

ACT

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Best Start In Life & Family Hubs – Update for Wokingham Families

January 2026

www.wokingham.gov.uk



**BEST
START
IN LIFE**

What are Family Hubs?



- ***Best Start Family hubs are a way of joining-up the planning and delivery of family services at the local level for the 0-18yrs age group and up to 25yrs for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)***
- In 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) launched initial Family Hub models with 75 pathfinders
- Government has committed to developing Best Start Family Hubs serving every community
- Wokingham is in the final cohort of Council's to receive funding and we are planning a delivery model building on existing services including Children's Centres
- Part of a whole-system redesign of Children's Social Care called the Families First Programme – intended to build stronger relationships between agencies and families

It's not all about buildings...



Now:

Hard to navigate -
separate support offers
Virtual / Online help
Referral-based access



By 2028

Co-ordinated offer
Parents can self refer
Jointly invested
Expanded support offer
- online, in-person,
meeting various needs

...this is about our local network of support services

Children's Services, Public Health, Education, Communities, Adults, ICB Commissioned Services, Voluntary and Community Sector services and support, Housing...

**Parent
Support**

Early Help

**Health visiting
and other child
health services**

**Links with
local Schools**

CORE OFFER OF

**Early Years
Services**

**Special Educational
Needs and
Disabilities (SEND) –
advice and support**

FAMILY & COMMUNITY

**Emotional Well-
being / Mental
Health support**

HUB SERVICES

**Access to Childcare
/ Holiday & Young
People's activities**

**Financial / Debt
Advice & Crisis
support**

**Adult Education,
Leisure & Cultural
activities**

Best Start Family Hub – 3 Neighbourhoods Model

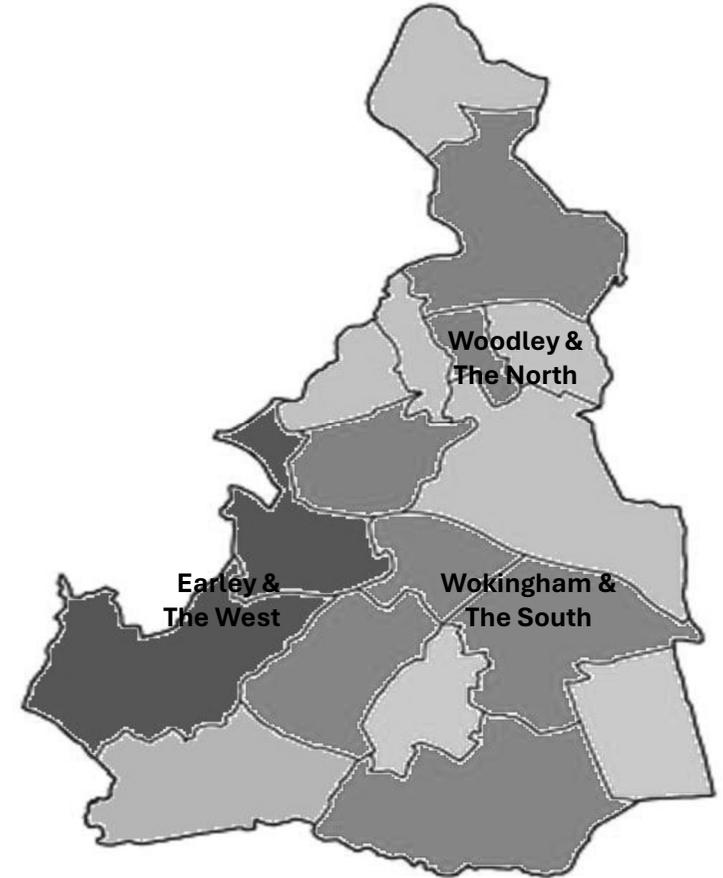
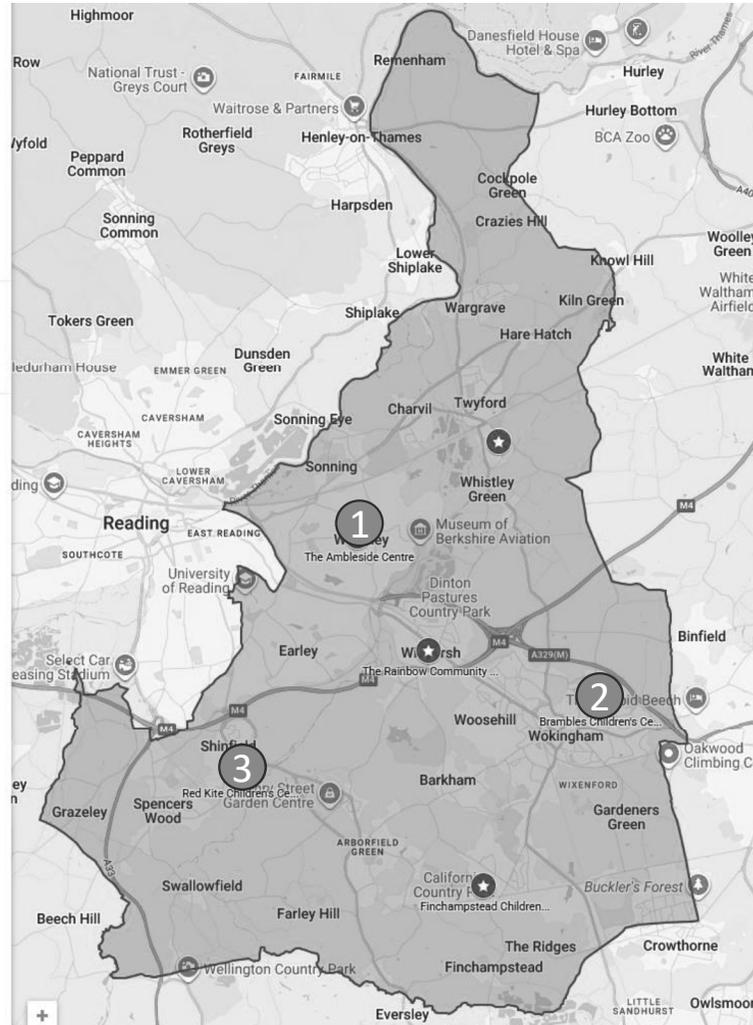
MAIN SITES

