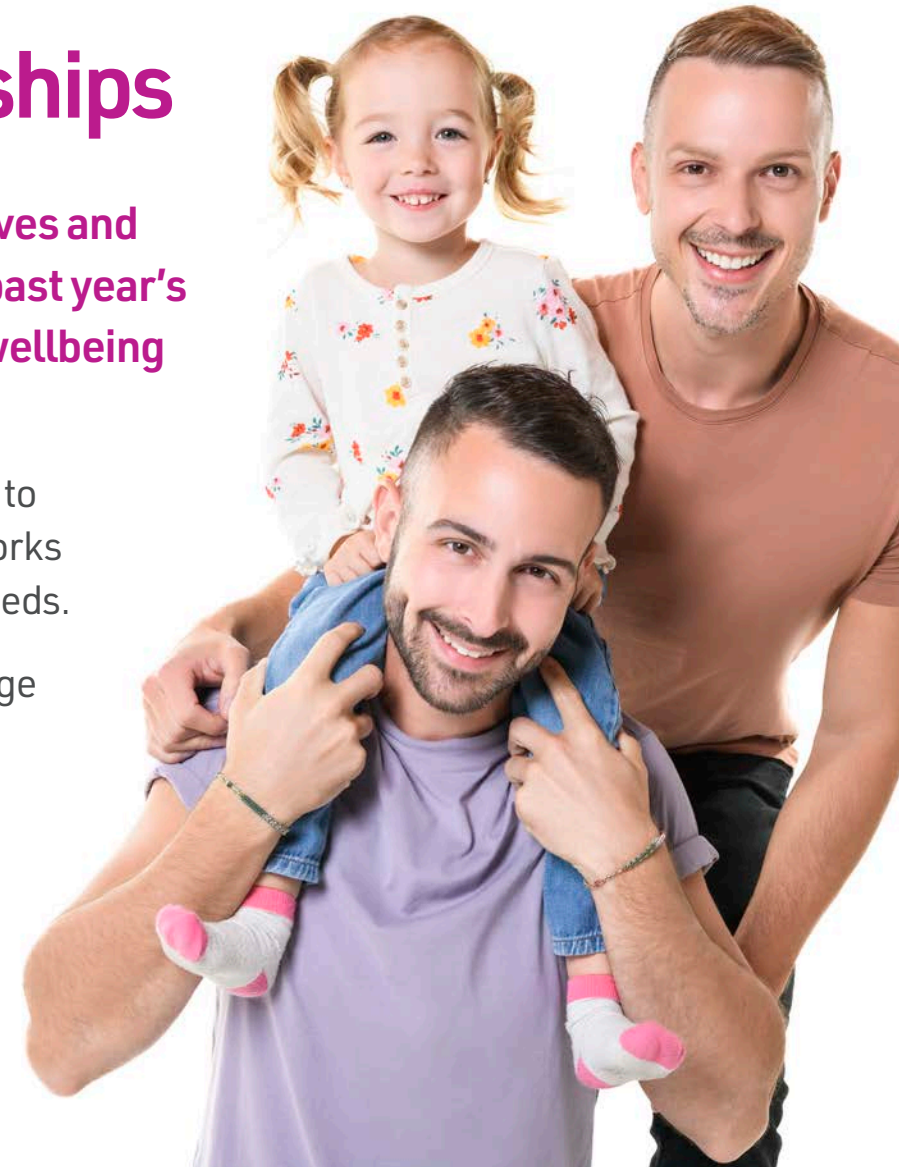


Healthy Lives, Healthy Relationships

Working towards the Healthier Hertfordshire vision, Healthy Lives and Healthy Relationships is woven throughout all that we do. The past year's presenting needs have been focused on emotional health and wellbeing alongside the impact of the 'cost of living'.

The Family Support Service work across all levels of need from universal to emerging needs and then onto a more targeted approach. The service works in a holistic way in partnership with families to better understand their needs.

