Derbyshire Best Start Family Hubs Outreach and Engagement Strategy

Vision

Every family knows where to find information, advice and support, feels welcomed and confident to access it, and sees this as a normal part of helping their family thrive.

Purpose

To help more children develop the foundations they need to thrive by increasing awareness of, access to and participation in the Best Start Family Hubs and wider family support offer. Through targeted outreach, engagement and community-based delivery, Derbyshire will connect families with timely support and reduce inequalities in outcomes.

How we will work

Our outreach and engagement activity will be:

- **Family-centred**: focused on the needs, experiences and strengths of families.
- **Community-based**: delivered through trusted settings and relationships within local communities.
- **Inclusive and accessible**: designed to reduce barriers and respond to diverse needs.
- **Focused on reducing inequalities**: prioritising families and communities least likely to access support or who experience poorer outcomes.
- **Collaborative:** working with families, communities and partners to shape and improve and influence support.
- **Evidence-led**: informed by data, insight and community intelligence.
- **Partnership-led**: bringing together partners to maximise reach, impact and continuity of support.
- **Driven by learning and improvement**: using feedback, evaluation and evidence to test, learn, refine and scale effective approaches.

Understanding Need and Targeting

Analysis of Derbyshire data highlights variation in outcomes, need and service engagement across communities. While Best Start Family Hubs will provide a countywide offer, outreach and engagement activity will be targeted where it can have the greatest impact on reducing inequalities and improving access to support.

Priorities will be informed by data, partner intelligence, family and community insight, and evidence of what works. This will help identify priority communities and cohorts, understand barriers to engagement, and target outreach, communications and community-based delivery. Priorities will be reviewed regularly as needs, evidence and learning evolve.

Current priority cohorts and communities, and the evidence underpinning these priorities, are summarised in Appendix A.

Derbyshire Outreach and Engagement Delivery Model

Derbyshire's outreach and engagement model combines three complementary approaches to increase awareness of and access to support.

1. **Community outreach and engagement, supported by volunteers:** To strengthen engagement with families who may not otherwise access services
2. **Community delivery, network sites and partnerships:** To extend the reach of Best Start Family Hubs through trusted community venues and providers and embed outreach and engagement as a shared responsibility across the wider partnership.
3. **Communications and digital engagement**: To increase reach, awareness, understanding and uptake of Best Start Family Hub support.

The aim is not only to raise awareness of support, but to help families move from awareness to engagement and participation, particularly where barriers, stigma or previous experiences may prevent access.

1. Community Outreach and Engagement

Community outreach will help engage families who are least likely to access support through traditional service routes. Working through trusted community settings, outreach activity will raise awareness of available support, reduce barriers to engagement and connect families with relevant services and opportunities.

A key component of this approach will be a VCFSE-led outreach model, supporting community engagement, volunteer development and connections between families and services. Delivery will prioritise neighbourhoods and cohorts experiencing the greatest inequality. Activity will focus on:

- Community-based family engagement activities
- Volunteer recruitment, training and support to strengthen community reach, engagement and participation.
- Community listening and insight gathering
- Development of community partnerships and referral pathways

Volunteering will be an important part of extending the reach and impact of Best Start Family Hubs. Opportunities will develop over time in response to learning and community need. Roles may range from informal community champion and peer-listening approaches through to more structured engagement, participation and support activities, helping to strengthen connections between families, services and communities.

Community outreach will also provide an important mechanism for gathering insight, understanding family experiences and informing continuous improvement across Best Start Family Hubs. Learning from outreach activity will help shape future service development and the wider test, learn and scale approach.

Priority Actions

- Develop and test the VCFSE-led outreach model through Erewash CVS and Derbyshire Voluntary Action in Year 1
- Develop and test a range of volunteering roles and opportunities to extend community reach and engagement
- Test, refine and scale outreach, engagement and participation approaches to identify what works for different communities.
- Develop strong community partnerships and referral pathways.
- Use learning to inform the refinement, scaling and wider adoption of effective approaches.

Success Measures

- Reach and engagement of families, including priority groups and communities.
- Volunteer involvement and contribution.
- Family participation, community insight and feedback.
- Referrals and connections into Family Hub and partner services.
- Improved understanding of barriers, motivations and effective engagement approaches.
- Evidence that learning has informed service improvement and the wider adoption of effective approaches across Derbyshire Best Start Family Hubs.

