



HM Government

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme

Trailblazer guide

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The Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme is jointly overseen by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education.

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Introduction

This trailblazer guide is for local authority areas that are eligible for funding from the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and are interested in becoming 'trailblazers'. Trailblazers will be a group of up to 15 local authorities who lead the way in delivering the programme, making the fastest and most ambitious improvements to services for families and establishing best practices to benefit all areas.

This guide describes the government's vision for trailblazers, what they will be expected to achieve and how we will support and select them. It is intended to help those responsible for delivering the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme to complete the trailblazer application process and consider how their local authority area can go further and faster in the programme's implementation.

We recommend reading this document after the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme guide. The main programme guide outlines a vision for family hubs and Start for Life services, what it will mean to participate in the programme and some supplementary guidance to support implementation.

The vision for trailblazers

We will support all 75 local authorities to improve outcomes for babies, children and families over the three-year programme. As part of this, we are providing the opportunity for up to 15 local authorities to lead the way in delivering the programme's expectations in the first financial year (2022-23).

These trailblazers will become national leaders for the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, focusing on perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships, infant feeding and parenting support. They will establish best practices, make the quickest improvements to services, and support other local authorities and the Government with their delivery expertise.

Trailblazers will sit alongside the programme's 'super evaluators', and it is expected that some trailblazers will also become 'super evaluators' (see the programme guide for more).

We know that many local authorities and associated health and education systems across England have the expertise, experience and ambition to become trailblazers. We strongly encourage you to apply if you consider your area well placed to lead the way in implementing the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

Becoming a trailblazer: what this will mean for your local authority

This section outlines what becoming a trailblazer means for your local authority area. To ensure trailblazers are at the forefront of the programme's implementation, we will ask them to undertake additional responsibilities, above and beyond other local authorities.

Additional delivery expectations

Objective one: lead the way in delivering ambitious, innovative and tangible change to improve family outcomes in year one

Trailblazers will need to make the quickest, most ambitious and most innovative progress in delivering the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. In particular, they will be expected to go further and faster in year one in delivering new or improved services for at least one of the following areas funded by the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme; perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships, infant feeding, and parenting support. We will consider selecting trailblazers who are exceptional in just one or two programme strands, but priority will be given to trailblazers who are ambitious and innovative across all three areas.

What this looks like will differ between trailblazers based on their local populations and what is deliverable in the context of their existing provision. However, all trailblazers will be expected to deliver visible, tangible change for families in the 2022-23 financial year, which they can sustain and improve over the rest of the programme.

This contrasts with local authorities who are not trailblazers who may use the funding for these funded services in 2022-23 to put the staff and systems in place to begin delivering tangible change for families accessing these services in 2023-24. Trailblazer funding does not cover publishing Start for Life offers, parent carer panels or the home learning environment because we expect to see all eligible local authorities make rapid progress in introducing these interventions in year one. All participating local authorities are also expected to open family hubs as quickly as possible, within the first half of 2023.

The table below details some examples of the progress that trailblazers may make in the first year of the programme's implementation (see the 'go further' tables in the programme guide for more). It includes examples for each of the three trailblazer strands and suggestions for how trailblazers can improve access to these services by ensuring all families are familiar with their local family hubs.

Local authorities should not feel bound by these examples. We encourage innovation, and [the selection process](#) will ensure we select trailblazers with the most ambitious and deliverable proposals. We also encourage trailblazers to use the

programme guide to think about how they can go further and faster in delivering the programme beyond the strands in the table below; however, this will not be assessed as part of the trailblazer selection process.

Examples of how trailblazers might go further and faster:

Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships:

- Expanding existing Parent-Infant Relationship support or developing a new specialist team. Please see Annex I of the programme guide for further guidance on the steps and considerations you should take if you want to pursue this option.
- Developing or expanding a peer support service, promoting perinatal mental health and / or parent-infant relationships.
- Developing or extending mild-moderate perinatal mental health support to non-birthing parents or carers (e.g., commission a model of care for fathers and partners).