Our approach is a Families First model, where we work closely with a range of other Partners that are identified as best placed to support families to build upon their strength and resilience.





Family Voice

"The support I have received from the Family Centre has really helped me to understand how to support my children. I have been using the strategies taught to me and whilst it's still early days, I can already see a difference in all of us."

The Protective Behaviours support has really helped me to make connections with my children and the resources have helped us to do things together. I know we have more work to do, however I feel confident in my abilities to do this."





Family Support 1:1 Referrals

2,669

= TOTAL NUMBER OF
REFERRALS

for 1:1
& Parenting
Groups

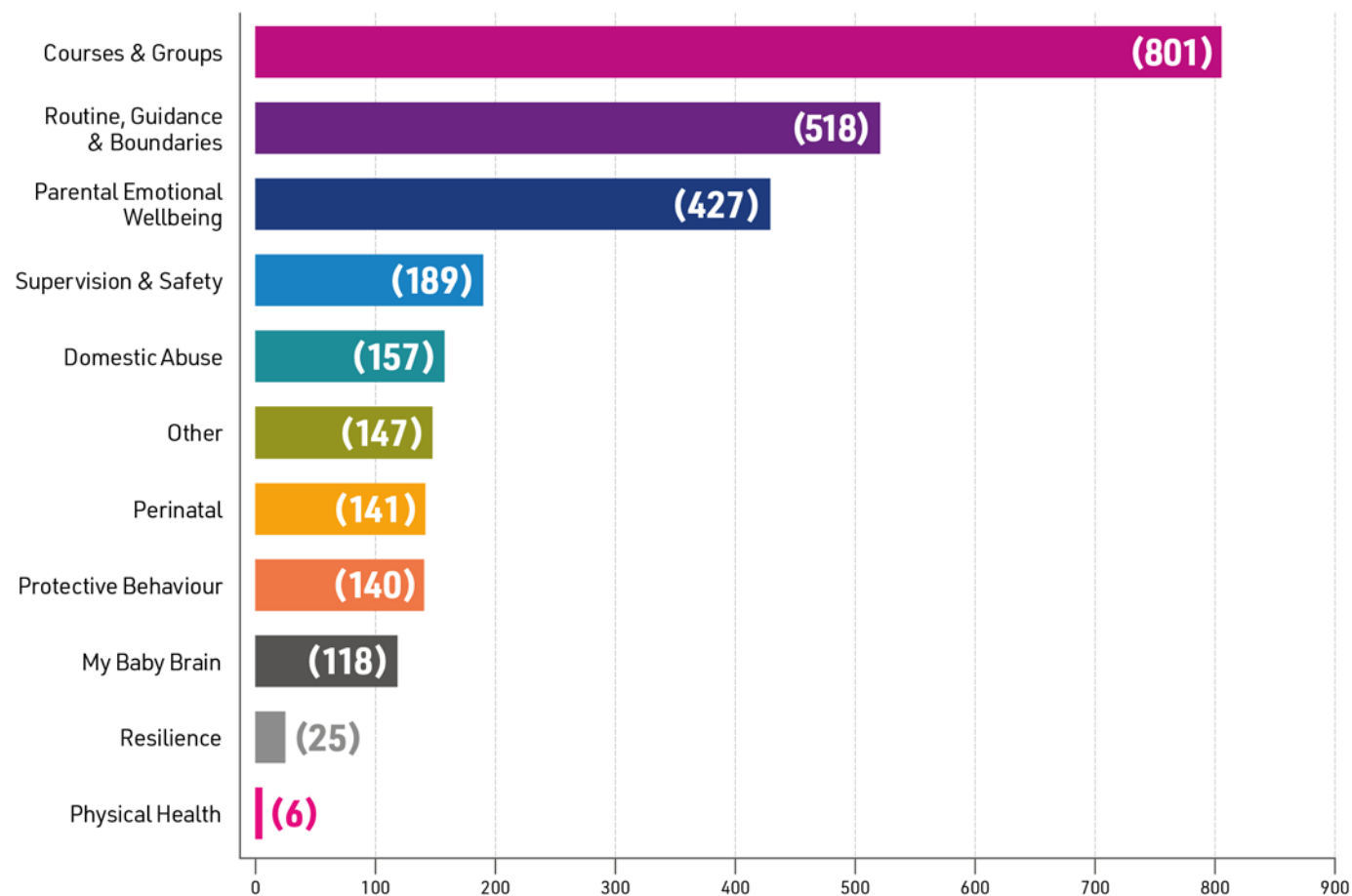
427

of these
REFERRALS
were for
**emotional
wellbeing
support**





Total Family Support Referrals: 2,669





PRIORITY 2



Raising Aspirations and Volunteering

Raising the aspirations of families enables them to live fulfilled lives and make a positive contribution in their communities. Through our partnerships with local providers, we offer families opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge through educational courses/ workshops to help prepare them for employment and improve their prospects.

“These workshops helped me a lot. It refreshed my thoughts on the importance of Self-Care, which affects our mental health and daily life greatly”.