2. Community Delivery, Network Sites and Partnerships

Community-based delivery will be a key mechanism through which Best Start Family Hubs extend their reach beyond hub buildings and into local communities. Delivering information, support and activities in places where families already spend time will help improve accessibility, strengthen engagement and reduce inequalities in access to support.

This approach will operate through a combination of network sites and wider community delivery**.**

Network sites will be formally designated locations that meet national and local criteria and form part of the Best Start Family Hubs network. They will provide recognised community access points for Family Hub support, particularly in communities where there is evidence of need and opportunity to improve access and engagement. The initial network will include settings where families already access support for children aged 0-5, such as libraries, adult education settings, early years settings and schools. Over time this may expand further to include health delivery venues and community settings. Derbyshire will adopt a phased approach, initially establishing a small number of sites and learning from implementation before expanding over time.

Alongside network sites, Best Start Family Hubs will work with a wider range of community venues, organisations and delivery partners to provide outreach, engagement and activities within local communities. This may include early years settings, schools, community centres and other locations where families naturally spend time. Activity may be delivered regularly or through targeted and pop-up approaches in response to local need and opportunities to engage specific communities.

Together, network sites, community delivery and local partnerships will help ensure support is available where it can have the greatest impact, whilst strengthening engagement and improving understanding of what works in different communities.

Partnership Working and Workforce Development

Derbyshire Best Start Family Hubs will be delivered through a strong partnership of organisations that already have trusted relationships with children, families and communities. Partners will play an important role in raising awareness of support, identifying needs early, strengthening referral pathways and helping families access the services and opportunities available to them.

By bringing together health, early years, education, voluntary sector and family support partners, Derbyshire Best Start Family Hubs will contribute to wider ambitions to improve reception readiness, child development and early identification of need, whilst supporting prevention, SEND, Healthy Child Programme and neighbourhood health priorities.

A key principle of Derbyshire's approach is that outreach and engagement is everyone's business. Every contact with a family is an opportunity to raise awareness of support, build confidence and encourage families to access help at the earliest opportunity. Through trusted relationships and routine interactions, practitioners, volunteers and partner organisations can act as community navigators, helping families understand and access the wider Best Start Family Hubs offer.

To support this, Derbyshire will develop a workforce development and communications approach that builds a shared understanding of the Best Start Family Hubs offer, the importance of the early years and the role that all services can play in supporting families. Derbyshire will provide consistent information, resources, communications materials and key messages to support practitioners, volunteers and partners to promote the offer confidently and consistently. This will help ensure families receive clear information wherever they come into contact with services and support practitioners to recognise when families may benefit from additional encouragement, trusted conversations or practical help to access support.

Outreach is Everybody's Business

Every contact is an opportunity to:

- Raise awareness of support and opportunities
- Help families understand the Best Start Family Hubs offer
- Identify needs early
- Build trusted relationships
- Encourage and support families to access help early
- Listen and respond to family experiences

Through trusted relationships and everyday conversations, practitioners, volunteers and partners can act as community navigators, helping families access the right support at the right time.

Effective outreach and community navigation is a shared responsibility across the Best Start Family Hubs partnership.

Priority Actions

- Develop and test a phased network site model, including clear criteria, expectations and support arrangements, using learning to inform future expansion.
- Extend the reach of Best Start Family Hubs through network sites, community-based delivery and local partnerships, prioritising communities where there is evidence of need and opportunity to improve engagement.
- Develop a workforce development and communications approach that equips practitioners, volunteers and partners to act as community navigators and consistently promote the Best Start Family Hubs offer.
- Test, refine and scale approaches to community delivery, engagement and partnership working to identify what works for Derbyshire families and communities.

Success Measures

- Growth in the reach and coverage of community delivery, network sites and partnerships.
- Increased engagement from priority groups and communities.
- Improved awareness, access to and use of Best Start Family Hub support.
- Stronger partnerships and referral pathways.
- Positive feedback from families, partners and community organisations.
- Evidence that learning has informed service improvement and the wider adoption of effective approaches across Derbyshire Best Start Family Hubs.

2. Communications and Digital Engagement

Communications and digital engagement will increase awareness, understanding and uptake of the Best Start Family Hubs offer. This activity will complement community outreach and partner engagement, ensuring that families can access information and support through a range of channels. Digital activity will complement rather than replace face-to-face outreach and support and will be a mechanism through which families can access BSFH information and support. Our approach must recognise that some families experience barriers to digital access.

