

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Families First Partnership Programme

Responsible Officer

Kerry Turner - DCED PMO

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

Ingrid Crisan - CY OICS

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

Service Redesign

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Children Young People and Education

Responsible Service

CYPE

Responsible Head of Service

Ingrid Crisan - CY OICS

Responsible Director

Christine McInnes - CY CDO

Aims and Objectives

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

1. establish targeted, multi-disciplinary Family Help services for children and families eligible for receiving targeted Early Help and/or Child in Need services.
2. introduce dedicated Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs), including lead child protection practitioners (LCPPs) and expand the parental support offer within Child Protection processes.
3. strengthen Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) practices, incorporating the voices of children and families throughout their journey, and providing financial support for family networks throughout the reformed system.

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. Central government invested £853.1 million funding for the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme to support local authorities and their partners to deliver a system reform. 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 has received funding for the Families First Partnership Programme totalling £21.7 million for 2026/2027, £21.7 million for 2027/2028 and £18.5 million for 2028/2029. This ring-fenced grant replaces funding previously received separately in 2025-26, through the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant (£6.7m) and Children's & Families Grant (Supporting Families, £6m), along with additional new investment of £8.9m. 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, coordinate support and provide consistent presence throughout their journey. Children and families will only have to tell their story once and the lead practitioner will remain involved with them and will advocate for and secure the help that the parents need. Service design across the journey of support for a family Children and families will no longer need to repeat their stories multiple times, as practitioners will access a shared case management system with a single case summary and chronology. This transformation will make services more 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 seeing services as support rather than threat. There will be a shift in our workforce, roles will evolve to empower and equip alternatively qualified workers to assess and respond to the needs of children and families. The introduction of Family Help Lead Practitioners will reflect a shift from rigid role definitions to valuing a range of experience and skills. We aim to reduce staff turnover and support stronger relationships with families and more effective multi-agency working. Kent's strong foundation of collaboration and a shared commitment to reform means change will be driven with partners, with the voices of children and families at the forefront to create a system that works for children. By engaging early and listening throughout, the system will shift towards prevention, consistency, and better outcomes, ensuring families stay together, thrive, and feel supported.

The changes to how Children Services are delivered is mandated through the Children Wellbeing and Schools bill 29 April 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. Every Local Authority is expected to implement these reforms. Formally approving the implementation of the Families First for Children Target Operating Model design, aligns directly with Aim 3: Supporting Residents That Need Help in the Reforming Kent 2025-2028 Strategy, as it strengthens Kent's ability to embed a greater focus on prevention and early intervention and empower residents to take responsibility for improving their own outcomes. The grant directly supports our priorities to give families timely access to the right support so

they can stay together wherever possible, to invest in prevention where financially viable and to put in place practical measures that empower families to make sensible life choices.

The Corporate Director of Children's Services (DCS) at Kent County Council 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 Implement the Families First for Children Model.

Through the Children Wellbeing and Schools Bill (date TBC) and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the implementation of these reforms is a legal requirement. Failure to implement the model would leave the Council non-compliant with national practice expectations, and jeopardise future funding arrangements, leading to increased scrutiny from Central Government and potential formal improvement intervention. The financial implications of not implementing the Families First model include the potential loss of government funding and the requirement to repay any unspent funds. This would put pressure on the Council's base budget for children services. The Council would therefore be required to identify funding from within existing budgets to pay for Early Help Services and to implement the Families First model, which would place additional pressure on already constrained resources. Without the programme's intended investment in preventative services, demand is likely to escalate, increasing the risk of more costly care placements and higher levels of statutory intervention. This would further destabilise the children's services budget.

Option 2: Deploy the accepted funding for the Families First Programme and implement the First for Children Target Operating Model design - This is the preferred option.