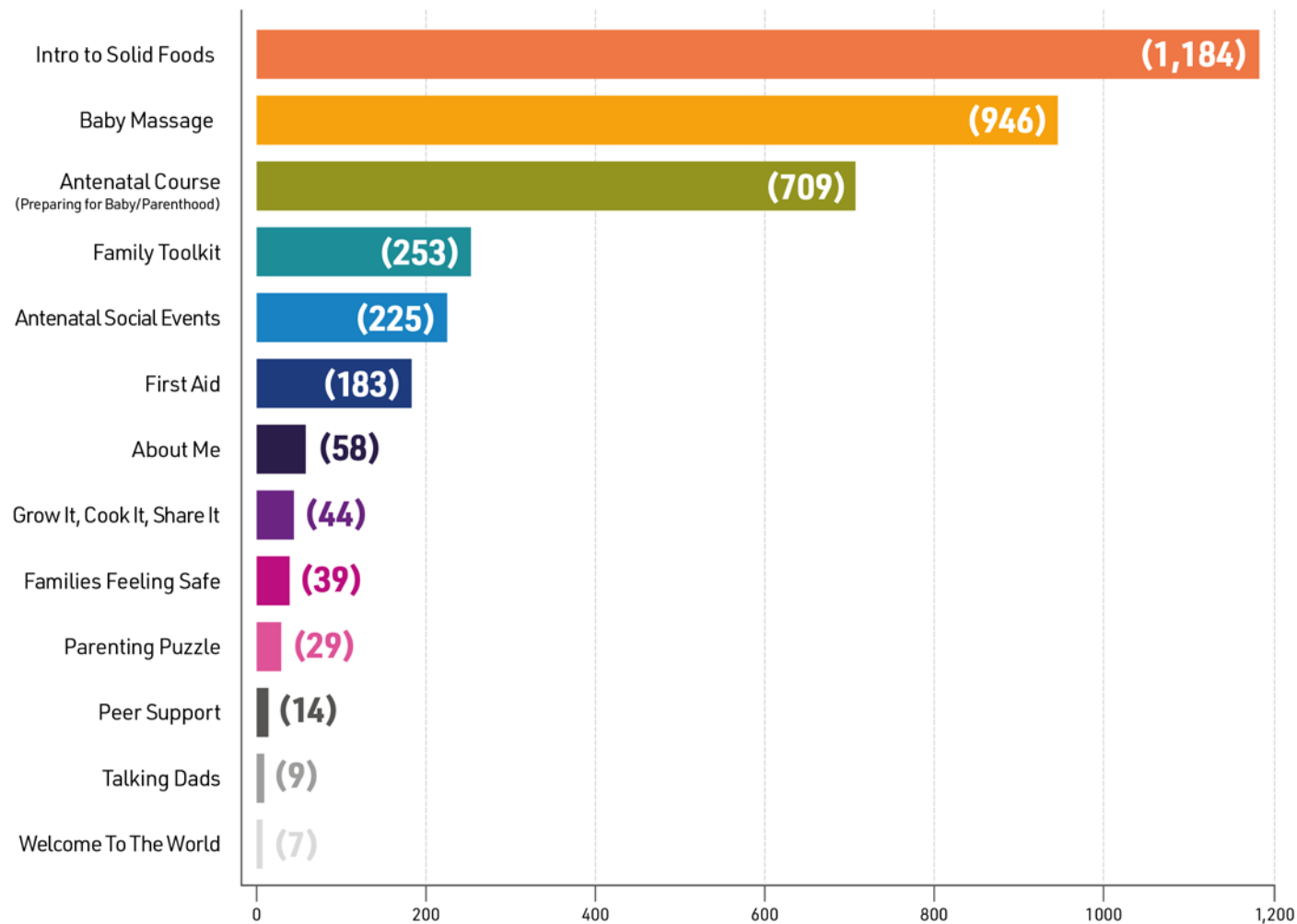
Wellbeing Workshop on Self-Care

“Wow that was fantastic! I feel that I’ve been on a long and difficult journey through life but didn’t understand that my childhood experiences were affecting my own experience of parenting. I now get how things can be different. I am confident that my daughter has a very different and much brighter future. Thank You.”

Talking Dads Workshop



Number of Families Attending Courses and Workshops





Volunteering

The Family Support Service offers volunteering opportunities. Through these experiences parents and carers can improve their skills, change the direction of their career by gaining work experience and build their self-confidence.

Through our volunteer pathway many people have gone into paid work or onto further training. Volunteers are integral to our service, they bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and lived experiences and come from diverse backgrounds.

All volunteers are provided with a full induction, access to further training, and ongoing support. Our aim is that all volunteers will have a positive and valuable experience.





“My time spent volunteering with the Family Support Service helped me to get an understanding of the roles within the service and reinforced my desire to work with families and young children/babies. From the first session I was made to feel very welcome and everyone was happy to support me in getting to know the service and sharing their knowledge with me. Volunteering helped me to feel confident when applying for the role of Perinatal and Under Ones Worker, knowing it was definitely where I wanted to be”.



CASE STUDY:

Volunteer Admin Assistant