Digital Offer

Derbyshire will develop a single, accessible and trusted digital front door for Best Start Family Hubs, building on the existing Family Information Service platform. The website will provide information, advice and access to support, helping families understand the Best Start Family Hubs offer, find local services and activities, understand entitlements, and identify the most appropriate route into support.

The aspiration is that the digital offer will connect families to trusted information and services across council, health, voluntary and community sector partners, reducing the need to navigate multiple websites or understand organisational structures.

Digital content and resources will be promoted through community outreach, partner organisations, communications activity and community networks. Development of the digital offer will take account of accessibility, health literacy and digital inclusion, ensuring information is clear, inclusive and easy to access. Families who cannot or do not wish to use digital services will continue to have access to alternative routes, supported by Family Hub staff, volunteers and partner organisations.

The digital offer will continue to develop over time in response to family feedback, service development and learning from implementation.

Communications and Marketing

Derbyshire will develop a coordinated communications approach to support a recognisable and trusted Best Start Family Hubs identity across the county.

Universal communications will focus on raising awareness of the Family Hubs offer and promoting available support through consistent branding, campaigns, printed materials, digital content and resources that can be used by partners across the system.

Targeted communications will be informed by data, insight and learning and tailored to priority communities and groups. Approaches may include working through trusted organisations and local champions, developing audience-specific resources, using messages that reflect known barriers and motivations, and delivering place-based campaigns through the channels most relevant to local communities.

Families will help shape communications, messaging and digital resources to ensure they remain relevant, accessible and responsive.

Priority Actions

- Develop and maintain a Best Start Family Hubs digital offer through the Family Information Service platform
- Establish clear links between the Best Start Family Hubs website and trusted partner information sources
- Design and produce promotional resources to support outreach activity, including posters, leaflets, banners, QR-code materials and digital assets.
- Deliver universal awareness-raising activity across Derbyshire
- Develop targeted communications approaches for priority groups and communities as evidence emerges about relative uptake and engagement
- Ensure communications and digital content are accessible, inclusive and informed by family feedback
- Support monitoring and evaluation by incorporating measurable calls to action and tracking mechanisms within communications activity.

Success Measures

- Increased awareness of Family Hubs
- Number of visitors accessing the Best Start Family Hubs website through outreach campaigns, partner materials and QR codes.
- Number of promotional resources distributed through outreach partners and network sites.
- Increase in Family Hub attendance and participation linked to outreach and promotional activity.
- Improved participation in support
- Greater reach into priority groups
- Positive family feedback

Learning, Improvement and Accountability

Derbyshire's approach to outreach and engagement will be underpinned by continuous learning and improvement. Data, insight and feedback will be used to understand what is working, identify emerging needs and refine delivery. Through a test, learn and scale approach, effective approaches will be expanded and embedded, while less effective approaches will be adapted or redesigned.

We will know this strategy is making a difference when:

- More families know what support is available and how to access it.
- Families feel welcomed, included and confident accessing support.
- More families access support early and without stigma.
- Priority groups are better represented in Family Hub services and activities.
- Families help shape services through participation and feedback.
- More children develop the foundations they need to thrive and inequalities in outcomes are reduced.

Learning will be informed by family, partner and volunteer feedback, service performance and participation data, and rapid learning cycles that test and refine new approaches. Key questions will include:

- Are priority groups engaging with support?
- Which families and communities remain underrepresented?
- Which outreach and engagement approaches are most effective?
- What barriers to participation remain?
- What are families, partners and practitioners telling us about local needs and experiences?
- Which approaches should be scaled, adapted or discontinued?

Learning will be used to inform service development, delivery and investment decisions, helping to build a sustainable countywide outreach model that responds to local need and builds on evidence of what works for Derbyshire families.

Governance

This strategy supports delivery of Derbyshire's Best Start in Life Local Plan. Oversight will be provided through the Best Start Family Hubs Workstream and wider programme governance arrangements. Progress will be monitored through regular reporting on delivery, performance, learning and outcomes.

Appendix A

Priority cohorts, places and supporting evidence

How priorities have been identified

Analysis of Derbyshire data highlights variation between localities and communities. Therefore, outreach and engagement activity will be targeted according to local need and population characteristics.

Outreach priorities have been identified using a combination of population and outcomes data, service utilisation data, partner intelligence, family and community insight, and national evidence and best practice. This information is used to identify children, families and communities at greater risk of poorer outcomes or lower engagement with support. Priorities will be reviewed regularly as evidence, local needs and learning evolve.

