

Health Visiting Partnership Public Consultation

*(Consultation on the proposal to enter into a
Section 75 Agreement for the 0-5 Health Visiting
Service)*

(14th August – 30th September 2023)

0-5 Public Health Nursing (Health Visiting)

Overview

We want to hear your views on a proposal to enter into a partnership agreement (known as a section 75 agreement) for the delivery of the 0-5 Public Health Nursing Service (Health Visiting)

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and South Warwickshire University Foundation Trust (SWFT) are consulting on a proposal to enter into a formal partnership arrangement around the future delivery of the 0-5 Public Health Nursing Service (Health Visiting). The two organisations want to hear views and feedback on this proposal which aims to link health visiting services more closely with other services that support the health of children, young people and their families in Warwickshire.

This consultation informs people of the reasons for this proposal and the benefits we think the proposed approach offers in meeting the health and wellbeing needs of families and children. We want to ensure we have considered a range of views on the proposal and understand how people feel it may impact them. What the people of Warwickshire tell us during this consultation will inform our future delivery approach and take into account any unanticipated effects of the proposed arrangement.

This consultation is open to anyone who wishes to comment on the proposed arrangements, including people who live in Warwickshire, people who use the service, carers and family members, professionals, our partners, providers and other stakeholders.

Please read the information below to find out more. In addition, we have provided links to other supporting information which may assist with your consideration of the proposal. This includes **Frequently Asked Questions** which we will keep updated.

Background

As part of the local authority's public health duties, Warwickshire County Council currently pays South Warwickshire University Foundation Trust through the [Public Health Grant](#) to deliver the Health Visiting service. The service supports families and children under 5 in ensuring good health and wellbeing in the crucial first years of life.

The service delivers the **Healthy Child Programme** in Warwickshire offering every family a programme of screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices.

The service also includes:

- **Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)**, a home visiting parenting programme for first-time young mums (17 and under) and mums 18-19 with additional needs until the child is 2 years of age.
- **Infant Feeding Service**: Supports and promotes breastfeeding and safe formula feeding practices in line with UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI). They work closely with the health visiting teams to make breastfeeding the norm, enable every child to have the best start in life, and to ensure a supportive environment in which all parents make a positive choice and are enabled to breastfeed for longer. It is an early intervention service from post-natal up to baby being 8 weeks old. The service covers Nuneaton & Bedworth, North Warwickshire and Rugby.
- **Stop Smoking in Pregnancy Service** which supports pregnant mothers in quitting smoking.
- **Healthy Lifestyles Healthy Families** programme supporting families with infants 0-5 with advice, information and guidance around healthy lifestyles.

What is the Healthy Child Programme?

The 0-5 Healthy Child Programme is the early intervention and prevention public health programme at the centre of supporting infants and families and is delivered by the Health Visiting Service. The programme aims to:

- Protect children from serious disease, through screening tests and immunisations.
- Support parents, carers or guardians in keeping children healthy and safe and reaching their full potential.
- Help parents, carers or guardians develop and sustain a strong bond with children.
- Ensure children are prepared for and supported in all childcare, early years and education settings and are supported to be ready to learn at 2 and ready for school by 5 years old.
- Provide developmental reviews for the baby at key early life stages – (Antenatal check, New Birth Visit, 6-8 Week Review, 12 month review and a 2-2.5 year review)
- Information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices.
- Provide breastfeeding support, advice and information.
- Support parent-infant mental health through, for example, the specialist parent-infant mental health visitors in Warwickshire.

What is the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)?

The Family Nurse Partnership is an intensive home visiting programme for first time young mums and dads. Mothers enrol in the programme early in their pregnancy and receive visits from a family nurse on a frequent basis to:

- Have a healthy pregnancy.
- Improve their child's health, development and readiness to learn at school.

- Help parents reach their goals and aspirations by helping parents plan for their own and their baby's future.

Our current contractual arrangements end on 31st March 2024 and therefore the Council has an opportunity to review the arrangements. This is an opportunity to see how we can best meet families' needs flexibly and explore different options. We have identified and weighed up different options and feel a partnership approach with the current provider offers the most benefits and meets the needs that families using the service have told us they want. This can ultimately improve access to services so that families and children receive the right support at the right time from the right service.

We think we need to consider a different kind of arrangement, (an agreement under Section 75) that will allow for partnership working, bringing a mix of key partners that support families and children together to develop integrated solutions for the delivery of the Health Visiting Service.