AM came to us as a volunteer through word of mouth in late 2020. She had two teenage children and had been out of the workplace since the birth of her first child.

AM had good admin and office skills but was painfully shy and lacked self-confidence, her motivation for volunteering was to rebuild her confidence to enable her to return to work.

AM completed a full induction training which all staff and volunteers undertake and references and checks were completed before AM took up her role at one of our hubs.

AM attended our hub one day per week. She was managed on a day-to-day basis by two members of staff on site who discussed her objectives and how to meet them in the context of the working environment.

At first AM was too nervous to answer the telephone or greet visitors so she was given back-office tasks which she completed to a high standard. Over the next year, as her confidence grew she took on more tasks.

By the end of her time with us she was running reception single handedly allowing staff to get on with other duties. She now works in a legal practice.





Volunteering



Volunteer Roles

SELF WEIGH



MEET & GREET

ADMIN SUPPORT

VIDEO PROMOTION



PEER SUPPORT

HANDY PERSON

VITAMINS & FOOD DELIVERY

SUPPORT FOR EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

GARDENER



INFANT FEEDING



LITERACY SUPPORT

HOME LEARNING RESOURCE

EMERGING NEEDS

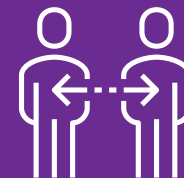
WALK & TALK



COMMUNITY GROUP SUPPORT



PRIORITY 3



Narrowing the Gap

Over the last year the Family Support Service have been working to raise the profile of the Emerging Needs packages which support narrowing the achievement gap for children under five years.