1. Ambleside Children's Centre- Woodley
2. Brambles Children's Centre- Wokingham
3. The Red Kite Children's Centre - Shinfield

SATELLITE SITES

4. Winnersh Children's Centre - Winnersh
5. Starlings Children Centre, Colleton Drive, Twyford
6. Finchampstead Children's Centre (within Finchampstead Baptist Church)

EXPLORING PLANS TO DEVELOP A SEND SPECIALIST HUB - TBC



...sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn't require to be sent via secure methods.

Family Hubs – Key Targets

Objective 1: Launch at least one Best Start Family Hub site from April 2026 from which to deliver parenting support interventions. **Any Hub(s) identified should be in a disadvantaged community / area of deprivation, where support is most needed.**

In Wokingham we are initially planning to launch two sites – Woodley and Wokingham Town

Objective 2: Prepare to deliver Parent Support Programme and Home Learning Environment programmes from April 2026:

In Wokingham we want to establish models that bring together schools, early years settings, and our local voluntary and community sector (VCS) in working together to deliver this activity

Objective 3: Increase the number of 5-year-olds achieving a good level of development to 80% by the time they reach school-age by 2028

In Wokingham we are focused on narrowing the gap between disadvantaged groups and our average GLD (77%), which is well above national averages

Longer Term - Whilst initial DfE focus is on early years, we will be developing a much wider range of support services– coverage for 0-18yrs up to 25 for those with SEND

Family Hub – What will the offer look like for families of children with SEND?

- We are planning for every Family Hub to provide an inclusive service to support a wide range of needs
- In December the DfE announced that there will be additional funding for a dedicated SEND practitioner in every hub
- Guidance and funding for this offer remains TBC but we are looking forward to being able to develop this support offer (we will consult with partners as to the model)
- Wokingham Borough Council is also exploring the potential to develop a SEND Specialist Family Hub to co-locate key services and to underpin our offer across the whole Borough – this is at an early stage, but details will follow

Family Hubs Parent Support Offer – Exploring Options

- We are planning to roll-out our evidence-based parent support offer across the borough
- We want to develop a broad a diverse range of support that meets a range of different needs
- We have had feedback that one of our current programmes – Triple P – does **not** meet the parent support needs of neurodiverse children
- We are working with a range of partners including SEND Voices to look at the available options (this will take into account existing support – including ASSIST and Parenting Special Children)
- There is a specific module of Triple P called **Stepping Stones** which is designed to better meet the needs of neuro-diverse children and their parents
- We are planning to test out Stepping Stones to gather feedback and see whether parents feel it is suitable – we will be planning this in partnership with SEND Voices in the coming weeks
- This will help us decide which programmes to deliver in future

Post 16 Hub Update

- The Post-16 Hub will provide local specialist provision, reducing reliance on out-of-area placements. Three curriculum pathways have been developed with a focus on supported internships and meaningful opportunities for work experience (eg through the onsite café)
- Tenders have been submitted by local education providers interested in operating the Post-16 Hub. A formal contract award decision will be made by the Council Executive in March 2026.
- 12 places will be available from September 2026, and the Post-16 Panel will shortly begin identifying pupils to consult with the selected provider.
- Engagement with families and schools will continue throughout 2026 to ensure a smooth transition for the first cohort.
- Places will increase to 40 over a three-year period, following a phased growth plan.
- A contractor has been appointed to deliver the renovation works, which are due to start imminently and are on track to support opening in September 2026.
- The project remains within the agreed timeline and budget parameters.