



UK Government

Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies: wider services expectations

**Guidance for local authorities
April 2026 to March 2029**

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Introduction

Our ambitions to deliver a step change in child development and health outcomes can only be achieved with the collaboration of partners from across a range of specialisms and service areas.

Best Start Family Hubs (BSFHs) should act as a gateway to wider local services beyond their core offer, ensuring families experience joined up seamless services.

This document provides non-statutory guidance for local authorities on the services BSFHs should connect to beyond their core offer and sets out the minimum expectations of the services which are not receiving additional investment through this programme, and optional good practice. The services listed in this document do not represent an exhaustive list and you can choose to deliver other services outside of these, according to local need. This document also sets out options to go further in the delivery of these services.

An earlier version of these expectations was published in February 2025 ([Family hubs service expectations](#)). They have been updated to remove the following sections, which are now captured in [Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies: guidance for local authorities](#) as they relate to core BSFH services:

- activities for children aged 0-5,
- early language and the home learning environment and parenting support
- early childhood education and care (ECEC) and financial support (Tax-Free Childcare, Universal Credit childcare),
- infant feeding support, parent-infant relationships and perinatal mental health support.

Summary

This document contains service expectations for a range of areas: health and wellbeing, safeguarding, cost of living and other assistance, family support services, and services for children aged 5+ and young people. The main types of support this covers are set out below.

Minimum expectations of BSFHs include:



Staff understand families' needs and are able to sensitively discuss a range of issues with them as appropriate. Examples of services where there is an expectation to do this include the sections on supporting Armed Forces families, school attendance and children affected by parent/carer imprisonment.



Wider services are delivered on site in BSFHs with dedicated space provided including private areas for confidential discussion with families. Examples of services where there is an expectation to do this include the sections on health visiting and midwifery.



Staff signpost and refer to other support and services delivered by the public, private and third sectors. Examples of services where there is an expectation to do this include the sections on housing, food support and social welfare advice.



Virtual support through apps, websites and helplines. This may be provided by the BSFH or other sources. Examples of services where there is an expectation to do this include the sections on mental health, screen time and support for separated and separating parents.

'Go further' options for BSFHs include:



Specialist staff are available on site at BSFHs, for example at drop-ins. Examples of services where there is an option to do this include substance misuse, support with employment and training and reducing parent/carer conflict.



Co-location of services on the same site as BSFHs, so that families can access both in same location. Examples of services where there is an option to do this include midwifery, family help and youth services.



Specialist training for BSFH staff to deliver particular interventions. Examples of services where there is an option to do this include stopping smoking, money advice and financial education.

Section 1: Health and wellbeing services

Health visiting (ages 0 to 5)

These expectations should be read alongside the healthy child programme delivery guidance, commissioning guidance and the high-impact areas for health visiting which sets the expected standards for the service.

Minimum expectations

- LAs ensure that BSFHs are included as part of health visiting teams routes to deliver personalised and tailored interventions through multi-professional pathways that respond to family need.
- BSFHs work with local healthy child programme staff to ensure that they are able to signpost families to BSFHs and Healthy Babies offer.
- BSFHs will offer spaces that are fit for purpose with private, confidential spaces for conversations as standard.
- LAs ensure that BSFHs host or support child health clinics, drop-ins and access to health visiting support where possible and appropriate, aligned to local need and service capacity.
- Where appropriate, BSFHs may be a venue for delivery of mandated health and development reviews at 12 months and 2 – 2 ½ years old.¹ The determination of setting should always be based on family context and need, rather than service capacity or convenience. LAs should ensure that hub-based delivery complements rather than replaces the universal health visiting service offer.
- LAs embed BSFHs as part of local systems to support health visiting teams to identify families with higher or more complex needs. BSFH staff actively facilitate the use of BSFHs as a venue for additional or enhanced support where this is appropriate for families with higher or more complex needs.
- Staff in the BSFH use the information they hold to involve local safeguarding and multi-agency child protection services where there are child safeguarding concerns.
- Parents and carers can access online information and other guidance for common concerns (for example, feeding, sleeping, crying, toileting, illnesses) online at any time of day or night.

¹ *The first three Health and Development reviews should in almost all circumstances be carried out at home.*

- Staff in the BSFH support parents and carers to access to trusted online information and guidance for common infant health concerns (for example, feeding, sleeping, crying, toileting, illnesses), available at any time.
- Staff in the BSFH ensure families are clearly informed about how to contact their health visiting team, including via telephone, messaging or digital platforms where available, with reasonable adjustments for digital exclusion.

‘Go further’ options

- LAs position health visiting as a system leader in the integration of health services for children and the development of coherent, joined-up family pathways, including incorporation of BSFHs as standard.
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of and can signpost families to online or blended access to additional specialist health visitor expertise to support children (including infants) and families with emerging or complex needs.
- Health visiting teams and BSFHs share information in order to develop a more holistic picture of a child’s circumstances, development and areas where they may need additional support. This could include, for example, the outcomes of the 2-2 ½ year review and 2 year progress check.