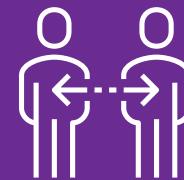
We have been ensuring that partner agencies are aware of what we offer and how to refer; and we have developed a set of promotional materials setting out course content and outcomes for our targeted courses.

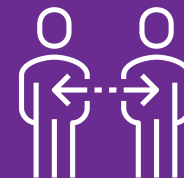
3,974



referrals into
**EMERGING
NEEDS**







The Emerging Needs packages are:

- **Early Talk**

A six week course to develop ideas to promote a child's communication and language. Run in partnership with the Speech and Language Therapy Team.

- **Little Learners**

A five week course for families with children aged 10 to 20 months supporting parents to have a better understanding of how to respond to their child's feelings and how to provide safe play and learning opportunities that they can enjoy together to help their child to reach their developmental milestones.

- **Young Explorers**

A five week course for families with children aged 2 and above supporting parents to have a better understanding of how to respond to their child's feelings and how to provide safe play and learning opportunities that they can enjoy together to help their child to reach their developmental milestones.

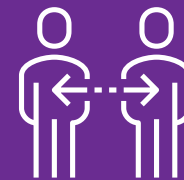
- **My Baby & Me**

A five week course for families with children aged 4 months to 1 year supporting parents to have a better understanding of how to respond to their child's feelings and how to provide safe play and learning opportunities that they can enjoy together to help their child to reach their developmental milestones.

These are designed to support around the 3 prime Early Years Foundation Stages areas:

- **Communication & Language**
- **Physical Development**
- **Personal, Social & Emotional Development**





Funding For 2 Year Olds

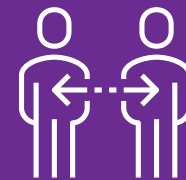
Eligible 2 year olds are entitled to free childcare (15 hours)

AUTUMN 2021
UPTAKE WAS 94.1%

AUTUMN 2022
UPTAKE WAS 96.5%



AN INCREASE OF
+2.4%





Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Through the Hertfordshire SEND Strategy and our commitment to the Professional Promise, we are continually looking for ways to improve our services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The role of the SEND Champion has developed over the last 12 months as the Family Support Service SEND offer has increased to include the new Early Adventurers sessions and the jointly run Early Years Support sessions.





"It's so nice to talk to someone who listens and understands how I am feeling and what we are dealing with as a family."

"Thank you so much for your time, it was lovely to talk about the support we can receive."



Early Adventurers

A nine week course for families with children aged between 18 months and 4 years who are displaying either an emerging special educational need or who have been diagnosed with a SEND need. The course helps develop the important skills that a child needs to have a successful start in an Early Years setting, whilst building parent confidence in supporting their child's needs.




COURSES
RUN **18**


126

FAMILIES
ATTENDED



127

CHILDREN
SUPPORTED

Family Voice



“Coming to a smaller group has helped my anxiety which also affects my son, I now feel more relaxed seeing how he interacts with the other children. I’m starting to understand the SEND pathway. I didn’t know where to start before I came to the course.”



“Sorry for the tears but thank you for validating my feelings, it’s so nice to have people who get it and you don’t feel you have to explain or justify your anxieties or worries.”



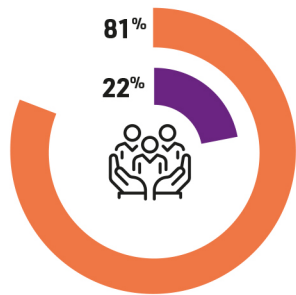
“I feel that I can approach the SENCo at his nursery and talk about the targets that need to be put in place. Before I didn’t understand the reasoning behind them, but now I feel more confident in working together with professionals and not feeling anxious around them.”



