



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5th February 2024

**Cllr Matt Golby – Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and
Health Integration**

Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education

Report Title	0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing Service – progress and development ahead of procurement in March 2025
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Timeline for the recommissioning process of 0-19 Public Health service 2024-25 [to follow]

Appendix B – Terms of Reference for the Best Start in Life Board [to follow]

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 West Northamptonshire Council has a duty to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of children, young people, and their families. West Northamptonshire Public Health commission the 0-19 health visiting and school nursing service to deliver the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme (HCP), which is the universal clinical and public health programme for children and families from birth to 19 years of age (up to 25 years for children with SEND).
- 1.2 At present, the service is commissioned as a county-wide service (hosted by North Northamptonshire Council) and includes: 0-19 health visiting and school nursing service, Strong Start (universal 0-5 service), Infant feeding service, Family Nurse Partnership and REACH. This is funded from Public Health Grant by each local authority for a total estimated annual value of £17.4m, North £8.5m and West £8.9m.

- 1.3 A decision was made on 17th January 2024 for West and North Northamptonshire councils to contract separately and disaggregate the services as of March 2025.
- 1.4 To support this decision, West Northamptonshire Public Health have started developing an action plan with a draft timeline to prepare for the recommissioning from April 2025 with the aim of integrating this with our West Family Hubs development and Early Help offer. This report provides the Committee with an overview of progress and development underway.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Shared Services Joint Committee was briefed on 17th January 2024 about an options appraisal for recommissioning Public Health services for children and young people across North and West Northamptonshire councils. The decision agreed was to contract separately and disaggregate the services listed below from March 2025:
- 0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing service
 - Strong Start (0-5 Universal service)
 - Infant Feeding Service
 - Family Nurse Partnership
 - REACH
- 2.2 North and West colleagues are working closely with the services listed above to regularly review and monitor them against the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and service improvement plans (SIPs) have been introduced as a mechanism to improve performance and monitor progress. This joint working arrangement will continue to be the case until March 2025.
- 2.3 Over the next 15 months, West Northamptonshire Council will be preparing for the recommissioning of 0-19 services with a greater integration between Council services and commissioned services. This will include working and consulting with key partners and service users to develop a new service specification that set out our WNC 0-19 services, the delivery model and contractual arrangement. This development will be closely tied with the family hubs program and improving our universal Early Help offer.
- 2.4 West Northamptonshire Council has started the development of Family hubs starting with the first hub in Towcester – the Forum as the pilot hub to later expand to Northampton and other areas. This program of work will support the improvement of our universal Early Help offer across West Northamptonshire. By developing the family hubs and improving our early help offer, families will be able to get the right support needed at the right time and by the right service, which means less families and children are hitting crisis point, and therefore less need for statutory services. This will reduce the number of children and families referred into Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, reducing demand, and improving the health and wellbeing outcomes for children and families. By supporting families early and preventing crisis, this will also mean fewer children require child protection plans and fewer children enter the care system over time. By getting in early and focusing on prevention as well as intervention, this will also lead to improving financial position of children’s services, specifically the Children’s Trust.

- 2.5 West Northamptonshire Council has recently launched the Best Start in Life Partnership Board – a new strategic board that will report into the Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress of 0-19 services recommissioning, Family hubs development and the Early help programme. The first board with senior wider system colleagues will take place on 20th February 2024. The terms of reference (TORs) for the board will be presented with this report.
- 2.6 We are in the process of developing a commissioning timeline and an action plan to describe the next 15 months’ program of work. The draft I commissioning timeline will be presented with this report and the key areas of work are:
- Establishment of a WNC 0-19 Recommissioning Task and Finish Group
 - Reviewing the evidence based and best practice examples of existing 0-19 service delivery models
 - Begin the consultation including stakeholders, key partners, and service users.
 - Drafting an Options appraisal outlining the service delivery and procurement models to Cabinet
 - Complete the market engagement
 - Write the service specification for the new 0-19 public health services
 - Pre-procurement activity: Tendering, evaluation, and contract awarding
 - Mobilization of the new service

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers the overview of progress and development underway.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 In April 2021, all Northamptonshire Councils were abolished, and 2 new unitary councils were created: North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). Several Public Health grant funded contracts were agreed to be jointly commissioned as part of this arrangement, and an agreement was reached as to a lead commissioner arrangement, with either NNC or WNC leading on the contract monitoring for an individual contract on behalf of both organisations. The host authority operated under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) arrangement, although financial accountability was still the responsibility of each organisation.
- 4.2 The Children and Young People contracts were due to come to an end on 31st March 2023. However, further executive approval was granted to extend the current arrangements for a further two years, so that the contracts will now end on 31st March 2025. This was to allow time for Needs Assessments to be conducted and detailed discussions to take place within NNC and WNC to inform recommissioning of the services to start on 1st April 2025 and deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes.