Infant feeding support:

- Running tailored infant feeding support sessions for specific groups (e.g. young mothers or fathers/partners).
- Expanding the peer support service by recruiting additional peer supporters and setting up a virtual peer support network to provide regular support to more babies, women and families.
- Providing infant feeding services in different locations within the community to improve accessibility.
- Implementing an out-of-hours service to provide infant feeding support during the evenings and at weekends.

Parenting support:

- Demonstrating good knowledge of underserved groups in your area and providing tailored outreach sessions, including for expectant parents, fathers and male carers, lone parents, LGBTQ+ parents and minority ethnic parents.
- Providing social spaces for expectant and new parents to meet other parents in different locations.
- Expanding partnership working to grow, support and invest in voluntary, community and faith sector organisations and education settings working towards shared outcomes on parenting within the family hub network.
- Providing improved and bespoke digital solutions (e.g. to engage expectant and new parents/families in greatest need, enhance peer-support networks or support a greater range of targeted outreach interventions).
- Innovating with a mix of digital and face to face to interventions to broaden reach, access and connections.

Improving access to the above services by ensuring families are familiar with their family hubs over the course of the programme:

- Offering all expectant parents, the first antenatal midwifery booking appointment in family hubs so that families are introduced to the hub at the earliest possible point.
- Introducing birth registration in family hubs so that all parents, carers and babies can be introduced to their local family hub at the point of birth. If you proceed with this option, we'd also encourage you to apply to take part in the programme's research into its impact (see Annex R of programme guide for more).
- Implementing other innovative ways of ensuring that all families make contact with their family hubs at key points during the start for life period.

Objective two: share delivery experience and expertise with other local authorities and the government

All 75 local authority areas have been asked to work with the Department for Education (DfE), the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and our partners (e.g. National Centre for Family Hubs) to identify and share best practices. This will ensure that all areas benefit from the programme's collective expertise and experience.

In effecting rapid and ambitious programme delivery, trailblazers will likely be the first to establish relevant knowledge of delivering the programme. Therefore, they will play a leading role in supporting other local authorities and DHSC, DfE and our delivery partners with their expertise.

As part of this, we expect all trailblazers to work with DHSC and DfE to contribute to products (e.g. newsletters and guidance) and events (e.g. webinars) over the three-year programme that identify and share best practices. We anticipate this to include trailblazers supporting us to deliver a few events and products each financial year and will ensure that this work is fairly distributed between the trailblazers.

Trailblazers should also proactively support other local authorities with their expertise. As part of the [trailblazer selection process](#), we will ask for innovative proposals in this space. This could include, for example, establishing a working group of local authorities in your region or similar delivery contexts, to share best practices and support each other on the programme's implementation.

Delivery support

Our joint teams in DfE and DHSC will support trailblazers to deliver these additional expectations through:

1. Support from our delivery advisors to implement rapid change in 2022-23. This will include help with troubleshooting delivery challenges and connecting you with other trailblazers facing similar issues and opportunities.
2. Additional funding in the 2022-23 financial year for perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships, infant feeding, and parenting support. This additional funding (see table 2) is for the first financial year only and will enable trailblazers to be more innovative and ambitious in implementing the programme across these strands.

As above, prospective trailblazers that are ambitious and innovative across all three strands are more likely to be successful during the selection process. However, we will consider selecting strong trailblazers who are particularly exceptional in just one or two programme strands. In this instance, trailblazers would only receive the additional funding allocated to the programme strand for which they have been selected as a trailblazer.

Table 1: additional funding for up to 15 trailblazers

Programme strand	Provisional additional funding per trailblazer in 22-23
Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship support	£100,000
Infant feeding support	£50,000
Parenting support	£33,000
Total	£183,000

Selection process

This section outlines the process through which we will select up to 15 trailblazers to deliver the additional expectations outlined under '[becoming a trailblazer](#)'. The trailblazer application form can be found at Annex A of the sign-up form.