Local authority 0-to-19 public health services, based on local needs assessments

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH know which public health services are provided where locally, and can connect families to these services, information and support relevant to their specific needs. This will include supporting families to access evidence-based health improvement advice and interventions, and information and advice for parents and carers on children and young people’s health and development, including local community resources (both in person and online) and social prescribing opportunities to increase social participation and health/wellbeing outcomes.
- Staff in the BSFH promote emotional wellbeing in conjunction with primary/secondary care and school-based support.
- There are drop-in opportunities in BSFHs provided by professionals and local providers of different public health services.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to connect families to appropriate support within the network, including to primary and secondary care, wider community health care and specialist services where appropriate and available.

- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about how to access public health services.

‘Go further’ options

- There are public health services and support available located on site in the BSFH, or virtually, provided by trained professionals.

Mental health services (beyond perinatal mental health and parent–infant relationships)

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH have an understanding of mental health issues, including early intervention and emotional/wellbeing support, and are able to connect to appropriate support within the network.
- Staff in the BSFH ensure equal consideration of mental health needs alongside other needs such as physical health (parity of esteem).
- Online BSFH presence offers universal mental health materials, connecting to online self-help materials, for example, [Every Mind Matters](#) and information about how to book on to services or self-refer where available.
- Staff in the BSFH use the information they hold to involve local safeguarding and multi-agency child protection services, where mental health or any other issue raises child safeguarding concerns.

‘Go further’ options

- Mental health support services are co-located in the BSFH (both NHS commissioned support, VCSE sector support, peer support and lower-level emotional/wellbeing support).
- A mental health lead is based in the BSFH with additional training and clear responsibility for mental health support is available to provide face-to-face support for families.
- Online virtual programme on offer, accessible via the BSFH.

Midwifery/maternity and neonatal

Minimum expectations

- Midwifery teams have the option to use BSFHs as a team base to support multi-agency working across maternity, health visiting, early years, family support and safeguarding.
- BSFHs provide suitable clinical and non-clinical spaces for midwifery teams meeting essential standards for privacy, infection control, etc.
- There is a confidential environment for assessments to be completed.
- BSFHs support care continuity between midwifery and health visiting through joint working, improved sharing of information and/or focus on postnatal handover. If appropriate, this will include face-to-face handover from the midwife to the health visitor with the parent/carer.
- BSFHs are able to provide expectant parents with information about a range of locally available appropriate birth options.
- The website and communication channels show up-to-date appointment and drop-in clinics for families to access.
- Virtual (including telephone) appointments are available.

‘Go further’ options

- Newborn hearing screenings are offered at BSFHs.
- Midwifery drop-in sessions, peer support sessions and classes are available at BSFHs.
- Post-natal contraception and advice on contraception methods is made available in BSFHs.
- There are good referral pathways and inter-agency working, for example, with breastfeeding services, smoking cessation and perinatal mental health services, perinatal pelvic health services, general family support services, targeted support through a local family help service, and agencies such as housing, domestic violence, and social work. These processes will be supported by one or more key contacts available to the family who are able to provide continuous support and connect them to additional or specialist services where required. The right key contact will depend on the circumstances but could be a member of the multidisciplinary skill mix team under the clinical leadership of health professionals.
- There is additional midwifery support, for example demonstrating basic baby care and safety, and targeted work for those with identified needs by the most appropriate professional in the multi-agency team.
- There is outreach antenatal care (including necessary equipment).

Healthy growth and nutrition support

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are aware of what child healthy growth and weight services* are available locally and nationally for early years, children, families, and parents/carers (via adult services), have knowledge of the eligibility criteria for these services and are able to connect families to them. *Also referred to as child weight management services in some areas.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to raise the topic of growth and weight and able to talk about healthy growth and weight in an informed and sensitive way.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to signpost to government healthy eating guidance (for example, the Eatwell Guide and 5-a-day).
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information on child healthy growth and weight service and support for children and their parents/carers (including via adult service) who are overweight or living with obesity, including services available locally and nationally and ways in which people access these services.
- Online BSFH presence links to government healthy eating guidance (for example, the Eatwell Guide and 5-a-day).

‘Go further’ options

- Drop-in opportunities are available with local child healthy growth and weight and adult weight management service providers.
- Child healthy growth and weight and adult weight management services are delivered from BSFHs.
- If appropriate,
 - For adults, face-to-face or remote conversations will be available with those who have undertaken healthy weight coach training, or similar, to support behaviour change and onward connection to weight management services available locally and nationally. This may require connecting the individual with a healthcare professional, such as a GP, to provide an onward referral.
 - For children, the professional will connect a parent/carer who is concerned about their child’s growth and weight to a healthcare professional such as the school nurse, GP, or child healthy growth and weight and weight management services.

Oral health improvement

Minimum expectations

- There is a member of staff in the BSFH who is designated as an oral health improvement champion. They will:
 - Understand the current local dental service landscape and provide active support to enable families to access appropriate NHS dental services, including community dental services, which are taking on new NHS patients for routine and urgent care.
 - Provide advice and support to parents and carers on keeping children's mouths healthy (diet, oral hygiene, fluoride).
 - Advocate for oral health improvement with other professionals/settings, for example health visitors, GPs and schools to make sure that every contact counts.
 - Ensure that the BSFH environment facilitates good oral health for all families, for example, breastfeeding is promoted, providing and promoting drinking water, championing healthy eating policies that limit food and drink containing sugar between meals, use of free flow cups, etc.
 - Promote daily supervised toothbrushing, advocate for expansion of local supervised toothbrushing programmes and encourage parents and carers to have their children attend those early years settings that provide supervised tooth-brushing programmes where available.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials, signposting to online oral health improvement resources, and relevant oral health and dental content. This includes how to find NHS dental services and other supporting information, for example, NHS dental charge exemption categories on gov.uk and NHS.uk, and parenthub.
- BSFHs host drop-in sessions with the local health improvement team.

