

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Families First Partnership Programme

Responsible Officer

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Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

[Q05 ResponsibleHeadOfService]

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

Yes

Project/Programme

Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Children Young People and Education

Responsible Service

Integrated Children's Services

Responsible Head of Service

Ingrid Crisan - CY EHPS (Early Help and Preventative Services)

Responsible Director

Sarah Hammond - CY EHPS (Early Help and Preventative Services)

Aims and Objectives

With a focus on strengthening multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and information sharing processes, the Families First Partnership

programme aims to establish targeted, multi-disciplinary Family Help services for children and families eligible for receiving targeted early help and/or Child in Need services. The introduction of expert-led, dedicated Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs), including Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs) and an expanded parental support offer will also reinforce this function within Child Protection processes. The programme also aims to strengthen Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) practices, incorporating the voices of children and families throughout their journey.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA):

This EQIA is intended to assess the potential impact of our decisions on persons with different protected characteristics. In particular, this EQIA has been prepared to help us to have regard to the need to: (i) eliminate discrimination; (ii) advance equality of opportunity; and (iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, in the exercise of our public functions. These issues are relevant considerations to be taken into account whenever a new policy, function, or system change is being proposed in the exercise of our public functions. This EQIA is also intended to evidence that these considerations have in fact been taken into account, and the weight given to them as part of our decision-making process.

Case for change :

The Families First Partnership programme was developed in response to recommendations from: The Independent Review of Children's Social Care and The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report on child protection in England. These reforms bring a significant shift and refocus on how we help, protect and support children and families. The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme has been backed by over £500 million of funding for the 2025/26 financial year. This investment is intended to support local authorities and their partners to design and implement end-to-end system reform focused on providing effective early help, family support and child protection services. Kent County Council's allocation of £6,759,810 from the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant 2025/2026 has already been confirmed from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This funding provides a critical opportunity to implement the Families First transformation model, which aligns with national reform priorities and KCC's strategic objectives for children's services.

Summary of proposals:

A successful Families First programme in Kent will deliver a fully integrated, family-centred system of support for children aged 0-18 or 0-25 for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in line with the National Children's Social Care Framework. Built on strong multi-agency collaboration and shared accountability, the programme will ensure that families receive and access the right help at the right time from trusted practitioners who understand their story and provide consistent guidance throughout their journey. Families will only need to tell their story once. A dedicated Lead Practitioner will remain involved throughout, advocating for the family and coordinating the help they need. Practitioners will use a shared case management system with a single unique identifier, enabling more responsive, personalised, and inclusive services.

This transformation will ensure services are responsive to individual needs and inclusive of the wider support network, with meetings held in accessible and family-preferred venues. Statutory services will become a trusted system that has the best interest of the child at the centre of its work. The stigma often associated with statutory services will be replaced by trust, with families perceiving services as support rather than threat. Family Hubs will serve as an inclusive and accessible community anchors, offering integrated universal and targeted services that span across

early help to social care and youth justice, eliminating silos and ensuring smoother transitions as needs change.

There will be a shift in our workforce, with roles evolving to empower and equip alternatively qualified practitioners to assess and respond to the needs of children and families. The introduction of Family Help Lead Practitioners marks a move away from rigid role definitions, instead recognising and valuing a diverse range of skills and experiences. This approach aims to reduce staff turnover, strengthen relationships with families, and enhance the effectiveness of multi-agency collaboration. Kent's strong foundation of partnership working and shared commitment to reform provides a solid platform for change. This transformation will be co-designed with partners, placing the voices of children and families at the heart of the process. By engaging early and listening throughout, we will shift the system towards prevention, consistency, and improved outcomes, ensuring families stay together, thrive, and feel supported.

The forthcoming changes to the delivery of Children's Services will be mandated through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament. All Local Authorities will be required to implement these reforms. Formally accepting the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant for 2025/2026, and delegating authority to the Director of Children's Services to allocate the funding, aligns with Priority 4: New Models of Care and Support in Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022–2026, as well as the Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy, which aims to alleviate financial pressures. The funding will support the sustainable and consistent implementation of the adopted Families First model across Kent. It is not anticipated to place additional pressure on existing revenue or capital budgets. Further details will be outlined in the decision report and the accompanying record of decision, which will be published at the time the decision is made.

The Director of Children's Services (DCS) at KCC has statutory duties outlined in Section 18 of the Children Act 2004. These duties involve ensuring the delivery of local authority social care functions for children and young people. This includes, but is not limited to, providing services that meet the needs of all children, youth, including the most vulnerable, and their families.

Summary of Options for Consideration:

Option 1: Do not accept Children's Social Care Prevention Grant 25/26

Should Kent County Council decline the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant for 2025/2026, it would need to identify alternative internal financial resources to support the transformation activity, thereby increasing financial pressure on the Council. If Option 1 is endorsed, the required changes to the delivery of Children Services will need to be funded within internal resources and will create budget pressures for the Council. As a result, there could be a detrimental impact on individuals with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, if services were cut to accommodate the need to fund the transformation activity from existing budgets.