Sources of evidence

- JSNA and population data
- Child development and school readiness data
- Maternal, infant and child health data
- Service utilisation and participation data
- Early years entitlement uptake
- Partner intelligence
- Family and community insight
- National research and best practice

Factors Associated with Increased Need and Lower Engagement

National and local evidence suggests that some families are more likely to experience poorer outcomes and/or face barriers to accessing services and support. There is evidence that disadvantaged and vulnerable families are less likely to access the services despite being in the most need[2]. Factors associated with increased need and/or lower engagement include:

- poverty and financial hardship
- social isolation
- language and communication barriers
- special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- poor parental mental health
- experience of domestic abuse
- digital exclusion
- rurality
- involvement with multiple services

Evidence suggests that proactive outreach, trusted relationships, accessible information and community-based delivery are particularly important in engaging families who may face additional barriers to accessing support.

Priority Communities

Further intelligence will be added over time including uptake of childcare entitlements and the most up to date GLD data.

Priority cohort	**Rationale**
Families experiencing poverty	Evidence of poorer outcomes and lower engagement, weak characteristic group for GLD
Families with English as an Additional Language	Barriers relating to language and service navigation, GLD showed improved data this year but numbers in cohort have risen and therefore support remains a priority
Families with vulnerabilities inc those engaged with Early Help, social care and/or specialist services such as domestic abuse, substance use, mental health	Multiple needs and service complexity
Families of children with SEND / additional needs (or where parents may have SEND)	Associated with increased levels of need, need for accessible and inclusive information and support, prioritised for early intervention
Families experiencing rural deprivation	Deprivation compounded by digital exclusion, poor public transport, social isolation

Priority Places

Further intelligence will be added over time including uptake of childcare entitlements and the most up to date GLD data.

Locality	**Key features and challenges**
Chesterfield	High proportion of children living in poverty. Second most deprived district in Derbyshire Poorer outcomes across a range of health and development indicators Higher minority ethnic population than the Derbyshire average. Priority neighbourhoods include Grangewood, Birdholme, Loundsley Green, Holme Hall, Middlecroft, Barrow Hill, New Whittington, Old Whittington, Mastin Moor and Staveley.
Bolsover	High proportion of children living in poverty. Most deprived district in Derbyshire Poorer health indicators including breastfeeding prevalence Fewer VCFSE organisations and rural access challenges outside the main settlements. Priority neighbourhoods include Shirebrook, Langwith, Bolsover, Carr Vale, Creswell and parts of Clowne,

North-East Derbyshire	High proportion of children living in poverty. Third most deprived district in Derbyshire Health inequalities exist within pockets of deprivation Rurality creates additional access challenges in some communities Priority neighbourhoods include Grassmoor, Holmewood, Heath and Clay Cross.
Erewash	70% of population lives within Ilkeston and Long Eaton. Rural access challenges for those living outside of these settlements Borough within the 20% most deprived in England but economically diverse Health inequalities exist within pockets of deprivation Higher minority ethnic population in parts of Ilkeston and Long Eaton compared with rest of County Priority neighbourhoods include Cotmanhay, Larklands and Kirk Hallam
High Peak	Rural access challenges and rural deprivation Digital deprivation, limited public transport Priority neighbourhoods include Fairfield (Buxton), Ollerset (New Mills) and Gamesley
Derbyshire Dales	Rural access challenges – 80% of population in rural settlements Digital deprivation, limited public transport Fewer households with children compared to other parts of Derbyshire Priority neighbourhood is Hurst Farm in Matlock
South Derbyshire	Health inequalities exist within pockets of deprivation Rapid population growth and a higher proportion of households with dependent children create additional demand for family services. Priority neighbourhoods include Woodville, Midway and Swadlincote Central, Newhall and Stanton, Church Gresley
Amber Valley	High proportion of children in poverty Higher proportion of households with dependent children compared to other parts of Derbyshire Priority neighbourhoods are Ironville Riddings E , Ripley The Elms, Langley Mill W, Somercotes, Alfreton S, Langley Mill S, Langley Bridge, Heanor and Somercotes

References and data sources

Relevant information can be found in Derbyshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:

- Population – Derbyshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 – Derbyshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Ethnicity – Derbyshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Children and Young People – Derbyshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Healthy Child Programme Indicators