Screen time

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH can signpost to:
 - Guidance for parents and carers on screentime in the early years (0-5s) [Baby and toddler screen time guidance - Best Start in Life](#) and forthcoming guidance for school-aged children (5-16s, publication date TBD).
 - [The UK CMOs' 2019 commentary on screen time and social media map of reviews](#), particularly the advice for parents and carers.
 - [Guidance on mobile phones in schools](#), in particular the section on the role of parents.
 - Other resources and information, including any published by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in relation to the Online Safety Act.

Stop smoking support

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH know what stop smoking services are provided locally, where these are available, and can connect families to these services.
- For families attending a first healthcare appointment at the BSFH staff will ask individuals about their smoking status and that of others in the household.
- Staff in the BSFH are trained in delivering very brief advice (VBA) on smoking to parents and carers identified as smokers. All staff interacting with families to complete [Very Brief Advice on Smoking \(VBA+\) training](#) from the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training.
- Staff in the BSFH are trained to deliver VBA on smoking to any pregnant people that are accessing the hub, culminating in a referral to local stop smoking support.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about how to access stop smoking services.

‘Go further’ options

- Drop-in opportunities with trained stop smoking advisers are available.
- Stop smoking support and services provided by trained stop smoking advisers are available on site in the BSFH, including individual, group and family-based treatment programmes.

- Specialist smoking in pregnancy advisers are available on site at designated times of the week, with links to midwifery services. Online/remote (for example, telephone or video call) stop smoking support available, accessible via the BSFH.

Substance (alcohol/drug) misuse support

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are trained to have an awareness of parental or carer substance misuse and young people's substance misuse and can make referrals to local drug and alcohol services where necessary and connect to appropriate support within the network, including targeted services through the local family help offer.
- Staff in the BSFH use the information they hold to involve local safeguarding and multi-agency child protection services, where substance misuse or any other issue raises child safeguarding concerns.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about substance misuse, the effects of parental or carer substance misuse upon children, harm reduction information, types of support available to the individual/family, how to book on to services, how to contact local drug and alcohol services commissioned by their local authority, and who to contact in an emergency.

'Go further' options

- A substance misuse practitioner works from the BSFH (not necessarily full-time), so people can access treatment in a non-stigmatising and discreet environment, feel safe to bring young children to appointments and can attend whole-family interventions which can be delivered in the hubs.
- A young people's substance misuse practitioner works from the BSFH (not necessarily full-time), recognising that targeted and specialist substances misuse interventions for young people are different to that for adults – related to factors such as age-appropriateness of the support offered, and identification, and the patterns of, substance-use problems.
- Substance misuse treatment workers based full-time in the BSFH are trained in delivering whole-family substance misuse interventions and reducing parental/carers conflict to deliver permanent whole-family substance misuse support in the hub, working holistically with all relevant agencies operating within the hub network. Service available through the BSFH but received elsewhere in the network.

- Training, potentially on a reciprocal basis, can be arranged with local adult and children and young people's specialist drug and alcohol services. Local drug and alcohol services can also offer peripatetic support within the family hub to further support staff.

Vaccinations

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH inform parents/carers, pregnant women, and young people if their eligibility for vaccinations in line with the routine immunisation schedule and any seasonal vaccination programmes.
- Embed vaccination discussions into routine touchpoints such as:
 - antenatal appointments
 - mandated health visitor checks
 - youth and maternity support sessions.
- Staff in the BSFH provide official vaccination information in an appropriate format (e.g. leaflets available from the UKHSA Health Publications website).
- Staff in the BSFH signpost families, pregnant women, and young people to local vaccination delivery services or networks, including information that will help families understand how to book, what to expect and what to do if they have missed vaccinations.
- Staff in the BSFH offer support to navigate access to these services, including for those who may have missed vaccinations (e.g. children starting school).
- BSFHs access to static or virtual information, including signposting to NHS information [NHS vaccinations and when to have them - NHS](#).

'Go further' options

- Staff in the BSFH champion vaccination by offering confident, informed conversations with families, pregnant women, and young people to build understanding and confidence in vaccination.
- Delivery of childhood, maternal, or youth vaccinations onsite via a trained clinical professional in a suitable clinical environment with appropriate governance in place.
- BSFHs promote the ongoing importance of vaccination across the life course, including school age vaccination programmes.
- Training for staff in BSFHs in culturally competent, evidence-based vaccine messaging.

