

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:
Christine Palmer
Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

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 to agree, finalise and enter into the required grant and other required agreements and to do so in future years providing funding is provided on similar terms;
- c. DELEGATE authority to the Director of Operational Integrated Children's Services and Director of Public Health to manage the grant funding expenditure in order to take the relevant actions and the required operational decisions to deploy the funding, manage services and deliver the Best Start in Life requirements in line with the adopted service model and any required enhancements.
- d. 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

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 accept the additional three-year grant funding for the Best Start Family Hub programme and to confirm delivery under the existing adopted Family Hub Model, updated to reflect the programme requirements set by the DfE and DHSC.

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 2026/27-2028/29. This is a ring-fenced grant. 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 (subject to the grants terms & conditions). Therefore, if this grant is not accepted, an alternative saving would have to be identified as part of the MTFP process.

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](#). The EqIA has been reviewed and the assessment has indicated that there are no anticipated adverse impacts that are associated with the acceptance of the grant. An updated EqIA will be completed in advance of the final decision

Data Protection implications:

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not expected to be required for the acceptance of the Best Start Family Hub grant money; however the relevant screening assessment will be undertaken prior to decision.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

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

This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

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

Date