



Best Start Family Hub Consultation Summary

23 October – 20 December 2026



**FAMILY
HUBS**

Proposal Summary

The proposed model is designed to expand access to support for families across Suffolk. The current Family Hub model would evolve into a wider Best Start Family Hub Network, bringing together Family Hubs, libraries, community venues and partner locations

We will be investing in more staff, more services and more activities to be delivered through this new network of sites, making sure there is more information and support available to families when they need it, including support for new parents, parenting support and support for children with SEND and their families

This approach aims to:

- Increase access to information, advice and support closer to where families live.
- Make services easier to find through a clearer and more recognisable network.
- Strengthen links between family support, health, early years and SEND services.
- Create opportunities for future growth through community partnerships and local venues.

The planned network would move from 29 Family Hubs (17 full time and 12 part time) to 17 Best Start Family Hub Sites and 33 Best Start Network Sites.

The proposals will improve access to support. More local sites, a larger workforce and stronger partnerships will help deliver a wider range of services, including Healthy Babies support, parenting programmes, early years services and support for children with additional needs.

Improving Access to Information, Advice and Support

A key aim of the Best Start Family Hub programme is to make it easier for families to access the right support at the right time.

The network will bring together services across health, education, early years and community settings, creating a simpler and more joined-up experience for families.

Libraries will play a key role in the network, building on their position as trusted community assets. Through closer partnership working with Family Hubs, they will help provide:

- Easier access to information, advice and guidance.
- A wider range of family support services and activities.
- More opportunities for outreach and community engagement.

- Co-located services where appropriate.

By using familiar local venues, the network will make support more visible, accessible and available closer to home.

Making the Best Use of Public Buildings

The proposals identify opportunities to make better use of council-owned buildings while maintaining family support provision.

Where services move to nearby libraries or community venues, buildings can be repurposed to meet other local needs while continuing to benefit children and families.

This creates opportunities to:

- Maximise the use of public assets.
- Reduce under-utilisation of buildings.
- Support investment in services responding to local demand.
- Maintain positive outcomes for children and families.

This approach enables Suffolk to make better use of its estate while expanding access to support through the wider network.

Supporting Childcare Sufficiency and SEND Capacity

The proposed changes create opportunities to increase both childcare and SEND provision in response to growing demand.

Childcare Provision

Several sites are being explored for childcare and early years use, helping to:

- Increase childcare capacity.
- Improve access to early education.
- Support school readiness and child development.
- Enable parents to access work, education and training.

SEND Provision

Some sites are also being considered for SEND and specialist education provision, helping to:

- Increase specialist capacity.

- Provide more suitable learning environments.
- Improve access to support closer to home.
- Strengthen links between education, health and family support.

Together, these opportunities will help ensure council buildings continue to deliver maximum benefit for local children and families.

Listening to Residents and Stakeholders

No final decisions will be made until consultation feedback has been fully considered.

We want to hear from residents, families, staff, community organisations, schools, childcare providers and health partners to understand their views on the proposals.

The consultation will help us to:

- Understand local needs and priorities.
- Identify benefits and challenges within the proposals.
- Explore opportunities for partnership working and community delivery.
- Shape a final model that meets the needs of Suffolk children and families.
- Inform future development of Family Hub, childcare and SEND services.

Feedback will play an important role in shaping the final Best Start Family Hub Network.

Conclusion

The proposed Best Start Family Hub Network represents an opportunity to grow support for families, improve access to information and services, and make better use of public buildings. Through a wider network of locations, stronger partnerships and opportunities to expand childcare and SEND provision, Suffolk can create a more accessible, sustainable and joined-up offer for children, young people and families. Consultation feedback will help shape the final model to ensure it reflects local needs and priorities.