

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Christine Palmer, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services
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DECISION NUMBER:

25/00109

Executive Decision – Key

25/00109 – Best Start Family Hubs Programme Grant Award

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health (subject to receiving confirmation from Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) I agree to:

- a) **APPROVE**, the acceptance of the Best Start Family Hub Grant Award and the deployment of the grant funding in accordance with the grant conditions and the adopted service model;
 - (b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to agree the terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant agreements;
 - (c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health to deliver the requirements of the grant;
 - (d) **DELEGATE** authority of required expenditure to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to be managed in line with Council procurement rules;
 - (e) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.
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Reasons for decision:

Within the Spending Review in June 2025, the Chancellor announced continued investment in the Family Hub Programme. In July 2025, the government launched the Best Start in Life Strategy alongside their commitment to invest £500m for the national roll out of Best Start Family Hubs with a 3-year Programme starting on 1 April 2026.

On 7 November 2025, the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced that the provisional allocation for the Best Start in Life Programme for Kent County Council is £15,354,500, for financial years 2026-29. The DfE and DHSC will share guidance on the service and delivery expectations ahead of April 2026.

A series of Key Decisions by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services accepted the original transformation grant funding for Family Hubs and adopted our new Family Hub service model. A new Key Decision is required to adopt the Best Start Family Hub Model and to accept funding for the 3-year programme.

Financial implications:

The DfE and DHSC have announced that the provisional funding allocation for the Best Start in Life Programme for Kent County Council is £15,354,500, for financial years 2026-29. The distribution of Kent's funding allocation by Programme Strand is set out in the table below.

Strand	% ¹	2026-27 Allocation ²	2027-28 Allocation	2028-29 Allocation
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - programme	21%	£1,186,800	£970,500	£996,600
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - capital	5%	£237,400	£242,100	£246,800
Parenting support	23%	£1,165,500	£1,180,000	£1,231,800
Home learning environment support	17%	£839,600	£850,000	£887,400
Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships	24%	£1,237,900	£1,237,900	£1,237,900
Infant feeding support	10%	£504,400	£504,400	£504,400
Healthy babies offers and parent and carer panels	1%	£31,000	£31,000	£31,000
Total		£5,202,600	£5,015,900	£5,135,900

¹ The distribution of funding has been rounded to one decimal place. The sum of percentages across strands may not total 100% due to this rounding.

² The allocation for 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29 has been rounded to the nearest 100 pounds. The sum of the allocations across strands may not total the maximum funding allocation due to this rounding.

While the delivery expectations of the grant are not yet known, the Programme Strands are a continuation of the current Strands, with the exception of 'Healthy Babies Offer', which has changed from 'Start for Life Offer'.

It is expected that the funding will support the ongoing delivery of Family Hubs in a way that complements and enhances existing services. Based on current understanding, the grant is not expected to place additional pressure on the Council's revenue or capital budgets. Additionally, DfE has confirmed that Best Start funding may be used for delivery of existing services which could support a reduction in the base budget for Family Hubs. Therefore, Kent Children Services intends to use a portion of this funding for existing staff that are already delivering these services.

Legal implications:

There is statutory Guidance, namely 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' that outlines how organisations and individuals should collaborate to protect children from harm; Local Authorities are one of several key partners. The focus within the Guidance is on the "whole family approach" to provide support and help for families to stay together safely and to provide such help as soon as problems emerge to prevent them from escalating. The Guidance is statutory, meaning it must be followed unless there is good reason not to.

The statutory Guidance in the context of the Family Hub programme, aligns with duties under both the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004. The 1989 Act creates a family focus to support families with children in need. The Children Act 2004 established a duty for agencies, including local authorities, to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Equalities implications:

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed in March 2025 alongside [Decision 24/00124](#). An updated EqIA has been completed. There are no anticipated adverse impacts that are associated with the acceptance of the grant.

Data Protection implications:

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) not required for the acceptance of the Best Start Family Hub grant money.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision was considered and endorsed by the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 20 January 2026.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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Signed

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Date