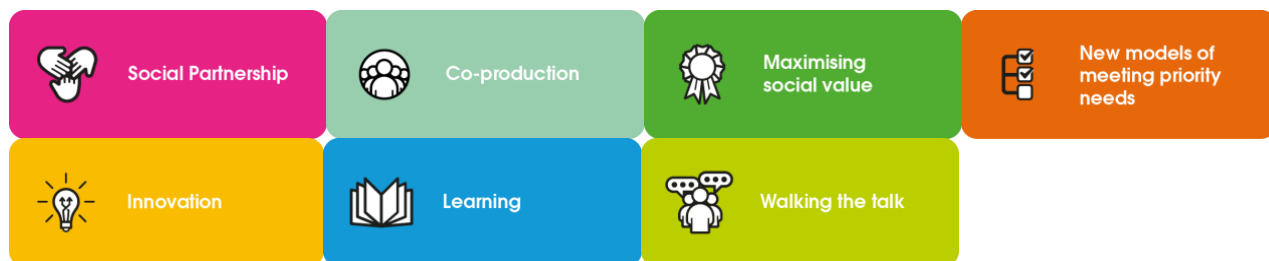




YOUNG PEOPLE



London Borough of Brent

Brent Council's Family Wellbeing Centres: ensuring young people get the best start in life

Working through a multi-agency partnership based within local communities eight former children's centres were redeveloped into Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC), bringing together more services to meet multiple family needs, while delivering the required budget savings. The multi-agency partnership has a shared responsibility to keep families safe; to provide an effective, efficient and co-ordinated service and ultimately to ensure young people get the best start in life.

Before Family Wellbeing Centres were created, Brent families, parents and carers of children were unable to get the support they needed in one place. Often advice and support were also only available too late, when issues were already occurring and more difficult and costly to manage.

Family Wellbeing Centres address these issues by offering a comprehensive support system to meet the entire family's needs in easily accessible community locations. The FWC initiative responds to the national shift towards hub-based working and comprehensive local consultation. Each shaped by a steering group of local stakeholders, the FWC are integrating working across Brent's Early Help network to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs of local families.



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The Offer

The Family Wellbeing Centres are an integral part of Brent's Early Help community-based offer providing an integrated 'whole family' (for children aged 0-18 years old, and 25 for those with SEND) service, bringing together core health visiting, school nursing, under 5s services, parenting and family support services into a single offer. There is a core service offer across all the FWCs and some variation depending on local needs and what services are delivered in the community.

The key aims of the offer are to build resilience and wellbeing in children, young people, and families; to offer early support to children and help prevent family breakdowns that can result in entry to care. There are over 130 different family support activities and services that can be booked online.

Each family is supported by partners (local authority, health and voluntary sector) at key points – both ante and post-natal – and continues to receive support throughout the early years until entry to school. This includes access to the healthy start programme including checks at appropriate points. All families have access to information about child learning and development and child and parent relationships as well as information about the free childcare offer.



A Family Wellbeing Centre



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The Healthy Child Programme (0-19), health visiting, and school nursing services, have successfully been delivered across all the network of centres. The Family Wellbeing Centres also work hard to develop activities and support for young people and signpost young people to opportunities which helps address the growing challenge of serious youth violence.

Early intervention work across the Family Wellbeing Centres network helps prevent families' problems escalating and becoming more complex. The centres provide a prevention first approach with parenting guidance offered before a child is born and in those vital early months and years, rather than solely reacting to issues after they have happened.

The triage service aims to achieve positive outcomes for children and families requiring light touch interventions or short-term support. Common issues presented to the triage service include:

- Families re-locating from other areas with no resources (i.e. household goods, lack of finances, etc)
- Debt - including utilities, rent, council tax, etc
- Children not in school
- Cost of living related issues
- Housing - overcrowding/ evictions/ disrepairs
- New arrivals - including Ukrainian families, other asylum seekers
- Parents with children who have undiagnosed additional needs who require help to access specialist services.

The Impact

The Family Wellbeing Centres have made a significant positive impact on the lives of families, parents and carers by improving family finances and reducing the worst impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. Key non-financial, recurring benefits also include improved health (e.g. reduced infant mortality, increased breastfeeding and reduced tooth decay, obesity and substance misuse). The centres have also supported school attainment, by reducing school absence and exclusions.

Other benefits include improved family nutrition, weight management and access to fresh fruit and vegetables, support to stop smoking and reducing the risk of domestic abuse.

The cost saving of delivering early help in Brent through Family Wellbeing Centres is estimated at around £16,000 per family.

The average cost of a child taken into care cost £44,676 per child per year. Other potential costs avoided include:

- Child in Need cases cost £1,416 every 6 months of case management
- Anti-social behaviour by young people cost £500 per case requiring further action
- Each young offender case cost £20,024 per year
- Serious youth crime per case cost £18,608 for serious wounding, £2,765 for other wounding
- Every homelessness application by young people cost £2,501 per application
- Every domestic violence incident reported cost £2,470 per reported incident



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Brent Council's Family Wellbeing Centres have transformed the way families receive support, offering a holistic, community-based service that builds resilience and addresses needs early. By integrating key services and fostering a multi-agency partnership, these centres ensure children, young people, and families thrive, while also achieving significant cost savings for the council. With a focus on early intervention and prevention, the centres have successfully improved family wellbeing, health outcomes, and school attainment, showcasing a sustainable model for delivering impactful early help.

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