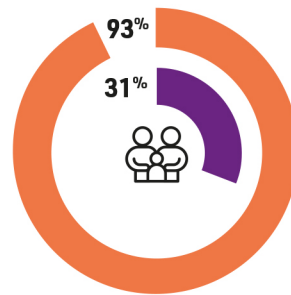


Parent Outcomes

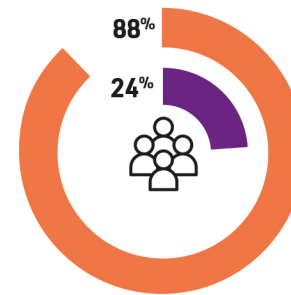
"I have a **support network** with other families"



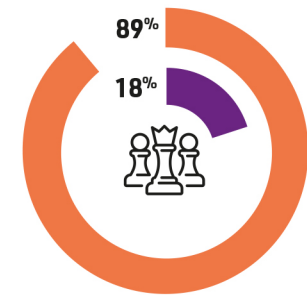
"I understand the **different needs** of my child and can respond appropriately"



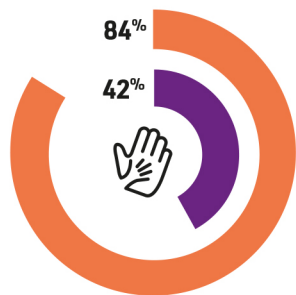
"I feel comfortable taking my child to **socialise** in a small group setting"



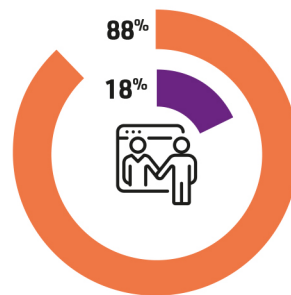
"I have a bank of **activity ideas** that I can use to play and engage with my child"



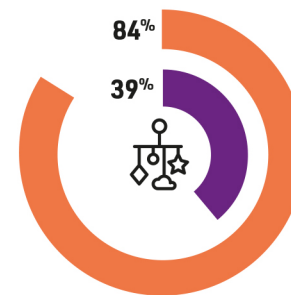
"I understand the **different ways** my child communicates"



"I am aware of the **services I need** for my family and how to access them"



"I understand the importance of having **consistent boundaries and routines**"



Key:

- Pre-Course
- Post-Course



CASE STUDY: Early Adventurers (SEND)

The family were referred to the Family Support Service by their Health Visitor to attend an Early Adventurers course. Mum has two boys with SEN, older child just about to start specialist provision.

Mum was anxious as she was unsure how her two year old would be in a new environment. Four families attended so the first week was calm and relaxed. Her son sat with mum for the whole session, but looked around and watched the others. The following week, he was more relaxed coming into the room, mum had said he loved books so plenty of books were available, he went straight over to the cosy area, flicked through the pages of the books and started naming objects.

He became more confident each week and slowly started to explore the room, gaining some eye contact and a little smile from him. Mum started to feel more

confident and benefited from chatting to other mums, sharing experiences and concerns regarding DLA, finding a nursery and starting the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process. She was signposted to HAND, The Money Advice Unit, SOS!SEN and the Family Centre supported with finding a Nursery.

By the end of the Early Adventurers course he would interact with staff through smiling or giving a cuddle. He was settled, engaged in play, sat for a short period at snack time and even tried some food!

At the one month follow on survey he had joined nursery and an EHCP had been discussed, the DLA forms had been submitted and mum was still in contact via Whats App with the other parents on the course and was meeting up with one of the families.



Early Support Session

A multi-agency initiative which brings together Public Health Nursing, Integrated Services for Learning (ISL) and the Family Support Service in one place to provide support for children with an identified or emerging need who are not accessing free or privately funded early years education. We welcome referrals via the completion of the child's details on an ISL single service request (SSR).