Overarching approach

The trailblazer selection process will identify local authorities best placed to lead the way in delivering the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, focusing on perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship support, infant feeding support, and parenting support.

To ensure the process is fair and robust, local authorities interested in becoming trailblazers will need to complete the trailblazer application alongside the wider sign-

up form. The trailblazer application will assess local authorities against the following criteria:

1. How deliverable, ambitious and innovative your plans are to utilise the trailblazer funding for perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship support, infant feeding support and parenting support, alongside how you will improve access to these services by ensuring families are familiar with their family hubs.
2. Your plans for proactively sharing your knowledge and expertise with other local authorities.
3. Your existing offer, focusing on family hubs, perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship support, infant feeding support and parenting support.
4. The maturity of your existing systems to support rapid delivery (e.g. leadership, data and workforce). The application form uses the most relevant questions from the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) Early Help System Guide to assess this. Local authorities will have the opportunity to update the answers they previously submitted to DLUHC if they wish.

Once DHSC and DfE receive local authorities' trailblazer applications, submissions will be assessed by a cross-government panel of officials. As part of this process, DHSC and DfE will work with other government departments (e.g. DLUHC) and national partners, to quality assure declarations made within trailblazer applications.

Timelines

Local authorities **not** intending on applying to become a trailblazer will have until the 31 October to complete their sign-up forms, though we encourage you to come forward as quickly as possible.

Local authorities interested in becoming trailblazers will need to submit their sign-up **and** trailblazer application forms for one of two 'selection waves'. The trailblazer assessment criteria and form will be the same for both selection waves.

1. **Selection Wave One** – to be considered as part of the first selection wave, local authorities will need to submit their sign-up forms and trailblazer application by the 31 August. This application wave will have up to eight trailblazer places.
2. **Selection Wave Two** – to be considered as part of the second selection wave, local authorities will need to submit their sign-up forms and trailblazer

applications by the 30 September. This application wave will have the remaining trailblazer places (i.e. seven places plus any unfilled places from the first wave).

Applicants should note the following points that apply to these deadlines:

- If any of the eight trailblazer places are left unfilled after the first selection wave, they will be allocated to the second wave.
- Local authorities that apply for the first wave, will also be considered for the second wave if they have a strong application, but are initially unsuccessful. In this instance, you will not be able to revise your application ahead of the second application wave, and feedback will only be provided on your application after the second deadline.
- We will not consider applications that miss these deadlines, as doing so be unfair to the local authorities that submitted their applications within the stated timescales.
- You will maximise your chances of success if you apply before the first deadline, as this provides two opportunities for your application to be considered. We, therefore, strongly encourage you to submit your application form as soon as possible.

The relationship between the sign-up and trailblazer selection processes

The trailblazer selection process and the wider sign-up process for all local authorities interested in joining the programme will run as two concurrent exercises. You should submit your trailblazer application and wider sign-up form at the same time.

An unsuccessful trailblazer application will not influence a local authority's ability to sign-up to the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. However, a local authority cannot become a trailblazer if they do not successfully complete the sign-up process for the programme.

Next Steps

As part of completing your trailblazer application form, you should seek to engage with relevant local partners on your trailblazer proposals. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Your local MP(s)
2. Your local authority's cabinet member for health and wellbeing
3. Your local authority's cabinet member for children and young people
4. Your integrated care board executive lead

5. Local providers of services relevant to the programme's delivery e.g. NHS providers, local midwifery team, health visitor leads, existing perinatal mental health services and parent-infant relationship services (where available), and local third sector/voluntary and community/faith organisations/education settings.

We know that many local authorities and associated health systems across England have the expertise, experience and ambition to become trailblazers. We strongly encourage you to apply if you consider your area well placed to lead the way in implementing the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

Any queries or questions regarding the application process should be emailed to familyhubs.startforlife@dhsc.gov.uk. The deadline for questions to be submitted is 72 hours before each application wave's closing date.



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