



*Celebrating a year on ..*

**Almost 12 months ago, we introduced our first family hub in Leicestershire. Since then, we have worked on bringing our vision and plans to reality.**

The purpose of family hubs is to ensure that families can easily find or request information, advice and support whenever and wherever they need it. We received transformation funding from the Department for Education and embarked on an ambitious programme of change to bring this vision to life for Leicestershire families.

It's been a whirlwind of activity, with ribbon cuttings, cakes eaten, photographs taken, and new partnerships made and services delivered.

We've launched 20 family hubs and worked with our colleagues in the library services to introduce 16 additional hubs in libraries. This has brought the total number of buildings to 36.

We're also adding 20 public access computers in our family hub buildings to enable families and communities to access the family hubs website. These computers are in addition to the ones available in county libraries.

We've met children and families who celebrated with us and heard how families share in our vision of creating safe spaces in communities and neighbourhoods where they can access services from various organisations or ask for advice. We've also heard from families about the barriers they can experience, whether that is from rural isolation, digital poverty, lack of information about what is available to them, language and cultural barriers, and services which can be hard to access.



**“Whilst family hubs are about buildings and the website, the partnership working that sits behind and within them will genuinely make the difference.”**

During the year, we took time to reflect on the achievements of our Children and Families Partnership Priority One, Best Start in Life. Building on these achievements around 1001 critical days and school readiness, we re-launched with a newly expanded partnership group and developed our First Maternity and Early Years Strategy and Plan. We have welcomed our voluntary sector colleagues to many of these meetings and are entering a new era of partnership work.

In June last year, we challenged many organisations to reconnect and explore opportunities for engagement and more integrated working. Our Early Help Partnership has focused on understanding the broader early help system and thinking about the responsibilities we all have within this system. In December last year, the partnership developed a strategy document for the county, drawing on the national Early Help System Guide and the updated Working Together to Safeguard Children document – both of which detail the importance of strong partnerships in early intervention and prevention.

Under the umbrella of Family Hubs, we are pleased to be working with colleagues across Rutland and Leicester City to explore the development of an early help competency framework. This will support thinking about the key skills, knowledge, and approaches across the early help system. Additionally, we'll be exploring how Family Hubs can support multi-agency learning and development to assist the constantly evolving early help workforce. We're also looking at implementing a form of Partnership early help assessment, using simple Signs of Safety approaches, to maintain consistent approaches with families and keep their needs at the forefront.

As this 2023-2024 year draws to a close, the need to work together has never been greater. We all face huge financial challenges, including the children and families we work with. The need for strong partnerships supporting early intervention and prevention, for multi-agency working wrapping around families, is all too apparent. We must make sure we push ahead in the years to come, working together to safeguard children and support our communities.

*Ellie Lowe & the family hubs team*



## REDUCING PARENTAL CONFLICT (RPC) IN LEICESTERSHIRE

Last year, we launched the partnership document, **Relationships Matter in Leicestershire**. This document was produced by the Core Development Group, a subgroup of the Early Help Partnership, working together to promote awareness and understanding of the impact that parental conflict has on children. The RPC agenda has been supported by The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) grant.

We've achieved so much in the last 12 months and across our partnership. We have trained over 570 professionals and volunteers using the Leicestershire RPC practitioner toolkit to raise the understanding of conflict so that it helps them in their roles to have those difficult conversations with families.

The approach of developing 'relationship leaders' across both statutory services and the voluntary sector should stand us in good stead beyond the funded period. The breadth of professionals undertaking this training serves to demonstrate the early help system in action – from GPs to teachers, midwives, health visitors, school pastoral staff, social workers, family support workers, district councils ASB and housing staff, volunteers, our colleagues in the voluntary sector, and many, many more – a truly remarkable effort from all to make a difference to family lives in Leicestershire.

We have scheduled 11 training sessions during the summer term. If you work with children, parents and families and would like to learn more about understanding the impact of parental conflict, why not attend one of our 50-minute, virtual sessions? If you are interested in attending a session, please get in touch with [Julie Crookes](#).



There are also a variety of resources available both **online** and offline, including short videos and One Plus One online courses that aim to help parents reduce conflict. These materials are available for families to self-help and for professionals and volunteers to access and use. Since launching, parents have given positive feedback and have reported that the information has helped them through difficult times.



Hear from our RPC parents

What have you learnt and what are you doing differently from using ARGUING BETTER?

"How to manage stress effectively, listening and using emotional support to explain emotions and offer support effectively and how to argue/get to the root of a problem without raised voices, how to make sure both sides are listened to by listening effectively and finding a solution and a common ground on the problem at hand."

"To be a better husband, dad and to listen more and to keep calm in all situations and to consider others feelings and ask about there day and help them and go forward together."