Examples of needs that children attending have are wide ranging and include:

- **Limited social skills**
- **Poor attention**
- **Speech delay**
- **Sensory processing concerns**
- **Hyperactivity**
- **Resistance to toilet training**

These sessions have been very well received by parents, outcomes of attending these sessions have included:

- Referred into Early Adventurers Group and into 1:1 support from the Family Support Service
- Parents being encouraged to self refer to Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy services
- Referral to Specialist Educational Needs Dental Service
- Parents have been signposted to a wide range of services including Money Advice Unit, Carers in Herts, ADD-Vance and HENRY Programme

“All was positive and so much better having just one meeting with a few professionals”



Spotlight on a SEND Champion

Maria Lambert

SEND Champion
Watford & Three
Rivers since 2020



Background: Teaching Assistant
in Primary School

"I love being able to provide families with support and information for their child with additional needs.

I also like knowing that I support parents with confidence and the ability to know where they can find any additional information they require".

Emma Jardine

Emerging Needs
Family Support
Worker and SEND Champion
North Quadrant since 2020



Background: Primary School
Teacher

"Introducing the new Early Adventurers course and Early Years Support Session has had a hugely positive impact on the families and children attending and the progress the children have made. I believe that all children should have the best start in life in a inclusive environment".

Natalie Chidgzey

SEND Champion and
Emerging Needs Lead
East Quadrant since 2019



Background: Pre-School and
Children's Centres

"I enjoy every aspect of my role but especially delivering the SEND sensory sessions and being able to provide families with support and guidance that has been beneficial to them and has made a difference to their lives. Seeing families grow not only in confidence as a parent but making connections with other families through the support we provide is a privilege".

PRIORITY 5



Public Health Messages

The Family Support Service ensures that key Public Health messages are threaded through all the services it provides via 1-1 conversations, small group discussions, signposting to other organisations and by sharing information via social media platforms.

These key messages include:

- Infant Feeding – Breastfeeding Support & Introduction to Solid Foods
- My Baby's Brain
- Oral Health
- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Smoking Cessation
- Toilet Training
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Immunisations
- Alcohol
- Child safety





Public Health Messages

The Family Support Service also delivers a number of key Public Health services. These continue to include:



Self Weigh Stations

Parents are able to book a 15 minute appointment to weigh their child and speak with a Family Support Service member of staff at key touchpoints to access information, support and signposting to Public Health Nursing as required.



Introduction to Solid Foods

Information is shared in a variety of ways including virtual Introduction to Solid Food workshops, face to face workshops, via social media and while attending self-weigh sessions.



Vitamin Scheme

Families can pick up free vitamins from Family Centres and within sessions.



Preparing for Parenthood/Baby Antenatal Programme

The Family Support Service leads one week of this two week course in partnership with Public Health Nursing.





The Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative



In September 2022, we were thrilled to announce our success in achieving reaccreditation of Unicef's Baby Friendly Initiative for excellence and sustained practice in the support of infant feeding and parent-infant relationships.

"The staff at Hertfordshire Family Support Service are commended for their hard work over the last two years in continuing to support mothers. It was clear to the assessment team, that in many areas pregnant women and new mothers received a high standard of care.

Staff we spoke to were enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and sensitive to the needs of babies, parents and families. Of particular note was their understanding of close and loving relationships and the impact on family's long term emotional health outcomes.

The hard work and dedication of the staff was evident in the feedback from mothers, it was clear that mothers who accessed the services in the family centre found them welcoming, useful, informative, and described them as a 'lifeline'.

Evidence of effective integrated working with midwifery and health visiting staff was apparent. Health leads provide training and the specialist service, which both staff and mothers commented on positively."

Source Re-assessment Report, June 2022, Unicef Baby Friendly Reaccreditation.





Healthy Mouths Programme

The aim of the Healthy Mouths Programme is to prevent tooth decay/oral disease, improve oral hygiene, promote healthy eating and signpost families to local dentists.