Section 2: Safeguarding

Domestic abuse

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are aware of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#), are trauma-informed, and can distinguish between parental conflict and domestic abuse, recognise signs of all forms of domestic abuse (including coercive control), teenage relationship abuse, and child to parent or caregiver abuse, and the effect of this abuse on victims (adult and child, including where children see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse). Staff in BSFHs are also aware of key risk points, such as pregnancy and ending an abusive relationship and the release of a partner from prison.
- The BSFH has a robust staff-safety policy to ensure that the safety of victims (adults and children) and staff members is prioritised. Staff consider how to prevent perpetrators and victims accessing services through the BSFH at the same time and know what to do if someone is in immediate danger and/or if a safeguarding referral is needed.
- Staff in the BSFH have a good understanding of the support services available locally and are able to connect adult and child victims, and where appropriate, perpetrators, to specialist domestic abuse services (including VCS organisations). This can be either a referral on site or within the BSFH network, as well as support from other agencies such as health, police, housing and/or local safe accommodation. In making referrals, the safety of victims/children is paramount at all times.
- Private spaces are available to allow victims (adult and/or child) to speak confidentially, to reduce risk associated with disclosing in front of perpetrators.
- BSFHs have awareness-raising information around the hub about local specialist services and domestic abuse helplines, such as posters on toilet doors or notice boards, or discreet cards available to pick up. Helplines include:
 - The 24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline (0808 2000 247).
 - The National Men's Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Respect (0808 8010327).
 - The National Helpline for LGBT+ Victims and Survivors of Abuse and Violence, run by Galop (0800 999 5428).
 - Honour-Based Abuse Helpline, run by Karma Nirvana (0800 5999 247).

- SignHealth's Deaf Domestic Abuse Service (TEXT 07800 003421).
 - The 24/7 Helpline for older victims, run by Hourglass (080 8808 8141).
 - The National Stalking Helpline, run by The Suzy Lamplugh Trust (0808 802 0300).
- Staff in the BSFH can also, where appropriate and available, connect perpetrators to relevant support. In making referrals, the safety of victims/children is paramount at all times.
 - Staff in the BSFH are aware of the HMPPS Unwanted Prisoner Contact Service (UPCS), which aims to prevent any unwanted contact between prisoners and victims or other members of the public who do not want to receive contact from a prisoner. Any member of the public, and professionals acting on a victim's behalf, can make a no-contact request and report unwanted contact from someone in prison: [Get support as a victim of crime - GOV.UK](#). Staff can signpost victims, where appropriate.
 - Staff in the BSFH use the information they hold to involve local safeguarding and multi-agency child protection services, where domestic abuse or any other issue raises child safeguarding concerns.
 - Online BSFH presence offers universal information about domestic abuse, teenage relationship abuse, and child to parent or caregiver abuse and how to access help and support and/or book on to services.
 - Online information is created with the locally commissioned services and provides clear advice about what to do if a victim is in immediate danger, as well as links to local and national support such as helplines/text services and refuge support.

'Go further' options

- There is an independent domestic abuse specialist worker co-located on site at the BSFH who can identify, risk-assess and support victims (adult and child) and connect them to specialist services within the BSFH network as required. This includes providing children's independent domestic abuse advocates (ChIDVAs) to recognise children's unique experiences.
- Where appropriate, services reflect the national guidance on best practice for commissioning and service delivery.
- Online virtual programme on offer, accessible via the BSFH.
- Online BSFH presence includes resources for friends and family members.

Tackling child sexual abuse and exploitation

Minimum expectations

- All BSFH staff receive training on child sexual abuse and exploitation and understand they should expect to identify cases.
- All BSFH staff are able to identify the signs and indicators of child sexual abuse and exploitation and communicate effectively with children, parents and carers, recognising that some parents and carers may also be children or young adults themselves (See: [Signs and indicators of child sexual abuse | CSA Centre](#) and [Communicating with children | CSA Centre](#)).
- All BSFH staff understand their responsibilities and are able to make appropriate referrals to the police and children's social care so that timely and decisive action is taken to protect and support children (See: [Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway | CSA Centre](#)).
- Staff in the BSFH are able to connect all family members including children, siblings, parents and carers to appropriate advice and support within the network, including targeted services through the local family help offer.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about child sexual abuse and exploitation, the signs and indicators of sexual abuse, types of support available for children and families and how to access these, including local sexual abuse services commissioned by local partners, and who to contact in an emergency.
- Free training on intrafamilial child sexual abuse is available here: [eLearning | CSA Centre](#); the [Data Insights Hub | CSA Centre](#) showing local prevalence and rates of identification, and evidence-based free practice resources here: [Practice resources | CSA Centre](#).

'Go further' options

- Multi-agency staff within the BSFH receive Practice Leads training from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse so that they are able to provide ongoing, local expertise to staff to support identification and response (See: [The Child Sexual Abuse Practice Leads Programme | CSA Centre](#)).

Section 3: Cost of living and other assistance

Birth registration

Minimum expectations

- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and provides information on booking a birth registration appointment.

‘Go further’ options

- Birth Registration is provided by the local authority who deliver services at locations they assess best meet the need of the local community alongside best utilisation of resource.
- Where a mobile service is provided, all families have the option to register a birth at their local BSFH (local authority discretion on frequency of availability).
- BSFHs provide advice and support for all who need assistance in registering births.