Formal deployment of the funding for the implementation of the Target Operating Model for Families First for Children, enables the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations and meet the associated grant conditions:

- Strengthen the Family Help offer in collaboration with safeguarding partners, by bringing together local services under a combined, multi-disciplinary practice team and seamless offer. This means ensuring join up between the non-statutory (targeted early help) and statutory components of Family Help (Section 17 of Children Act 1989) to wrap support around the family at the earliest opportunity, streamline re-assessment points and ensure consistency of relationships by establishing the role of the Family Help Lead Practitioner.
- Work with safeguarding partners to deliver multi-agency child protection reform, including through establishing multi-agency child protection teams, with embedded social worker Lead Child Protection Practitioners, health, police and education practitioners and other agencies according to local needs.
- Incorporate systemic use of family group decision-making and family network support packages to make greater use of family networks. Where it is in the best interests of the child, local partnerships should ensure that the offer of family group decision-making is made as early as possible and repeat the offer as a child's needs and the support they receive changes.

Summary and justification:

Formal approval of the implementation of the Families First for Children Target Operating Model design enables the Council to achieve its statutory obligations, meet the Central Government imposed

implementation deadline of April 2027 and provide the right support and intervention for families at the right time. This also aligns with the Council's Reforming Kent 2025–2028 Strategy, as it strengthens Kent's ability to embed a greater focus on prevention and early intervention and empower residents to take responsibility for improving their own outcomes.

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?

Kent County Council has received funding for the Families First Partnership Programme totalling £21.7 million for 2026/2027, £21.7 million for 2027/2028 and £18.5 million for 2028/2029. This was accepted by the Corporate Director and a Record of Decision was produced in March 2026.

In March 2026, DfE released the updated Guidance document for the Families First Programme and the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, which underpin the Families First for Children reforms.

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 and co-design a model that meets both statutory obligations and is responsive to local arrangements.

Since May 2025, the Families First Programme team has participated in key discussions across boards including Strategic Reset Programme Board, the Families First Programme Multi-agency Forum, Kent safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership, Families First Partnership Programme Board and relevant governance groups supporting the development of the Families First Programme. These meetings and workshops have helped shaped the programme's design and implementation plan.

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

Yes

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 includes important elements that are expected to have a positive impact on both

service users and the wider children's social care system.

Implementation of the Families First for Children model will have positive impacts for service users/communities/residents with protected characteristics as outlined below:

- Strengthened expectations for practitioners (including multi-agency partners) to challenge racism and discrimination, improving fairness for families from global majority backgrounds and other protected groups.
- Stronger focus on anti-discriminatory, inclusive cultures, improving trust and access to support across protected characteristics.
- Enhanced assessment and planning for disabled children and their ,-agency support. - Clearer guidance on supporting unborn babies and infants, strengthening early safeguarding where pregnancy-related vulnerabilities exist.
- Multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams providing streamlined, whole-family support benefiting families with disabilities, long-term conditions or complex needs.
- Strengthened focus on domestic abuse, coercive control and teenage relationship abuse, enhancing protection particularly for women, girls and pregnant mothers.
- Family Help model promoting consistent practitioner relationships, reducing re-traumatisation for victims of abuse and those with protected characteristics. - Recognition of and tailored support for children in kinship care, extended family arrangements and care settings, improving outcomes for groups over-represented in care, including those from global majority backgrounds and disabled children.- Embedding Family Group Decision Making, empowering culturally diverse family networks to shape plans and reducing unnecessary statutory intervention.
- Earlier identification and seamless support through integrated Family Help pathways, reducing escalation for families who historically face barriers to accessing support.
- The integration of MACPTs with Family Help pathways strengthens whole-family, relational practice, improving trust and engagement among families who historically mistrust statutory services (e.g. families from global majority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+, young people, disabled carers).- Strengthened Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCP) roles results in faster, more consistent and culturally competent safeguarding responses, benefiting children and families with protected characteristics by reducing inconsistent or biased decision-making.

