



HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 25th SEPTEMBER 2025

REPORT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

FAMILIES FIRST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Board members with an overview of the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP).
2. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to commit support to the programme which aligns with key priorities of the Board. This includes the focus on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the potential for positive impact on health inequalities through improved multi-disciplinary working within communities, and potential to reduce demand on high-cost acute services.

Recommendation

3. The recommendations for the Board are:
 - a) To note the content of the report and share within agencies;
 - b) To participate in partnership briefings and engagement events to support partnership collaboration;
 - c) For agencies to consider implications for practice, process, future commissioning.

Policy Framework and Previous Decision

4. The Families First Partnership Programme follows on from the Department for Education's published strategy for reforming children's social care, "Stable Homes, Built on Love". This was followed up with the 2024 policy guide, "Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive", and most recent publication, "Families First Partnership Programme Guide - Delivery expectations for safeguarding partners in England, March 2025". The programme complements existing statutory guidance including Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and the Children's Social Care National Framework. Additionally, elements of the programme, including a stronger safeguarding role for educators, and a statutory offer of family group decision making, are incorporated in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill currently making its way through parliament.

Background

5. The FFFP is the delivery mechanism for the Government's reform of children's social care services. It has a particular focus on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and integrated delivery of targeted early help, ensuring families and their networks are at the centre of finding solutions to keep children safe at home.
6. Programme delivery has been underway since July 2025 with the establishment of a Reforms Implementation Board (RIB). This is a partnership Board chaired by the Director of Children and Family services at Leicestershire County Council and attended by Police, Health, (ICB, LPT, Public Health) Education, Adult Social Care, and Children's Social Care. The purpose of the RIB is to provide strategic direction and decision making to guide the development and implementation of the Reforms Programme. A Programme Lead and Design Lead are in post at the County Council, and a Police Officer and designated Health Professional have been seconded to the programme team. Health commissioners and providers have formed a programme oversight group to ensure all relevant sectors within health are informed and involved.
7. The RIB has agreed a vision for the programme:

"In Leicestershire we are working together with partner agencies to consider the National Reforms for Children's services. We are committed to continue to work together to maintain and strengthen services that put your needs first, so you (our children, families and carers in Leicestershire) are supported to feel safe, listened to and cared for. We will support you to build stronger networks around you so that you can grow, succeed and feel a real sense of belonging and safety"
8. Supported by the Design Lead, the programme is currently organised around three Change Groups covering:
 - a. Family Help;
 - b. Family Networks;
 - c. Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams.

These groups are made up of practitioners and managers from across children's social care, targeted early help, education and include the seconded police and health representatives. These groups are mapping the expectations of the programme and government focus against current practice, identifying areas which will require development and change, alongside making best use of available data and incorporating the voice of children, young people and families to achieve an informed understanding of the current state. Once satisfied that the discovery phase is complete, they will move on to design.

Family Help Change Group

9. The Family Help Change Group has a focus on ensuring join up between Targeted Early Help and Child in Need services, the development of a single assessment, and ensuring the Team Around the Family includes relevant multi-agency partners. Additionally, this group is considering the 'front door' arrangements for Children's Services, as well as workforce development needs.
10. Considerable progress had already been made within Children's Services with a Family Help model of service delivery being implemented in February 2024 following a period of piloting the approach in one area of the county. This brought together social work teams with targeted early help to form an integrated team able to provide a more seamless service for families who may move from one area of the service to another. Alternatively qualified staff (i.e., not social work qualified) are supported to deliver Child in Need plans with the professional oversight of experienced social work qualified 'Senior Oversight Practitioners'. This means that where families need to step from early help to Child in Need, where it is appropriate to do so, the same worker may continue to provide support with additional social work oversight in place. This continuity of worker means that families do not have to re-tell their story and future work can build on what has already been provided. Social Workers within the team case-hold any families where it is deemed there is higher risk or potential to escalate. These teams are co-located within the 21 Family Hubs around the county.
11. Feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive about the new ways of working, and staff in the new service are similarly positive about being in more integrated teams.
12. The Family Help service has however recognised the need for more consistency in multi-agency arrangements for Team Around the Family approaches within Child in Need.

Family Networks Change Group

13. Whilst the government has only mandated Family Group Decision Making before initiating care proceedings, our Leicestershire approach is to embrace a wider offer of Family Network Meetings from the earliest possible stage. This supports a family strengths-based model, recognising the role that extended family, friends and the local community have to play in keeping children safe and helping families to thrive. The Family Networks Change Group is considering how family networks can be further embedded in practice from the point of earliest intervention.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Team Change Group