Dental hygiene packs are delivered to vulnerable children (aged 0 – 5) in Hertfordshire through our existing Family Support Services and Public Health Nursing with professional advice to families about oral health.

1,339



Total no. families who
BENEFITTED
from this project





Oral Health Pilot in Stevenage

This year we worked in partnership with Hertfordshire's Community Dental Service to develop a new community dental pop-up pilot. The pilot initially began in Stevenage as it has high levels of tooth decay.

The aim of the pilot was to help families with children aged 0 – 5 years to improve their child's dental hygiene and in return reduce oral health inequalities. Families were offered tailored advice around tooth brushing and diet as well as topical fluoride application was also offered to help strengthen teeth and prevent decay.

- **192 families seen**
- **12 sessions ran**
- **224 children seen**
- **63% had no access to a dentist before visit**





CASE STUDY: **Oral Health Pilot in Stevenage**

A child visited the Stevenage dental pop-up in distress refusing to be seen by the dentist.

The dentist gave props to child to take home and practice with parent.

The child returned with their parent and was happy to have his teeth examined and fluoride applied.

The parent was very happy that the child had been seen and thankful for the staff for this.





Self Weigh



TOTAL NUMBER OF
**SELF WEIGH
LOCATIONS**
ACROSS THE COUNTY

↪ **47**

TOTAL NUMBER OF
ATTENDEES ↪

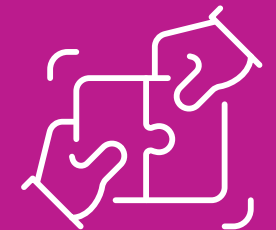
9,362





Our Next Steps

- Continue to proactively work with local partners as a member of the Building Life Chances Programme to support families during the Cost of Living crisis
- Continue to ensure that our service is father friendly resulting in higher engagement across the service
- Continue to ensure that our antenatal offer is inclusive to all, an example of which is the roll out of Becoming Dad
- Oral Health pilot in Stevenage is to begin to roll-out starting with Broxbourne
- Continue to work with Hertfordshire's Early Years partners on building the workforce through the Recruitment and Retention Working Group
- Strengthen the SEND offer by raising the profile of the universal SEND Drop Ins, Early Adventurers, and joint Early Years Support sessions with Integrated Services for Learning and Public Health Nursing, alongside increasing referrals from a wider range of partners



Digital Communications Statistics for the County

The Communications teams across the three Family Support Providers work closely together to ensure a consistent and correctly branded message is depicted on all social media platforms across the County.



Thank You to our Partners

Collaborative working is central to so much of the service that we provide to families through the Family Support Service. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of our partner organisations listed below, in particular our Public Health Nursing colleagues from Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust.

- ADD-Vance
- BBC Children in Need
- BeeZee Bodies
- Catapult
- Citizens Advice
- Community Action Dacorum
- Communities 1st
- District Councils
- District Healthy Hubs
- DSPLs
- Early Years Alliance
- Families First
- Family in Focus
- Food Banks
- Future Living
- Herts for Learning
- Herts Helpline
- Hertfordshire Children's Fund
- Hertfordshire Libraries
- Hertfordshire Libraries & Heritage Services – HCC
- Herts Mind
- Herts Parent Carer Involvement
- Home Start
- Housing Associations eg. B3 Living
- IDVA
- Job Centre
- Margaret Street, Early Years Librarian
- National Careers Service
- Playskills
- Safer Places
- Step2Skills
- SPACE
- Supporting Links
- Team Herts
- The Living Room
- The Local Offer
- The Wellbeing Team
- Trainingly
- Watford & Three Rivers Trust
- Watford Women's Centre





Hertfordshire **Family Centre Service**

For more information:

Call: 0300 123 7572

Visit: hertsfamilycentres.org



Find us on social media

**Most of the images in this presentation are original Family Support Service photographs and are only used for the purpose we have been given permission for.*

Data references: April 2022 - March 2023