

Hundreds of Best Start Family Hubs open nationwide

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More parents can save hundreds of pounds through free services, as over 200 Best Start Family Hubs open nationwide this week, helping with the cost of living.

Families across England struggling with the cost of living can save money on services including free stay and play sessions for babies and young children, as hundreds of new Best Start Family Hubs open nationwide, building on the legacy of Sure Start.

Parents will be able to access help with infant feeding, parenting advice and early support for children with SEND, in one place, reducing the need to pay for private classes or specialist support.

This support forms part of the government's wider efforts to make family life easier, including publishing new evidence-backed guidance on screen time this week in response to parents' calls for support.

On top of savings of up to £200 a year through free stay and play sessions, many hubs will also provide access to debt advice and welfare guidance, which could help families access support they may otherwise miss and improve their financial position.

Over 200 new Best Start Family Hubs in areas not previously funded are now open to families, as the government delivers on its pledge to ensure there is a hub in every council area. These form the first wave of up to 1,000 hubs across all local authorities by the end of 2028, with 800 expected to be operating as Best Start Family Hubs by the end of April.

New guidance sets out the government's plans to bring services families rely on together under one roof, making it easier to get help at the right time - reimagining Sure Start for the modern age through a more joined-up system of support.

The government is also making a new commitment to deliver up to 2,000 satellite locations by the end of 2028 - based in health centres, leisure centres, libraries and churches - so families experience seamless support in the places they already go.

The programme builds on the legacy of Sure Start, while updating family services for the modern world - combining face-to-face and digital support, strong partnerships with early years settings, and better use of existing community partners and spaces.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said:

Children growing up in our country deserve the best start in life, but for too long, too many families have been navigating the pressures of parenthood without the support they need.

Best Start Family Hubs will revitalise family services - bringing together health, parenting support and practical advice in one place, free and close to home, so that parents can get the help they need, when they need it.

I've seen the difference Sure Start made in my community, and why it's so important that we bring that support back today, reimagined for a new generation of families.

Whether it's advice on child development, help with additional needs, or simply a friendly face in the community, this government is putting the support so many families used to rely on, back into each and every community.

The new Best Start Family Hubs are backed by £900m of investment over the next three years - including half a billion to deliver hubs nationwide, £200 million for the Healthy Babies services, and a further £200 million to fund SEND practitioners in every hub.

Every Best Start Family Hub will include dedicated outreach workers to reach families, alongside a practitioner to help identify additional needs early - particularly those who might otherwise fall through the cracks - helping them access the right support sooner without being passed between services.

Alongside this, Healthy Babies support will be delivered through Best Start Family Hubs - bringing together health and early support such as midwifery, health visiting, infant feeding and perinatal mental health support so families get a more joined-up experience from day one.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting said:

I want babies born this year to grow up as the healthiest generation than any before it - and that means building good habits early.

We know that the earliest years of a child's life shape everything that follows. But for too long, families have had to navigate a maze of services at the very moment they need simple, straightforward help.

We're making it easier for families to get the right support in one place - from pregnancy onwards.

That means spotting problems earlier, stepping in sooner, and moving care closer to the communities that need it most.

With significant investment over the next three years, Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies services will play a key role in improving school readiness, supporting early development and helping parents manage the cost of living. Hubs will also be able to host school-based nurseries, bringing childcare together with family support, health visiting and early SEND identification under one roof - giving families more joined-up support.

New guidance sets out the full support families can expect from Best Start Family Hubs, bringing together help from pregnancy through to school age in one joined-up offer. It comes as the government prioritises cost of living to make life more affordable for families - from support with managing screen-time to major cost of living support for families, including saving eligible parents an average of £8,000 a year through funded childcare, up to £450 a year through free breakfast clubs, up to £500 a year through the expansion of free school meals, and around £300 a year through Holiday Activities and Food programmes, alongside the expansion of Best Start school-based nurseries.

Brigitte Gater, Managing Director of Children's Services at Action for Children, said:

Best Start Family hubs are at their best when they bring together trusted local partners to reach families in ways that work for them.

As a national charity delivering local family hub services across England, Action for Children has seen how collaboration between local authorities, community groups and specialist providers helps services adapt quickly to what families need, whether that's trialling new approaches, reaching families who might otherwise be missed, or joining up support around the whole family.

That shared commitment to learning and adapting is what enables services to deliver the best outcomes for children and families."

Neil Leitch, CEO of the Early Years said:

We welcome the announcement of the Best Start in Life Family Hubs opening this week. They have the potential to make a real difference for families, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, as long as they are fully joined up with local early years provision to deliver meaningful, long-term support.

This is a positive step, and we stand ready to work with ministers to help ensure that the rollout of Best Start family hubs - and the wider Best Start in Life strategy - delivers the high-quality care, education and support that families both need and deserve."

Jodie Reed, co-CEO of family support charity, Home-Start UK

By working hand-in-hand with children's centres and family hubs the national network of Home-Start charities has shown how partnership with community-based charities and voluntary organisations increases reach to families in greatest need.

The strong and trusting relationships our trained community volunteers build with families over months of home-visiting gives parents the confidence and encouragement they need to access the services they need. Services for the community, delivered by the community like this build connection and maximise impact for children.

Jane van Zyl, CEO at Working Families said;

We welcome the Government plans to launch 200 new Best Start Family Hubs across every local authority in England by 2028.

These hubs aim to bring together services that support families. Too many families are currently cut off from early years support, particularly in lower-income areas. This initiative could be a step toward changing that, and local implementation will be key.

At Working Families, we know how much families benefit when the right help is easily accessible, early on, and we'll be watching closely to see how this promise translates

into real change for parents and carers

Sarah Ronan, Executive Director, Early Education and Childcare Coalition said:

These plans make clear that working in partnership across the system is how we wrap support around families at the earliest opportunity. Meeting families where they are, removing barriers to accessing support and actively shaping the system with families is key - we welcome the crystal clear focus on these principles throughout the guidance.

We all have a role to play in making sure that every child, in every community gets the best start in life and we are particularly pleased to see Government recognise the importance of early education and childcare in achieving that.

Having the support of Best Start Family Hub staff in navigating childcare entitlements will help ensure that parents find a setting that suits their child's needs and, crucially, that they get the education and care that supports them to thrive.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hundreds-of-best-start-family-hubs-open-nationwide>