Debt advice, money guidance and welfare advice

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH know how to provide up-to-date and impartial guidance on money matters relevant to the families they support, by joining the [Money and Pensions Service’s free Money Guiders programme](#) and using its accredited training.
- Staff in the BSFH know that free welfare advice is available, locally and nationally (such as the telephone service offered by Turn2Us), and can explain how families can access it.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to connect families to free, independent debt advice (such as Citizens Advice, National Debtline, Money Wellness, StepChange, Christians against Poverty, and PayPlan), and to independent guidance on managing debts from a service like MoneyHelper.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to signpost to employment dispute services such as Acas.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to signpost families struggling with essential costs to local financial support funds (e.g. Household Support Fund).

- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about when families should seek money guidance, debt advice and/or welfare advice including Child Maintenance applications, and how to access these services.

‘Go further’ options

- Where available, specialist work coaches support eligible customers in BSFHs with employment and training advice and support.
- Staff in the BSFH access [Money and Pensions Service \(MaPS\) free ongoing Money Guiders training](#) as part of their continuous professional development (CPD).
- The BSFH hosts free, independent community-based debt advice providers, such as those funded by the Money and Pensions Service.
- Once available, staff in the BSFH can deliver the Talk Learn Do programme, a financial education intervention from the Money and Pensions Service that improves child, parent/carer and family financial resilience.
- Virtual access to debt advice, such as video appointments or kiosks, allowing families to speak directly with a qualified adviser in a private environment.

Food support

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH:
 - Signpost to sources of local food support that include holistic services to both help prevent people needing to rely on emergency food bank parcels and so that people get financial support when they are dependent on emergency food.
 - Provide information discreetly and sensitively to minimise stigma around food insecurity.
 - Ensure appropriate join up with local Jobcentre Plus services, for example in respect of employment and benefits.
 - Signpost to relevant gov.uk online information about benefit entitlement.
 - Offer practical help with navigating application processes (e.g. Healthy Start digital application, local welfare schemes, any local food membership models).

‘Go further’ options

- BSFHs are co-located with food aid services with a holistic element, such as debt advice, budgeting support or benefit advice etc.
- Host or co-locate food aid or affordable food initiatives (e.g. community fridges, pantries, social supermarkets) alongside holistic wraparound

support such as debt advice, budgeting sessions, or welfare rights guidance. locate food aid or affordable food initiatives (e.g. community fridges, pantries, social supermarkets) alongside holistic wraparound support such as debt advice, budgeting sessions, or welfare rights guidance.

- Presentations from local food charities to BSFH users.
- Provide space for local food charities or community food organisations to deliver workshops, talks, or cooking demonstrations.
- Work proactively with families most at risk of food insecurity, using outreach and partnership with early help, safeguarding, midwifery, and health visiting teams.

Fuel poverty

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH can:
 - Signpost those interested in making home upgrades or those in fuel poverty to online or telephone energy advice such as The Consumer Advice and Information Phonenumber and Find Ways to Save Energy in Your Home GOV.UK services.
 - Signpost to eligibility checks for public funding such as Warm Homes Local Grant and Boiler Upgrade Scheme. The services are being enhanced and in future homeowners/occupiers will be able to find trusted installers in their local area and access information on a range of changes they might be able to make to their homes to make them warmer and less expensive to run.

‘Go further’ options

- Staff in the BSFH can signpost to energy efficiency schemes that can help reduce household bills such as the Warm Homes: Local Grant. Staff can contact their local authority Warm Homes team (or equivalent) to find out more.
- Staff in the BSFH can also refer to specialist fuel poverty advice and support from VSOs such as National Energy Action and Citizens Advice ((the Statutory Advocate for Energy Consumers) who can then pass on through for further support from organisations such as the Fuel Bank Foundation on a case by case basis. Staff can also connect with and utilise local VSOs specialising in fuel poverty support.

Housing

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH have a good understanding of housing issues that families may be facing and are trained to identify emerging problems early, such as signs that a family may be struggling to maintain their tenancy. Staff are trained to inform homeless families of support they can receive from their housing officer, educational establishment and relevant health services.
- Staff in the BSFH connect families to appropriate housing support services within the network and to the local Family Help service to ensure timely holistic support for families needing targeted help. Staff are also aware of and able to connect families to wider Children's Social Care services where there is a risk of youth homelessness due to family breakdown, ensuring coordinated support to keep families together.
- If staff consider that any service user may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, staff should notify the relevant housing authority, with the service user's consent.
- The online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about how to find and access local housing support services.

'Go further' options

- There is specialist VCS and/or local authority housing staff on site at the BSFH at certain times. Where eligible and needed, specialist housing staff will liaise with the landlord or housing service to escalate the issue.
- Staff in the BSFH establish links with housing associations.

Parental leave and pay

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are able to signpost to relevant gov.uk online information about entitlements to parental pay and leave [Benefits and financial support for families - GOV.UK](#).

Social welfare advice services

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH understand the landscape of advice agencies and other sources of support for social welfare legal problems —such as issues with housing, family breakdown, employment, welfare benefits, debt, domestic violence and immigration. Staff can signpost families to these sources of support and information, and make referrals where appropriate. Staff can also signpost families to online sources of information, such as the AdviceNow website, where appropriate.