5. Service Specific Details

5.1 Service one: 0-19 Public Health service for Children and Young People

These services are provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and include:

- Health Visiting
- School Nursing
- Infant Feeding
- Home Visiting
- Young Parents services aged under 19 (up to 25 if special educational needs are present) providing mandated visits, assessments and clinical safeguarding services.

5.1.1 *The Health Visiting Element*

This service supports families from the antenatal period up to school entry (0-5 years). It delivers 5 nationally mandated universal visits to the child and their family, but also further support/visits based on need. Mandated visits provided by health visiting services are:

- Antenatal health promoting contact and new birth visits
- New-born check (10-14 days)
- 6-8 weeks check
- 1-year check
- 2-2.5-year check

Each visit includes an assessment of critical development milestones. Trusted and expert advice is provided. If a family is assessed as vulnerable due to physical, mental, or social reasons, more support is available. The service includes specialist outreach teams that proactively engage with families in temporary housing, refuges, and includes support for perinatal mental health, and breastfeeding. The mandated visits made by health visitors are critical for early identification of developmental delays which may indicate a child has an additional need or disability. These visits deliver interventions that can improve outcomes for those children and can also result in referrals to more specialist assessment and care. Children with additional health and social needs are transferred from the health visiting service to the school nursing service as they enter school. Health visitors and school nurses also contribute to Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

5.1.2 *School Nursing Service Element*

This service supports children aged 5-19 (and up to 25 if there are any special educational needs) to improve their health and wellbeing. School nurses deliver the National Child Measurement Program (NCMP) which is a nationally mandated assessment of the Body Mass Index (BMI) of children. This generates intelligence about children who are underweight or overweight/obese and offers further support as necessary. The assessments also identify children and families who would benefit from advice, information, or referral, including the involvement of safeguarding services if appropriate.

5.1.3 Infant feeding Service

This service supports mothers to develop positive attitudes toward infant feeding and assists and supports mothers who wish to breastfeed.

5.1.4 Family Nurse Partnership service

This service provides an intensive home visiting service for vulnerable young mums aged under 19 (or 25 in the case of children with SEND or disabilities). This will also include working with their families from pregnancy until the child is 2 years old. The Family Nurse Partnership service is a nationally licensed program and is delivered as part of the 0-19 offer.

5.2 Service Two: Strong Start

This is a 0-5 universal non-clinical early years childhood service that works across North and West Northamptonshire. The service is provided by WNC in-house services which are based in West Northamptonshire Council libraries but operate across North and West. It provides health information, training, and employment services to assist children, parents and prospective parents and includes:

- safe sleep
- introducing children to solid food
- toilet training
- child behavior
- child oral health
- child safety

5.3 Service Three: REACH

This is a Young People's Counselling Service in Northamptonshire provided by a collaboration between different providers. This 'Collaborative' of Providers delivers services that build on people's existing capabilities empowering young people to become active in taking charge of, and improving, their own and others' wellbeing. The aim of the collaborative is to offer a single contact number, a single online booking system, and a referral management process offering all young people a choice of service delivery points. The service is offered to young people aged 11-19 (up to 25 if the young person has special educational needs and/or disabilities) if they are accessing education in mainstream state-funded schools or colleges.

The support on offer includes the following:

- Digital offer – relevant help online
- Community offer – Providing young people with the opportunity to get support outside of the school environment but face-to-face.
- School-based offer – This could include counselling in schools, assessments, and referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), where appropriate, and literacy programmes for young people, teachers, and parents.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 This report is for the Committee to be informed about the 0-19 Public Health services recommissioning process and its integration and alignment with Family Hubs development and Early Help, and therefore there are no specific choices to highlight at this stage.
- 6.2 However, the Committee will be consulted on the commissioning and delivery models when developed.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 Public Health Services listed above are funded by the Public Health Grant, and the financial implications to contract separately are outlined in the report.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to deliver the Healthy Child Programme (HCP). Public Health have a dedicated legal advisor for Public Health contracts and the options appraisal report that was agreed by the Shared Services Joint Committee was reviewed and considered by Legal and Procurement beforehand. Public Health will be working with Legal and Procurement to consult on the contractual model for 0-19 services pending West Northamptonshire Council consultations' decisions on the delivery model.

7.3 Risk

- 7.3.1 The risks outlined below could result from the disaggregation of 0-19 Public Health services:
- Lack of clarity among services users around the idea of an identical service delivered across North and West.
 - A lack of shared vision about service delivery model might delay or disrupt the progress
 - Increase risk of duplication if both unitary councils end up with the same 0-19 provider

7.4 Consultation and Communications

- 7.4.1 There will be a wide consultation with key stakeholders and partners such as the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT), Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and others, in addition to consultation with young people and families with children under 5s to develop a new service delivery model for 0-19 Public Health services.
- 7.4.2 We are currently working with our comms colleagues to develop a press release about disaggregation and the recommissioning process.

7.5 Climate Impact

7.5.1 Not applicable.

7.6 Community Impact

7.6.1 The Public Health services listed in this report have a direct impact on children, young people and families' health and wellbeing outcomes across West Northamptonshire.

6. Background Papers

None