

## The Families First Programme- Context

This programme is designed to fund activities that support families with children to navigate a wide range of parenting issues at the earliest possible opportunity. The programme aims to enable parents, and the young people themselves, to build trusting relationships with providers that build confidence and enable early intervention to reduce the need for children and families being referred to statutory services or being taken in to care.

This programme will be delivered in partnership with Cheshire West and Cheshire Council and partner funders, and will fund work supporting parents and families initially across four pilot areas, with the aim to roll out more widely as the programme progresses:

- Ellesmere Port (particularly around Stanlaw Abbey and Portside Children's Centres footprints);
- Chester (particularly around Blacon and Chester Victoria Children's Centres footprints);
- Winsford (particularly around Over Children's Centre footprint); and
- Northwich (particularly around Victoria Road and Weaverham Children's Centres footprints).

## What will the programme focus on?

This programme will fund projects delivering tailored, individualised parenting support and skills development through sessions delivered in the family home. There will be the opportunity to support families with children of any age between 0-19 years old, or up to 25 for children with additional needs. However, these grants will have a key focus on children aged 11-16 and will require the provider to support young people and their families during key transitional phases.

One of the areas of innovation within this programme is developing the confidence and skills of parents to support young people at this key stage in their development.

Parenting skills could be covered by a broad range of outcomes, including (but not limited to):

- Building positive relationships and trust;
- Improving communication;
- Reducing conflict;
- Setting and maintaining boundaries;
- Building structures and routines potentially including developing interests;
- Prevention and early intervention strategies to navigate challenges, build resilience and care for the mental wellbeing of parents and children;
- Role modelling; and
- Improving home conditions (to ensure a house is suitable and safe for children to live there).

Families will self-refer. It is appreciated that work will need to be done by successful providers to encourage self-referrals and build trust. Navigators in the Early Help Service that are working in the four pilot areas will also support referrals into the service.

As part of these early interventions, organisations will be required to signpost their families on to statutory services, where appropriate and necessary. If a provider feels there may be more significant support needs, they can talk to the family about a Team Around the Family (TAF) and who might be best placed to support with this. The support can also act as a precursor to the family needing more formal parenting or groupwork programmes. However, parents may then return to their 'Families First' provider for future support, when safe and appropriate to do so.

## How will it achieve this?

Grants will initially be for up to **three years**, with a potential for the work to be extended for a further year. We recognise that there may need to be a period of mobilisation alongside an opportunity to pilot and evaluate interventions and develop to ensure the full offer across the whole age range.

Funded work will be tailored, individualised support taking place **primarily in the family home**. The work will predominantly focus on early intervention in the home in those critical moments a family requires support, but could include wraparound support, where this is deemed appropriate and is not available elsewhere/through other funded programmes. Such wraparound support could include:

- Digital/online sessions – However, a digital offer to enhance delivery may be used but only after face-to-face sessions have been utilised to build trusting relationships and will be for the purpose of underpinning face-to-face contact;
- School liaison work;
- Diversionary activities which build skills or resilience;
- Parental/Carer respite activities;
- Family activities which support positive mental health and family bonding.

Innovation is welcomed and it is recognised that, in a tailored programme of support, different needs and solutions may present themselves.

## What can organisations apply for?

Applicants can apply for a maximum of £75,000 per pilot area, in the first year (including any funding required for mobilisation), £100,000 in year two, and £125,000 in year three, recognising the ambition to expand the programme (in terms of volume and geographic area) as the programme progresses. However, providers will need to evidence positive outcomes and ongoing development to successfully expand the provision beyond the initial pilot area. In order to ensure capacity to deliver, each applicant can apply to lead this work in a maximum of TWO of the pilot areas; however, we will accept additional applications which name them as a non-lead partner in other areas.

Applications should outline how the organisation plans to deliver early intervention work with parents, carers, and their families, using a “Think Family” approach, whereby in their day-to-day roles, all practitioners (whether working with adults or children) are identifying, considering and appropriately responding to the needs of all family members.

A maximum of one grant will be awarded per pilot area (maximum of four grants in total). It is recognised that not all applicants may be able to deliver the entire range of service required and/or may feel that combining capacity with partner organisations may be beneficial. Collaboration is therefore encouraged and an applicant workshop will be held at Chester Bluecoat Building on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 to facilitate this. If you would like to attend, please email [office@cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk](mailto:office@cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk) providing your name, job title and organisation. Please note that places are currently limited to one representative per organisation.

Any partnership or consortium-based applications will be asked to provide a memorandum of understanding or other agreement to evidence partnership working, before funding is released.

Applicants can apply for operational costs directly related to the delivery of parenting support services, including staffing, training, and resources. We also recognise that some applicants may

require a mobilisation period in the first year of the grant, and we welcome applications which factor these costs in.

## Who can apply?

We will accept applications from any organisation which:

- has the ability to work with Children and Young People and their families who live in the following areas:
  - Ellesmere Port
  - Chester
  - Winsford
  - Northwich
- meets our [general eligibility criteria](#) and [grantmaking principles](#), including the demonstration of rigorous safeguarding processes and procedures.
- has a track record of working with families and/or carers.
- can demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion.
- has robust data management systems, combined with a thorough application of data protection protocols.
- can demonstrate a clear Theory of Change as part of their application.

We are especially keen to receive applications from organisations who:

- have clear plans and capacity to perform targeted outreach for the work, generating self-referrals to introduce families to the service. Referrals may also come from Cheshire West & Chester Council, particularly Navigators in the Early Help Service, who would encourage families to contact 'Families First' programme providers, where appropriate.
- Can demonstrate the capacity to support families with disabled, SEN, and neurodiverse children and young people. This includes children who have not yet had a diagnosis.
- Can demonstrate a highly qualified team with significant experience and track record of delivery in this area.

## Timeline

The programme will open for applications on Monday 23rd September, with a deadline for submissions of Sunday 10th November.

An applicant workshop will be held at Chester Bluecoat Building on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 to facilitate this. If you would like to attend, please email [office@cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk](mailto:office@cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk) providing your name, job title and organisation. Please note that places are currently limited to one representative per organisation.

Decisions will be communicated in mid-December 2024.

If successful, funded organisations will be expected to:

- Provide reports on the outcomes and impact of their services in an annual report and annual service review.
- Provide quarterly monitoring reports, focussing on the outcomes of their delivery, rather than a focus on outputs. We want to see evidence of a difference being made for children, young people and their families.

- Participate in quarterly programme meetings with other funded organisations to review programme performance, identify and deal with issues and share best practice.
- Work collaboratively with schools, the local authority, and other stakeholders to ensure effective service delivery.

## Process

Applications will be made via the [Cheshire Community Foundation](#) website.