The proposed option of entering into a Section 75 agreement requires the Council and the proposed partner (SWFT) to first consult jointly with anyone that may be affected by this arrangement.

What is a Section 75 Partnership Agreement

A Section 75 Agreement is a legal agreement under the NHS Services Act 2006 between a local authority (in this case Warwickshire County Council) and a National Health Service Body the local (in this case South Warwickshire University Foundation Trust). It is a way of allowing local authorities and health bodies to work together to provide and monitor services jointly in partnership to ensure they are delivering the best outcomes.

Why are we proposing to change the service arrangements?

There are 4 main reasons why we are proposing to enter into a Section 75 agreement.

1. The current contract ends in March 2024. This means that we need to plan and decide on the future arrangements for the provision of the service now.
2. Engagement with families and healthcare professionals consistently tells us they want more joined up services that are easy to access and which work with other services that may be supporting the family.
3. A Section 75 agreement provides a mechanism by which we can achieve integrated services for families. It enables us to do this by providing a legal basis to work closer and more collaboratively with the local healthcare sector. At present Warwickshire County Council is responsible for the commissioning of the service. This agreement enables SWFT to take up this role and therefore align more with other services your local NHS provides for infants and children.
4. There is a rising level of needs for children 0-5 emotionally, socially and physically and we need to be innovative in how we respond to ensure every child can have the best start in life.

What do we mean by 'integration'?

What: The bringing together of two or more services so that they can combine their strengths, skills, resources and practices to benefit people who use a service. Working closely alongside partners who also provide similar support to ensure clarity in purpose and approach.

With whom: For this service this could mean: Other NHS services in addition to Health Visiting such as Speech and Language Therapy, Midwifery, and teams within Early Help - those services which may also support families during the first years of a child's life.

How: Services having more accessible channels of communication between each other, working together to discuss families' specific needs and identifying who can deliver the most appropriate support.

Why: Families and health visiting staff have told us they value joined-up working practices, so that ultimately families can access the right support at the right time and therefore providing the best start in life for children. As the population grows and greater demands and needs are arising, a system of services that speak as one voice, enables us to respond more effectively. **Alone the health visiting service can only do so much, together we can do a lot more.**

How did we develop this proposal?

We arrived at this proposal through considering several important factors, these were:

1. Survey engagement results with parents and families in Warwickshire
2. Information from focus groups and workshops with healthcare professionals
3. Warwickshire's [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) and our three key priorities including helping children and young people have the best start in life.
4. A [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for 0-5s](#) in Warwickshire
5. Considering the government's advice in the [White Paper on Innovation and Integration](#) for these types of services to best meet outcomes.
6. Researching and understanding best practice in other areas who have had similar circumstances and undertaken such an agreement.

These pieces of information were used to weigh up the positive and negatives of the options available to us. Our assessment has led us to believe that this approach best meets what each of these told us.

Feedback from families using the Health Visiting service has consistently told us they want an integrated service, that works closely with other services to support families (within both the NHS and the community). Families want to be able to navigate services easily and see the right service at the right time. Families want to easily understand who does what and where to go for the support they need without any obstacles. Equally health visitors informed us of the importance of joining up services and how critical communication between teams was in ensuring the health, safeguarding and wellbeing of children and families.

We have provided a full summary of these findings in the supporting documents.

Integration has the potential to enable greater information and resource sharing between midwives, health visiting, and other staff so transitions between services are seamless and

timely for families and children. We recognise it takes a range of services supporting the family to ensure good health and wellbeing.

Collaborative working practices including (but not limited to) early help, family support workers, children and family centres, primary care and the voluntary and community sector is critical to ensuring children have the best start in life. Building a team around children and families can ensure the right support at the right time so that families only have to tell their story as many times as they choose.

In June 2022, a Needs Assessment was published which highlighted integration between health visiting and early help, improving access for families and finding innovative ways to respond to the rising complexity of needs presented.

We have also consulted with other regional and national councils on the models of current support for families and 0-5 children, sharing what works best and lessons learnt. The findings supported the development of the options available.

The options available to the council were then identified and weighed up as to their pros and cons and how they would best meet these needs. These options are:

1. A Section 75 with SWFT who currently provide the health visiting service. This was deemed as the recommended option to meet family's needs whilst ensuring continuity of service for families.
2. Asking providers including SWFT and others who may be able to provide such a service to put forward their proposals for how they would deliver the service and the Council would then evaluate which best meets their criteria (this is usually done and is a process called 'tendering'). This option was discounted due to not directly providing the conditions to ensure joined up, cohesive working practice across NHS services and other partners in the area. Moreover, there was also the potential that this could impact on provision in the short-term as it would take time to build and transition to a service which may or may not be provided by the NHS. We recognise there are advantages of SWFT having the networks, and local intelligence to support families best.
3. The third option considered was Warwickshire County Council directly providing the service. This was discounted as we recognise SWFT as an NHS Trust have a strong reputation, resources and range of clinical professionals to best meet a range of emotional, physical and social needs of the family.

A further detailed explanation of what options were considered and their relative advantages/disadvantages is provided in the supporting documents.

A Shared Vision

Warwickshire County Council and South Warwickshire University Foundation Trust are and have been committed to delivering high quality public health services and ensuring that those services are provided in conjunction with wider NHS services. There have been considerable challenges faced by the health sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,

leading to changes in the way care is received. At the same time this meant collaborative working practices became more challenging and resulted in a single view of a family. Our vision of providing the best start in life for children requires a greater focus on integration, ensuring that services are easy to access and well-co-ordinated for the people who use them. The Council and NHS Trust teams currently involved in managing and delivering this service, work very closely together to design, plan and monitor them.

The proposed Partnership Agreement (known as a “Section 75 Partnership Agreement”) would provide us with a mechanism to formalise arrangements to support improved flexibility and greater efficiency, better integration and, in turn, improve outcomes for children, young people and families. It also puts in place a mechanism for the greater integration of services with those provided by the NHS Trust for children. For example, in addition to delivering the Health Visiting Service in Warwickshire, SWFT also provide: Community Paediatrics, Occupational therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and the Warwickshire Pre-School Autism Service. Further information can be found here: <https://www.swft.nhs.uk/our-services>

Why do we need to put a formal Section 75 agreement in place?

The Section 75 agreement provides the legal basis and flexibility for the bringing together of resources in support of our overall integration plans. This will enable the strategic and more efficient commissioning of locally-tailored health services and ultimately delivering better outcomes for families.

How will this impact me? What difference will a Section 75 agreement make to those who use services.

- There will be no change in services provided specifically as a result of the proposed Section 75 agreement. The agreement will better enable both partners to continue to work together to improve the commissioning and delivery of services.
- The service will not change how it operates in any material way, families will continue to receive their mandated contacts, however the partnership approach will offer a more joined up pathway with a benefit in terms of access to services.

Potential benefits include:

- Stability in support – this option ensures continuity of service, meaning little disruption to the support you currently or may receive.
- More seamless care between the current services and access to the right services at the right time
- A greater level of personalised support to your level of need
- Earlier identification of support needs, family challenges and connecting to relevant support.
- Clearer understanding and defined purpose of what and how health visiting can help and what other services in the early years of a child’s life can do.
- Ability to refer on as needs for more specialist support such as mental health support, communication and other more specialist needs arise.

- A cohesive united offer of support across 0-5 years for the infant and family.

The service will not be interrupted in any way, families and children who use the service do not need to do anything or re-register for support.

Supporting Information

We have provided the following supporting documents to help you consider and respond to this consultation:

- A bitesize summary of the consultation.
- Frequently Asked Questions – These will be updated to reflect any questions received during the consultation.
- Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Options considered.
- Benefits of the proposed approach.
- A summary of our past engagement with families and healthcare professionals.
- Glossary – what do some of the terms used mean.

How to take part

You can put forward your views either individually or as part of a group in the following ways:

- Complete our online survey on www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask
- You can request a paper copy or the survey in an alternative format or language by email at peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk or by telephone (01926 410410)
- You can also respond directly in writing to: Warwickshire County Council, Health Visiting Consultation, Shire Hall, Market Place, Warwick, CV34 4RL or by email: peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk

Help and advice about the consultation

If you have any queries or need any help or advice about the consultation please email peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk or telephone Warwickshire County Council Customer Service Centre on 01926 410410 and they will direct you to the Family Wellbeing team for support.

Please also ring the above number or email if you require help completing the survey or would like the survey in another format.

Closing date

The consultation will close on Saturday 30th September

What will happen after the consultation

We will collate all the consultation responses and use the information provided to inform the future of support services in Warwickshire.

Information will be communicated via the Ask Warwickshire home page early in 2024 and if agreed the proposal will be implemented from April 1st 2024.