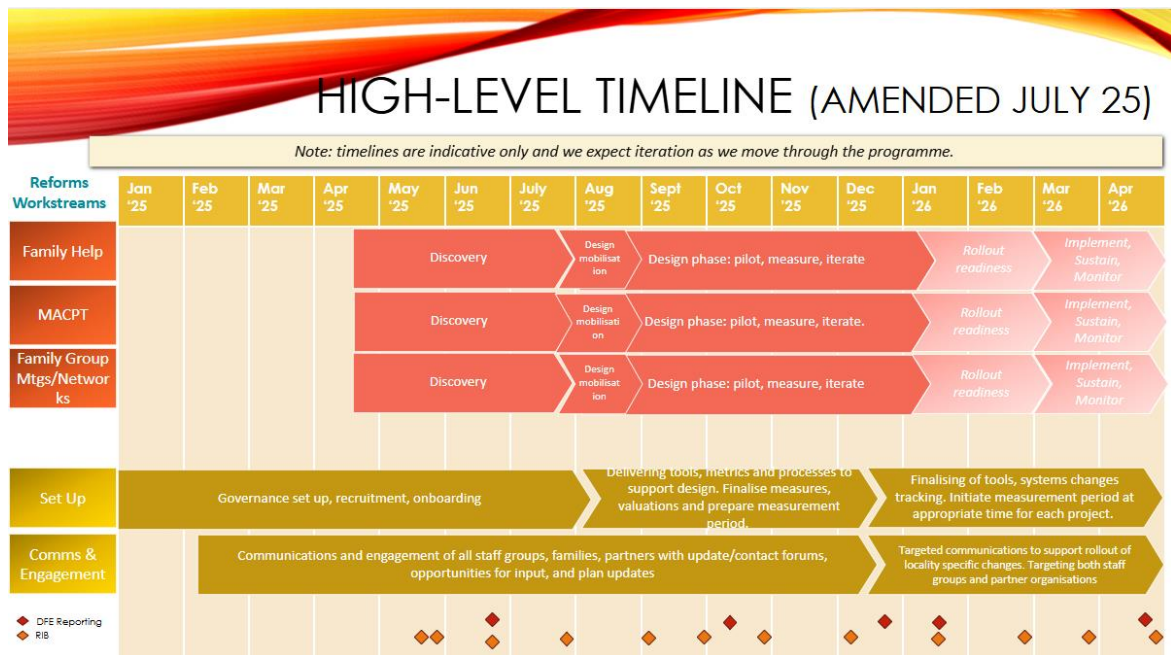
14. The remit of the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team is to ensure there is an effective multi-agency child protection system where the right decisions are made at the right time for children to keep them safe. The Change Group is exploring current processes and procedures, identifying areas of strength as well as 'pinch points' in the system. Whilst there is considerable good practice and effective multi-agency working in evidence, for example in the arena of child exploitation and harm outside the home, there is more to be done to achieve consistent and robust responses across the partnership. This Change Group has a current focus on the role of the Child Protection Lead Practitioner which is a new role identified within DfE guidance.

Additional Workstreams

15. Alongside the Change Groups, additional workstreams are considering communications, system changes, partner engagement and the participation of children, young people and families. A stakeholder mapping exercise has informed a stakeholder engagement plan which makes provision for ensuring that all key stakeholders are kept informed and engaged with the programme.
16. In addition to county focused meetings, regular meetings are taking place between strategic and operational leads from Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Authorities. This is to ensure developments are aligned across the Sub Region.

Timeline and next steps

17. As the programme progresses, a range of options will be presented for each workstream to the Reform Implementation Board for consideration.
18. The RIB meets monthly, receiving highlight reports from each of the change work streams. The Board provides a level of control and oversight for the Reforms programme, giving assurance to the corporate management team, elected members and partners around achieving greater outcomes for children and families, underpinned by stronger partnership working
19. The Board is responsible for receiving, reviewing, and monitoring all identified risks and issues, ensuring remedial measures/mitigation are identified and realised. The Board is the decision maker for recommendations made by the Change Groups.
20. The high-level timeline is included for your information.



Consultation/Patient and Public Involvement

21. As referenced above, a stakeholder engagement plan has been devised, and this includes provision for the involvement of children, young people, and families throughout this programme.

Resource Implications

22. Transformation grant funding via the DfE is in place until 2028. It is highly likely the resource implications of this programme will require some reconfiguration of how existing resources are deployed.

Timetable for Decisions

23. None required

Background papers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love/guide-for-children-and-young-people-stable-homes-built-on-love>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-helping-families-thrive>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-first-partnership-programme>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

n/a

Officer to contact

Ellie Lowe

Head of Service, Families First Partnership Programme

Telephone: 0116 3056511

Email: ellie.lowe@leics.gov.uk

Relevant Impact Assessments**Equality Implications**

24. It will be the responsibility of each workstream to consider the impact of any change on children and families, particularly those with protected characteristics; internal processes will be followed for completion of EIAs for the design options.

Human Rights Implications

25. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications and Environmental Implications

26. The police are a key partner, and an officer has been identified to contribute to design and ensure the police have a voice regarding the impact on communities.

Partnership Working and associated issues

27. The Families First Partnership Programme will have a significant impact on partnership working in the safeguarding arena but also more generally across the delivery of support to families from early intervention and beyond. Multi-Agency Child Protection arrangements are a significant part of the programme and there are several issues which will be considered, not limited to: workforce configuration and multi-disciplinary teams, workforce development, information sharing and case management systems, resource allocation.

Risk Assessment

28. As noted above, the Reforms Implementation Board meets monthly, receiving highlight reports from each of the change work streams. The Board provides a level of control and oversight for the Reforms programme, giving assurance to the corporate management team, elected members and partners around achieving greater outcomes for children and families, underpinned by stronger partnership working.
29. The Board is responsible for receiving, reviewing, and monitoring all identified risks and issues, ensuring remedial measures are/mitigation is identified and realised.

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