Option 2: Accept the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant 25/26 and deliver the Families First Partnership Programme

The funding will be used to ensure the sustainable and consistent delivery of the adopted Families First model across Kent, in alignment with the national reforms set out on the forthcoming bill. As the programme enters its initial planning phase, the discovery stage will prioritise stakeholder engagement and the co-design of service reforms, ensuring that changes are informed by those with lived experience and professional insight.

The Families First Programme aims to improve access to the right help at the right time. The model aims to foster stronger, more trusting relationships by ensuring continuity with consistent practitioners, reducing the need for families to repeat their stories and creating a more seamless experience.

The programme aims to enhance the safety and protection of children and young people, especially those at risk of significant harm occurring outside the home. Additionally, there is a commitment to support better educational engagement through improved school attendance and earlier identification of need. Overall, this programme contributes to a more balanced children's social care system by shifting the focus from crisis intervention to prevention and early help.

The recommended course of action is to endorse Option 2: to accept the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant for 2025/2026. This option will enable the delivery of the Families First model and support the enhancement and continuous improvement of Children's Social Care Services.

Summary and justification:

It is anticipated that the Families First Partnership Programme will deliver a range of positive impacts, particularly through the enhancement of service delivery. These improvements will be driven by strengthened multi-agency and multi-disciplinary collaboration, greater inclusion of children's and families' voices, and the streamlining of case management systems. The Families First model is designed to reduce inequalities by co-designing future service models with children, young people, families, and partners, ensuring a collaborative and holistic approach to service redesign. The team are committed to developing services that are seamless, inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all families across Kent.

In light of these anticipated benefits, it is believed the proposals are justified. Any mitigation measures must be balanced against KCC's Best Value Duty, as outlined in Securing Kent's Future, to ensure that activities are sustainable and deliverable beyond the lifespan of the 2025/2026 Children's Social Care Prevention Grant.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

The Children's Social Care Prevention Grant for 2025/2026 has already been received by KCC from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

In March 2025, Department for Education (DfE) released the updated Guidance document for the Families First Programme. The Families First Programme has prioritised engagement through direct and regular meetings with key stakeholders and core partners across several strategic boards to gather qualitative insights that reflect the current realities and lived experiences of services and communities in Kent.

Since May 2025, the Families First Programme team has participated in key discussions with relevant stakeholders at the Strategic Reset Programme Board, the Early Help Partnership Board, Start for Life and Family Hubs Board, Families First Partnership Board and relevant governance groups supporting the development of the Families First Programme. These meetings and workshops have helped shaped understanding of key priorities and informed programme's direction and next steps.

We will continue to engage and make use of existing networks that represent the voices of children, young people and families across Kent.

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

The programme guidance outlines key elements that are expected to positively impact both service users and the broader children's social care system.

Acceptance of the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant for 2025/2026 is expected to generate positive impacts for service users, communities, and residents, particularly those with protected characteristics, through the following outcomes:

- An opportunity to participate in the co-design of new service models and co-production of a shared vision, ensures the voices of all marginalised groups are incorporated in improved services. Inclusivity is at the core of the proposed Families First Model, fostering trust among groups who many historically feel misunderstood by statutory services.
- Reduction of stigma (particularly against those from racially and ethnically diverse groups) when accessing support through reframing

intervention as ‘family help’. The programme offers a more personalised, strengths based approach and helps lower the fear of punitive statutory involvement.

- Emphasis on co-design ensures that individuals who have diverse needs have an input on how information is created and delivered, ensuring improved accessibility of support, reducing barriers to accessing services particularly for service users who may have struggled to navigate fragmented systems - i.e. those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, language barriers or physical disabilities.
- Early help and children statutory services often disproportionately support women (as primary care givers) and children with disabilities who meet the definition of children in need in the Children Act 1989. The supportive, integrated model may provide earlier relief, practical assistance and emotional support for this group.
- Emphasis on multi-agency and multidisciplinary working allows for more tailored support that considers the intersectionality of characteristics, based on an individual’s engagement with various services (e.g. disability, single-parents, ethnic minority, parenthood), enabling needs to be addressed holistically.
- The creation of Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs) ensures greater consistency for families by maintaining a single trusted professional relationship throughout their journey, reducing the need to retell their story.
- Improved navigation through the integrated front door model across agencies ensuring that families receive the right help quickly.

Acceptance of Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant 25/26 funding will have positive impacts for staff with protected characteristics as outlined below:

- The programme offers career development opportunities which may particularly benefit staff who experience barriers to career advancement (i.e. women, faith groups etc). This has additional benefits in diversifying, upskilling and strengthening the workforce.
- The introduction of a more seamless case management system and single unique identifier creates opportunities for staff to spend less time seeking information or navigating barriers to information sharing, thus potentially benefitting staff who require more flexible working patterns (i.e. parents, those with disabilities or health conditions), enabling them to work more efficiently.
- The programme will positively impact staff by providing clearer roles, stronger multi-agency collaboration, consistent supervision, and access to shared practice frameworks and training, empowering them to deliver more effective, relationship-based support to families

There are no anticipated negative impacts on individuals with protected characteristics from accepting the Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant 25/26 funding, beyond the initial identified risks associated with programme itself. It is suggested however, that a revised EQIA is completed in consideration of negative impacts following the development of a robust programme plan as outlined in Section A.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No

Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Applicable
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No

Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable