



RIGHT PEOPLE, RIGHT SERVICE, RIGHT TIME

Developing the Blackpool Early Parenthood Service

The local decommissioning of Family Nurse Partnership in Blackpool gave the opportunity to develop a targeted parenting offer which met the needs of the most vulnerable parents. Working together across services the experiences of parents and carers, front line staff, and management from Health and Social Care, was used to develop a new local service.

The Early Parenthood Service was co-developed to deliver individualised targeted support from specialist nurses for parents from early pregnancy to up to four months postnatally to help them provide safe consistent care for their child at the most critical time.

Understanding the challenge

Blackpool parents are more likely to experience a range of adversities than in other parts of the country. The town has six wards that are in the one percent most deprived in England and the highest levels of deprivation in Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Blackpool also has one of the highest rates of Children in Need and Looked After Children in the country, with around a quarter aged under five, and for those under the age of one year the rate is over four times higher than the national average. (JSNA, 2023 <https://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Developing-Well/Children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/Looked-After-Children-Children-in-Need.aspx>).



The support the team give to families that is really practical, evidence-based, therapeutic is fantastic and makes a difference.

Service Manager Early Help and Support Services



Since 2010, more than £2 billion has been cut nationally from preventative services. In Blackpool, like many parts of the UK budgets have reduced while the demand for services continued to grow. Leading to difficult decisions about commissioning and ensuring resources are allocated to meet the highest priority needs.

Commissioned in Blackpool since 2016, Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) provided targeted parenting support for first time mothers up to the age of 19, for the first two years of their child's life. The service was effective for those that engaged and provided beneficial support for both parents and child. However, local data and stakeholder (practitioner and parent) insight made it clear that targeted support was needed by more parents who did not meet FNP criteria. In response to this, in 2022, the process began to decommission FNP in Blackpool and develop a targeted service to be accessed by a broader range of expectant parents.

The Early Parenthood Service was developed as a response to meeting the needs of more parents and filling an identified gap in support, while seeking to retain the good practice and staff expertise present in the town. The service aligned with the development of the Start for Life and Family Hub offer in Blackpool and brought together Health and Social Care professionals to ensure the service did not duplicate but enhanced existing services and pathways of support.

What we did

Looking at the data

The process of reimagining the service to give most support to new parents with greatest need began with a review of population and administrative data from within the partnership. Data showed that high levels of need were not limited to young parents or first-time parents but were broadly distributed across the population.

Bringing together the learning

Partners came together to hold a "Common Elements" workshop which asked participants across early years' service delivery in Blackpool to consider what elements of practice are key factors in successful services. It was identified that services worked best when:

- Relationship building with families was central
- Specialist staff had expertise in child health/development
- Flexibility including home based offers for parents
- No wrong door – families only told their story once
- Interventions were evidence-based or informed but not manualised
- Focused on safeguarding
- Included reflective practice and supervision
- Offered time limited interventions scaffolded with clear in/ outwards pathways of additional support

Developing the service

Partners worked together over the next few months regularly meeting to develop a theory of change and a vision for the service. They considered alternative models of delivery from other localities and areas of best practice, and sought feedback from those with lived experience.

It was acknowledged that the FNP nurses had developed a range of expertise in relationship building, child health and development and delivering targeted interventions and the goal was to retain this expertise in the new service. Conversations with the FNP national team ensured this was done transparently.

The service development phase included defining:

- Referral criteria and pathway in/out of the service
- Length of intervention with parents and critical time period to offer support
- Interventions and approaches to be integrated in the service offer
- Pathways and transitions to universal and targeted services to scaffold support
- Data collection and outcome monitoring

It has helped me to recognise skills I did not know I had.

Dad





It has been fantastic, my nurse is very caring and I feel able to talk to her. I feel through my sessions, I have improved my confidence levels and self esteem. It has made me a better mum for having the support through my journey."

Mum



The Early Parenthood Service

The service was operational in July 2023, parents are referred to the service through a multiagency Family Hub triage panel convened in a local Family Hub. The service is open to mothers of any age with any number of children. The triage panel consider both the mother and her partner against a range of criteria to ensure that those that are most likely to derive benefit from the service are offered support.

1. **Parents who have had very difficult experiences within childhood into adulthood, some of whom may be care experienced.**
2. **Parents with children no longer in their care.**
3. **Parents who are under 17 years of age.**
4. **Parents who are isolated with limited or no support from family or peers.**
5. **Parents who have additional support needs and/or disabilities and may require help to provide consistent care.**
6. **Parents who may be experiencing vulnerabilities and whose lifestyles may pose high levels of risk, meaning that they need extra support to provide safe and consistent care for their children.**

What the service does

Specialist nurses work alongside parents from referral in pregnancy to when the baby is up to four months old, visiting them in their home (weekly at first) and providing individualised relationship-based support on priorities agreed by the parents using the Outcomes Star.

Support may include evidence-based interventions such as the Newborn Behavioural Assessment Scale, PIPE (Partners and Parenting Education), Reducing Parental Conflict, and Behavioural Activation. Parents are supported to access universal early years support through Family Hubs, Health and Community providers and the team will refer the family into additional targeted or specialist services depending on their needs.

Outcomes

In the first two years of delivery 143 expectant mothers have been supported.

External evaluation to be carried out by NIHR PHIRST to strengthen the learning from the development of the service.

Winners of two national awards;

Nursing Times Awards 2024: Nursing in the Community

Health Services Journal Awards 2024; Primary and Community Care Innovation of the Year.