Implementation of the Families First for Children model will have positive impacts for staff with protected characteristics as outlined below:

- The model offers career development opportunities which may particularly benefit staff who experience barriers to career advancement (i.e. women, global majority backgrounds, 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.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

Increased scrutiny for some age groups (e.g. unborn babies, infants, teenagers) due to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 strengthened focus on early identification of harm, domestic abuse, online

harms and teenage relationship abuse.
Mitigating Actions for Age
Embed relational, trauma-informed practice.
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Ingrid Crisan
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
Yes
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Data sharing across agencies may raise privacy concerns for disabled parents or carers who rely on multiple services.
Mitigating actions for Disability
Ensure transparency about how information is used and stored under strengthened data-sharing expectations
Responsible Officer for Disability
Ingrid Crisan
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Heightened safeguarding focus on domestic abuse and coercive control may lead to increased service intervention for women, who are statistically overrepresented in victim groups.
Mitigating actions for Sex
Promote consistent use of Family Help plans to ensure proportionate rather than punitive intervention.
Responsible Officer for Sex
Responsible Officer for Sex
Ingrid Crisan
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Yes
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Multi-agency data sharing could raise concerns for trans individuals about privacy around gender history or previous names, impacting their sense of safety when accessing services.
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Ensure system design and information-sharing practices respect privacy, minimise unnecessary disclosure of gender history, and involve the individual in decisions about what is shared
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Ingrid Crisan
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
Yes
Negative impacts for Race
Strengthened focus on hidden harms and earlier risk identification may unintentionally heighten statutory involvement for those from global majority families, who are already overrepresented in safeguarding systems. Cultural misunderstanding could worsen if workforce diversity is not improved in line with system

expectations.
Mitigating actions for Race
Working Together 2026 mandates explicit anti-racist practice and analysis of disproportionality, helping identify and address biases. Diversify workforce through opportunities created by MACPTs, LCPP roles and FFP professional pathways. Ensure culturally competent Family Group Decision Making to empower families.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Ingrid Crisan
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
Yes
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Strengthened data analysis and safeguarding against forms of harm (e.g. honour-related abuse, faith-based abuse) may lead some religious communities to fear stereotyping or disproportionate scrutiny
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Embed Working Together 2026 anti-discriminatory expectations to avoid cultural stereotyping. Ensure Family Help Teams are trained in faith-sensitive practice and engage local community leaders where appropriate. Transparency in assessment pathways reduces mistrust.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Ingrid Crisan
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Yes
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Strengthened focus on overlapping harms (e.g. online abuse, exploitation, domestic abuse) may increase intervention for LGBTQ+ young people who face higher risk of certain harms.
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Embed Working Together 2026's expectations on anti-discriminatory practice across agencies
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Ingrid Crisan
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Yes
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Working Together 2026 increased focus on monitoring unborn babies may feel intrusive for pregnant women, particularly those already experiencing socioeconomic or racial inequalities
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Apply trauma-informed relational practice within Family Help, ensuring early support rather than punitive approaches.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Ingrid Crisan
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Yes
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Whole-family approaches may feel intrusive for couples undergoing relationship stress or separation. Strengthened focus on domestic abuse, coercive control and relationship-based harms may lead to

increased statutory involvement in households where relationships are unstable; married or civil-partnered couples may perceive this as stigmatising or threatening to family stability.

Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Apply trauma-informed relational practice within Family Help, ensuring early support rather than punitive approaches.

Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Ingrid Crisan

28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

Yes

Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

The stronger emphasis on family networks, including kinship care and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), may place additional expectations on carers, particularly older carers or those balancing caring roles with disabilities or employment. Increased multi-agency assessments and earlier identification of needs may unintentionally increase pressure on carers if services expect rapid involvement.

Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Use FGDM to share caring responsibilities across wider family and community networks, reducing individual burden. Ensure carers receive clear, accessible information about safeguarding pathways and expectations. Provide tailored support for kinship and parent-carers through Family Help Teams and multi-disciplinary working, ensuring carers' needs are considered alongside the child's.

Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities

Ingrid Crisan