‘Go further’ options

- Where possible, VCS organisations providing support and advice on social welfare legal problems (such as issues with housing, family breakdown, employment, welfare benefits, debt, domestic violence and immigration) may be co-located or provide outreach/drop-in sessions at the family hub location. It will be for individual local authorities to liaise with advice services to decide the optimal method of service delivery and whether co-location is an option. Co-locating advice services within family hubs ensures families can access multiple forms of support in one place, removing barriers such as travel, time and cost. It creates stronger referral pathways through warm handovers, enabling timely and trusted connections to expert help. Many social welfare legal issues are interconnected with non-legal problems, so by addressing these issues together, co-location provides holistic support and early intervention by preventing problems from escalating into crises.

Section 4: Family support services

Armed Forces families

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are aware of the challenges that Armed Forces and Veteran families can face e.g. cumulative impact of mobility, separation, deployment, life after service and bereavement and are confident in discussing these sensitively with families where appropriate. (Further detail is set out in the [The Armed Forces Covenant Statutory guidance](#)).
- Staff in the BSFH signpost families to support services where appropriate, including:
 - The MOD's Education Advisory Team (able to advise on a range of educational matters including SEND, school admission/appeals, school transition) – EAT contact details to be found on the Defence Children Services website [Assigned in the UK](#).
- Armed Forces Family Federations, each service has a dedicated Families Federation who are able to provide support and guidance across a range of areas including education.
 - Army Families Federation (AFF): aff.org.uk
 - Naval Families Federation (NFF): nff.org.uk
 - RAF Families Federation (RAF FF): raf-ff.org.uk
- Staff in the BSFH to be aware of joint MOD/DfE guidance 'Service pupils in Schools: Non-Statutory guidance' (April 2025) to help state-funded schools and local authorities in England to understand and address the needs of Service pupils in schools. The guidance can be found at: [Service pupils in schools-non statutory guidance](#).
- Staff in the BSFH to be aware of whether their local authority is a member of the [MOD Local Authority Partnership](#) (MODLAP) and agreed principles when supporting the school transition of Service children with SEND.

'Go further' options

- The establishment of a military champion in every hub – this could be linked into local authority commitments already in place through the Armed Forces Covenant, OGD Covenant commitments or relate to the April 2025 joint MOD/DfE guidance – 'Service Pupils in Schools: Non-Statutory guidance', where LAs are asked to consider developing a Service Pupil Champion role.

Children affected by parent/carer imprisonment

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are aware of the range of potential impacts of parent/carer imprisonment, well-equipped to raise and discuss this with children and families, as well as listen carefully to their personal experience as appropriate in a respectful, trauma-informed and confidential manner which can help mitigate potential harm and encourage stability.
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of support available for families affected by parent/carer imprisonment and connect families to appropriate services as required.
- The BSFH works closely with the justice partners (including prisons and probation), regional voluntary and community organisations, schools (including Early Years settings) and relevant Family Service Providers to raise awareness of the services they offer and to ensure families in contact with the criminal justice system receive tailored, appropriate support.
- Online BSFH presence signposts families to relevant universal materials and information about parent/carer imprisonment, the possible impacts of parent/carer imprisonment on children and families, what support is available, and how to access support both in their local community and nationally. This will include links to [Prisoners' Families Helpline](#) (which provides confidential advice and support for families experiencing imprisonment) and the [Prison Reform Trust's Child Impact Assessment Project](#)
- Staff in the BSFH can signpost families affected by imprisonment of a parent or carer to financial support schemes, including the Help with Visits scheme, which supports visitors on low incomes by providing a contribution towards visits costs for close relatives, partners or sole visitors. More information can be found at: [Get help with the cost of prison visits - GOV.UK](#).

'Go further' options

- Staff in the BSFH are trained to conduct a [Child Impact Assessment](#) when children and families affected by imprisonment access the hub.
- BSFHs raise awareness of support available for children and families affected by parent/carer imprisonment in courts, prisons and probation offices to signal Criminal Justice System (CJS) awareness and advertise available support.
- BSFHs support mechanisms for confidential and appropriate information sharing between nurseries, schools, youth clubs, local authorities, relevant charities/support organisations (both local and national), prisons and probation, for safeguarding purposes and/or with permission from children and families as appropriate.

- BSFHs facilitate multi-disciplinary meetings with practitioners and families to identify their needs and determine a programme of support, where appropriate, using the hub as a safe and accessible environment.
- BSFHs employ Co-ordinators or Family Link Workers to connect hubs, local authorities, schools, prisons and probation, ensuring holistic support.
- BSFHs run monthly sessions with support organisations and volunteers with lived experience and undertakes outreach with charities, prisons, probation and social workers to identify families and their needs.
- BSFHs provide specific courses and guidance tailored for families impacted by parent/carer imprisonment, for example to promote co-parenting and positive relationships once an individual is released from custody.
- BSFHs train staff on child-centred, trauma-informed practice and data protection (GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018), including handling sensitive information in the context of parental imprisonment.
- Staff in the BSFH attend resettlement boards/resettlement marketplaces in prisons to identify prisoners and their families who may need support.
- Staff in the BSFH to provide services within prisons, such as parenting courses.
- Staff in the BSFH to provide support services in custody for short-term sentences e.g. one-off information sessions with clear guidance and connection to the hub.
- Ensuring BSFH support and guidance materials can be accessed through digital provision in prisons (e.g., BSFH information, information on parenting). This could include access to online guidance, such as:
<https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/professionals/schools/toolkit/>.