"Stepping away. More patience, more consideration for each other and the kids"



What have you learnt and what are you doing differently from GETTING IT RIGHT FOR CHILDREN?

"Take my time when responding to conflict and/or situations that arise especially change in plans. To not use the children to pass messages on or transfer details - take the pressure and stress off them."

"Stay calm, make sure these discussions are not around the kids. To listen and come to an agreement or arrangement that suits both parents."

"To remain focused on my daughter's needs. Also to remain thoughtful about how my ex partner is feeling when discussing arrangements."

What have you learnt and what are you doing differently from using ME, YOU AND BABY TOO?

"How to positively resolve conflict in a respectful way for both myself and my partner, and the impacts negative conflict can have on our children"

"I have learned how to deal better with arguments and walking away before it gets bad and then when we have calmed down we can talk about it better instead of arguing."

"We are talking better and working through problems better"

"I feel supported"

"Getting on better"



## CHANGES TO OUR TARGETED EARLY HELP SERVICES

Over the last year, we have tried different ways of working across our Targeted Early Help Services (Children and Family Wellbeing Service) and Child in Need Services. In February we launched our new integrated service, **Family Help**.

Family Help comprises of locality-based teams, bringing together staff from Children and Family Wellbeing, Social Workers and Social Work Managers. These new integrated teams are working together to consider the needs of each family, applying the thresholds for services, and deciding how best to support the family's needs. This means that when the threshold is met for a child in need, we will determine whether the family will be supported by a social worker or by a keyworker (with social work oversight – this means that a social worker will always chair CiN (child in need) review meetings and meet regularly with the Keyworker to monitor the CiN plan.)

In our pilot last year, we achieved improved outcomes with families with this different approach, and the feedback we received from families was overwhelmingly positive.

- **Family Help** our Targeted Early Help and CiN services.
- **Family Safeguarding** is our child protection services.
- The Early Help System a term used by the central government, describes the ways in which children and families can seek and receive assistance, underscoring the importance of our collective role in this process.
- **Family Hubs** encompasses our collective delivery of prevention and early intervention throughout the Early Help System. Family Hubs are not just physical buildings or a website but a collaborative effort to enhance outcomes for all Leicestershire families.

**11,133**

families asked for help through referrals



**1,381**

families had an early help assessment

**149**

parents accessed the 0-2 Pathway through our targeted Start for Life offer

During the year we ran

**27**

Pathways across the county



## FAMILY HUB CONFERENCE 2024

In March 2024, we organised our second **Family Hubs Conference** with over 60 partners in attendance.

During the event, we reflected on the positive outcomes achieved through our partnership working, discussed the range of services delivered, and the outreach work we had undertaken in the past 12 months. The conference's theme, 'It takes a Village to Raise a Child', was facilitated by Narrative Alchemy. They led us through a creative process that helped us explore how our partnership working can assist parents, caregivers, and families in their parental roles to create strong and safe communities. We also showcased our short film, which demonstrated how our joined-up working can support families.

Cllr Deborah Taylor spoke of the significance of our collective efforts in delivering services, while the attendees demonstrated their unwavering support by making their pledges. These commitments, which will be compiled in our '2024 book of pledges', are a testament to our shared dedication to enhancing access to support for Leicestershire families. The book is currently in the design phase, and we look forward to sharing it with you upon completion.



**42,741**

tonnes of food saved through Community Fridges and over 11,400 visitors



**7,000**

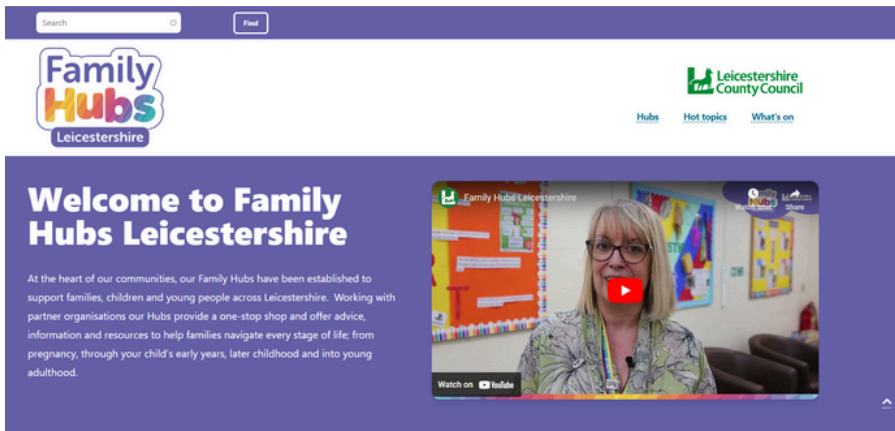
hours over the year from 180 volunteers



**741**

Stay and Play groups during term time

NEW website  
launched



We're excited to announce the launch of our new website. The website is an excellent addition to the family hubs offering, providing a digital resource that brings together various services for easy access for families, young people, professionals, and volunteers. With the website's launch, people can now access information and advice online anytime, making it more convenient for those who cannot visit a physical hub.

