

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

DECISION NO:

26/00029

For publication YES

Key decision: YES

Title of Decision:

Implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I agree to:

- (a) Approve the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme Target Operating Model in Kent.
- (b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, to take all necessary actions to utilise and allocate the Children, Families and Youth Grant and to implement the Families First Partnership Programme Target Operating Model in Kent in line with Government expectations including, but not limited to, determining the expenditure of the grant.
- (c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Head of Law to negotiate, finalise the terms of, and enter into any contracts or other legal agreements required to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

The decision is sought to approve the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme in Kent. This includes:

- approval of the Family Help model,
- the introduction of Family Help Lead Practitioners,
- the establishment of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs),
- the introduction of Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCCP),
- the creation of an Education Lead role in the Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams,
- the embedding of Family Group Decision Making in line with the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.

Under Key Decision 25/00047, Kent approved acceptance and deployment of the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant, development of the Families First model and delegated detailed design and future grant acceptance to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education. Kent has since completed initial design and co-production work and now seeks approval to implement its Target Operating Model ahead of the Governments April 2027 deadline.

How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement: This decision supports the Council's strategic priority to focus on prevention and early intervention, ensuring that children and families receive the right support at the earliest opportunity. It contributes to *Reforming Kent* by strengthening multi-agency working, improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families, and delivering more integrated, efficient, and sustainable services. The proposed model also aligns with the Council's ambition to support residents who need help, enabling a more coordinated and proactive approach to safeguarding and family support.

Financial Implications:

Kent County Council has received funding towards implementing the Families First Partnership Programme, known as the Children's, Families and Youth Grant, 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 and Families Grant (Supporting Families, £6m), along with additional new investment of £8.9m. The funding is ring-fenced for direct investment in new and updated services to deliver the Families First Model: family help, multi-agency protection teams, and support for family networks along with associated transformation activity. Failure to implement the Families First model in line with Government expectations may result in the potential loss of government funding. The delivery of this new targeted operating model will involve both the reorganisation of existing children services and the introduction of specific new posts. The final cost of the model is yet to be determined but will be designed to be affordable with the existing staffing budget and additional grant funding. The grant funding has only been confirmed for 3 years (ending in March 2029), therefore there is a risk there could be a shortfall in future funding of this service if sufficient savings cannot be delivered from the impact of these reforms. It is recognised the Council will need to keep this under review and further plans will be informed by future government announcements.

Legal implications:

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. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026' legally obliges Kent County Council to comply with the delivery requirements.

Given that the funding agreement extends beyond the anticipated "go live" date for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in 2028, legal consideration has been given to the continuity of statutory duties and the future governance arrangements required to maintain compliance. The obligations attached to the grant will continue to apply regardless of structural changes arising from LGR.

Once the preferred LGR model is confirmed in July 2026, the programme will be aligned with the agreed transition arrangements to ensure that grant conditions, accountability for spend, and decision-making responsibilities may transfer lawfully to any successor body or bodies. This will include mapping statutory functions, review governance frameworks, and establishing clear mechanisms for continuity of service delivery during and after the transition. The Executive decision now being sought to be made will therefore establish a secure basis for implementation, whilst noting that formal variation or transfer arrangements may be required once LGR outcomes are confirmed.

The implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme and associated Target Operating Model supports the Council in meeting these statutory duties and ensures alignment with national reform requirements. The delegation of authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services enables the Council to take all necessary operational, contractual, and partnership actions required to implement the approved model in compliance with relevant legislation and governance requirements.

Equality Implications:

Future operations and activity will be designed to complement, develop, and build on established family support services, including supporting diverse families that are seldom heard, which aligns Aim 3 of our Reforming Kent Strategy, 'Supporting residents That Need Help'. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the Families First Partnership Programme, considering potential impacts on individuals and families with protected characteristics. While the reforms introduced through Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 may increase early identification, information-sharing and multi-agency involvement for some groups, no disproportionate negative impacts have been identified that cannot be mitigated.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision was discussed and endorsed at the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 14 July 2026.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

N/A

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

None.

signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P W Webb', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date: 06/08/2026