Reducing parent/carer conflict

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are aware of the evidence on the effect of parent/carer conflict, can identify it, can distinguish it from domestic abuse, and provide universal-level support and initial early support, and provide or connect to moderate support where required, whether on or off site. This support is available to parents/carers who are together, separating or separated.
- Universal support is available virtually, for example, information, apps, videos and practitioners available to offer early and moderate support.

‘Go further’ options

- Staff in the BSFH are able to connect parents/carers to specialist interventions whether on or off site.
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of developing services, including new online offers, and are able to signpost parents/carers to them.
- Virtual services available through the BSFH, including static online information and/or interactive virtual services.
- Specialist intensive support is available virtually in Reducing Parental Conflict funded local areas, where this works for parents/carers.
- Separate advice and support is available for young people whose parents/carers are experiencing conflict.

Support for adoptive, kinship and foster families

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH understand the needs of and are responsive to any challenges adoptive, kinship and foster families may experience.
- Staff in the BSFH signpost families to appropriate information and support, including:
 - Adoptive families: [Adoptive Parents - Support | Adoption England](#)
 - Kinship families: [Looking after someone else's child - GOV.UK](#)
 - Foster families: [Help and support for foster parents in England: GOV.UK](#)
- Staff in the BSFH should be aware of [the Safety Net advocacy service](#), currently provided by National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). This is a national safety-net advocacy service ensuring that no child or young person is turned away when they need help to have their voice heard. The service provides rights-based information, signposting, and, where local advocacy is unavailable, direct issue-based or non-instructed advocacy for care experienced children and children supported by children’s social care.
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of and signpost to appropriate information, advice and guidance from helplines and their associated online support services, including:
 - The Child Law Advice Service for free, initial legal advice from Coram on family, child and education law issues. Available via telephone, email, or webchat. Visit www.childlawadvice.org.uk for a wide range of legal information, call Family Line on 0300 330 5480 or Education Line on 0300 330 5485.

- Family Rights Group for free, independent and confidential advice for families involved with children's services in England. Includes a free advice line 0808 801 0366, a webchat service via their [website](#)), a [web enquiry form](#), and [advice forums](#) for parents and kinship carers. Visit [frg.org.uk](#) to access these services alongside free resources, advice and information.
- Family Lives for free, confidential emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life. Includes a free advice line on 0808 800 2222 and a live chat, WhatsApp, email and advice forum via [familylives.org.uk](#).
- The NSPCC Childline for free, confidential advice and counselling for children across the UK on issues ranging from bullying, sexual abuse and neglect, 24/7, 365 days a year through telephone by calling 0800 1111, 1-2-1 chat and email. Further information on how to contact Childline is available via their website [Contacting Childline | Childline](#).
- The NSPCC Helpline for adults or practitioners across the UK who are concerned about a child or young person. It offers support and can take action if a child is in danger through onward referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police. The Helpline can be contacted by calling 0808 800 5000 or emailing [help@NSPCC.org.uk](#).

For adoptive families:

- Staff in the BSFH are able to provide guidance on post adoption support available and connect to available support and adoption specific support through Regional Adoption Agencies.
- Staff in the BSFH should take a needs-based approach, linking adoptive families to the same support as other families where appropriate.
- Staff in the BSFH can connect to appropriate adoption support offered through Regional Adoption Agencies and elsewhere in the network. Once connected support may take the form of online learning, peer support and navigation of universal services.
- Staff in the BSFH can connect to Regional Adoption Agencies and local authority colleagues able to support Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund applications especially where there is a risk of an adoption breakdown.
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of and signpost information, advice and guidance from helplines and their associated online support services, including those outlined in the Minimum Expectations section above.

For kinship families:

- Staff in the BSFH signpost families to appropriate information and support, including:
 - Kinship carers: [Looking after someone else's child - GOV.UK](#).
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of and signpost information, advice and guidance from helplines and their associated online support services, including those outlined in the Minimum Expectations section above.

For foster families:

- Staff in the BSFH to signpost families to appropriate information and support, including:
 - Foster families: [Help and support for foster parents in England: GOV.UK](#).
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of and signpost information, advice and guidance from helplines and their associated online support services, including those outlined in the Minimum Expectations section above.

Support for separated and separating parents/carers

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH understand the effect of parental/carer separation and relationship breakdown on children and can connect parents/carers to appropriate services and support to ensure outcomes for their children are front-and-centre when agreeing child arrangements.
- Staff in the BSFH can connect parents/carers to mediation (including the current voucher scheme), to Separated Parenting Programmes, Cafcass' Parenting Plans and other local or virtual services, where safe and appropriate, to help avoid the cost and potential trauma associated with going through the court process.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about how to book on to services for separated families including signposting separated parents to Child Maintenance Service for help arranging Child Maintenance.
- The BSFH is to develop strong working links with local family courts and mediation providers to explore the possibility of providing hub-based mediation or other services to support separating parents/carers, such as shared parenting programmes. BSFHs should also develop strong working links with prisons, particularly those who provide prison-based mediation programmes for parents/carers.

- Online virtual programmes for separated families on offer, accessible via the BSFH.