Our website journey started in June 2023 with a vision and plan to create a user-centric design that was easy to use and easy to read while providing a portal to services and support available to all our communities across Leicestershire.

We delivered the website through several phases, ensuring we worked with specific user groups to hear their feedback and meet their needs.

With the launch of our new digital offer, people can expect online access to advice and information, events and news at the touch of a button, making it much more convenient for those unable to access a family hub.

The website includes information on:

- pregnancy and your new baby, early years, education, parenting and relationships
- support from health visiting, tailored and intensive support for families who may need a little extra help, family help and support for children with SEND
- family health, community support, mental health and family wellbeing
- practical support around finance, housing and employment
- youth support services, young carers, wellbeing advice, pre and post-16 information
- local events, news updates, and family hub locations and contacts.

The family hubs online resource makes navigating relevant information easier. We will continue to build on it to provide a one-stop shop of resources and information for all communities across Leicestershire.

## OPENING UP MATERNITY CARE

Over the past 12 months, we've placed a significant emphasis on engaging with diverse communities in an effort to understand their needs, particularly those associated with accessing maternity care. Our efforts have focused on addressing rural isolation, supporting Gypsy and Traveller communities, and assisting women from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in Loughborough.

With the help of Family Hubs funding, we commissioned 'Heads Up' to conduct research and voice work in Loughborough. The project team conducted interviews with local women, service providers, and faith leaders to ascertain the reasons behind late bookings for maternity care services and developed a program for recruiting and training maternity champion volunteers to continue this work.

We've collaborated and will continue to collaborate with GATE, Leicestershire's Gypsy, and Traveller Equalities organisation; they have been invaluable in helping us understand and break down the barriers faced by this community in accessing services.

Our community engagement workers have contacted organisations and families to spread the word about our hubs, bring together networks, and ensure that family voices are heard in all our plans. This small team has worked tirelessly and has achieved a lot in such a short period, and we're very proud of their accomplishments.

## SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS

In 2023, the family hubs collaborated with the care leavers team to provide additional support to young people who were transitioning to living independently. On average, 60 young people leave the local authority's care every year when they turn 18.

Each care leaver will receive a gift of a shopping voucher to buy essentials as they move to independent living. Their key worker will help them identify what essential items they might need to assist them in their first few weeks of independent living. We will also provide a storage box to keep their belongings in and a multi purpose plug adaptor to help them keep connected online.

We've also invited young care leavers to take part in evening art workshops hosted by a local graffiti artist. Their work will be showcased across the family hubs in areas where they may attend an appointment with a worker, giving our spaces some unique artwork to be appreciated by all who use the family hub facilities.



## READ EASY LEICESTER AND DISTRICT

Read Easy UK is a national organisation that provides a volunteer-led reading coaching program for adults. Family hubs are working with Read Easy Leicester and District to support adults across Leicestershire. The program is free, as reading coaches volunteer their time, and resources and training are funded through donations.

We maintain confidentiality of the readers by ensuring that only a few people in each group know their identity. All coaching sessions take place in a private space within a public place to encourage people to come forward and ask for help. Our one-to-one approach allows readers to develop a supportive and trusting bond with their dedicated coach as many readers have had a poor experience in a school classroom or group setting.

The program works by having the 'reader' commit to meeting with a trained coach for two 30-minute sessions per week. We tailor our courses to the individual reader, and estimate that the course can be completed in 9 months to 2 years.

Learning to read can have many positive outcomes for the reader and their family. It can improve their employment prospects, increase their confidence and well-being, and enable them to support their family in education.

If you know an adult who is unhappy with their reading skills, you can refer them to us by contacting Alison Hastilow at 07553 250733 or send an **email**. For any queries or referrals, you can contact Linda Osborne at 07703 572313 or sent an **email**.

If you are interested in volunteering for Read Easy, please take a look at the **Voluntary Action Leicestershire website**, and search for a role using the words "Read Easy", most of the roles only require a couple of hours per week.

Since embarking on our family hubs journey, our project team, library hubs, staff, colleagues, volunteers, communities, and partners have demonstrated exceptional passion and commitment to delivering and supporting families and communities across Leicestershire. By working together, we have demonstrated that together we can provide a stronger support system for our communities.

This is just the beginning of what we hope will become a vital source of support for families and communities throughout Leicestershire. If you'd like to work together, share information, or have a query please **get in touch**.