Targeted family support, delivered by local family help teams

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH, and those linked to the hub, regardless of specialism know how to ask questions to explore the wider needs families may have and can connect families to the right support for their needs. Where there are multiple, complex needs, they will refer families to their local family help service which will identify and assign them a family help lead practitioner. The family help lead practitioner role can be held by a range of practitioners most suited to building a strong and trusting relationship. Where agreed with the family help team, staff in the family hub could be a family's lead practitioner. [The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#) provides further information to support the implementation of family help teams and how they should align with BSFHs as part of the help, support and protection system.
- Staff in the BSFH can connect families to their local family help service, whether on site in the BSFH or elsewhere in the network.
- Support for families is accessible via the BSFH and provided wherever and whenever is most effective for their support needs, for example in the family home. If a family is in receipt of family help support, the family help lead practitioner will work with the family to determine which locations are best for the delivery of support.
- Online BSFH presence offers materials and information about the local authority's family help service and how to access it.
- Online BSFH offer includes a way for families to access targeted family help support, for example to speak to a family hub practitioner virtually to flag concerns about multiple complex needs.
- Staff in the BSFH use the information they hold to involve local safeguarding and multi-agency child protection service, they have child safeguarding concerns.

'Go further' options

- Local multi-disciplinary and multi-agency family help teams are strongly associated with or co-located in the hub and use it for direct work where this is best for the family.

Section 5: Services for children aged 5+ and young people

School attendance

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH are aware of the importance of school attendance for children's development, and as a protective factor for the most vulnerable. They feel confident to ask parents/carers about their child's attendance, highlight the importance of early habits, the benefits of attending regularly, and encourage them to talk to their school about any barriers their child might be facing.
- Staff in the BSFH are able to connect to appropriate support within the network, including the school, local authority attendance team, health services and VCS organisations.
- Staff in the BSFH recognise absence as an indicator of wider need (particularly severe absence), and refer families for Family Help assessments where appropriate.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information promoting the benefits of regular attendance, and providing support and advice to parents/carers.

'Go further' options

- BSFHs are used as a venue for programmes delivered by the local authority or other partners to support parents/carers whose children face barriers to attendance (e.g. courses highlighting the benefits of regular attendance and supporting parents to embed good routines, or school-readiness courses for parents/carers of children about to start school).
- Online school attendance programmes are on offer, accessible via the BSFH.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH make eligible families (those in receipt of Free School Meals) aware of support available through HAF programme in school holidays and signpost to local authority HAF team/website for more information.
- Staff in the BSFH create links with HAF coordinators within local authority.

‘Go further’ options

- Staff in the BSFH support families to check their eligibility for the HAF programme.

Youth Justice Services

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH, or those linked to it, regardless of specialism, have the knowledge and awareness to identify risk factors that may contribute to potential offending behaviour. They are equipped with the knowledge and understanding of the preventative and early intervention service provision offer within the youth justice service, including multi-agency serious violence prevention programmes, making timely referrals where appropriate. They know how to ask questions to explore these risk factors and connect children and their families to the most suitable support tailored to their needs.
- Staff in the BSFH have an awareness and understanding of child criminal exploitation.
- Staff in the BSFH should be aware of the Turnaround Programme (a youth justice early intervention programme led by the Ministry of Justice, providing funding to enable Youth Justice Services to intervene earlier and improve outcomes for children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system) and the relevant Youth Justice Service that they should contact about a child who may benefit. Eligibility criteria may be found at [Turnaround Programme - GOV.UK](#).
- Staff in the BSFH should also be equipped to receive referrals from youth justice services and wider multi-agency serious violence prevention programmes.

‘Go further’ options

- Targeted youth support services are strongly associated with, or co-located in, the BSFH, and use the BSFH for direct work where this is best for the family.

Youth services – universal and targeted

Minimum expectations

- Staff in the BSFH work with youth workers where appropriate to build trusted relationships with young people and their families and provide or signpost to appropriate support.
- Staff in the BSFH are aware of and able to refer young people to universal youth services, such as youth clubs, sports and other specific activity clubs, homework clubs and uniformed youth groups (for example, Scouts/Guides).
- Staff in the BSFH have an awareness and understanding of child criminal exploitation.
- Where appropriate, staff in BSFHs should connect families to available targeted youth services such as prevention sessions, mental health support or support for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or specialist support for young people at risk of abuse or exploitation, or at risk of being drawn into crime.
- Online BSFH presence offers universal materials and information about how to book on to services.

‘Go further’ options

- New facilities funded through the Youth Investment Fund or the Better Youth Spaces Fund could provide a site within the BSFH network for the delivery of a range of BSFH services, tailored to ensure relevance and accessibility to the local community.
- The BSFH connects and works with a range of universal and targeted youth facilities outside the BSFH network including Young Futures Hubs and youth employment hubs where relevant so families can access services provided by other local spaces and providers where this is best for them.
- BSFHs work closely with universal youth services in the area and consider delivering, or supporting the delivery of youth services in the BSFH where this is best for the family.

- Co-locating youth services in BSFHs, including services provided by qualified youth workers and volunteers who can provide immediate and specialist intervention, where this is best for the family, as well as signpost to positive activities/youth services in the community.

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