

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services

DECISION NO:

23/00113

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or*
- b) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
 - *the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;*
 - *significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.*

Families First for Children - Pathfinder

Decision:

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

- A) Agree to enter into relevant agreements with the DfE to become a Pathfinder for the delivery of Families First for Children (agreement to include the acceptances of relevant Memorandums of Understandings and associated funding)
- B) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services, to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to, finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) published Stable Homes, Built on Love – an implementation strategy and consultation on 2 February 2023, the consultation was backed by £200m additional investment. The Families First for Children (FFC) Pathfinder is a core commitment made in the strategy.

1.2 Kent County Council applied to become a FFC Pathfinder through Wave 2 of the programme on 6 November 2023 with support from the Assistant Chief Constable and the Director of Children’s Services in the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board. This is in recognition that becoming a FFC Pathfinder will require greater integration and system level reform of services to transform the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, Family Help, Child Protection and Family Networks.

1.3 The Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy sets out a vision to re-balance children’s social

care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support. It sets out actions that seek to:

- Address urgent issues facing children and families now
- Lay the foundations for whole system reform
- Set national direction for change

The DfE states it will reform in phases, investing £200m over the next two years. After two years they will refresh this strategy, scaling up new approaches that have been tested and bring forward legislation (subject to parliamentary time).

The key features of this programme include:

- Establishing a system-wide, 'Families First' culture, which addresses structural inequalities, attends to the full spectrum of families' contexts and needs, and facilitates a welcoming and effective system for children and families.
- Clarifying and strengthening multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, ways of working and independent scrutiny. This includes strengthening the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements at strategic level.
- Streamlining and supporting effective multi-agency information sharing and case management systems.

How the proposed decision supports the Strategic Statement:

The proposed decision supports Framing Kent's Future Our Council Strategy 2022-2026, Specifically Priority 4 New Models of Care and Support:

"To support the most vulnerable children and families in our county, ensuring our social work practice supports manageable caseloads, reflective learning, joined up safeguarding and effective corporate parenting arrangements incorporating the priorities as listed below:

- *Support further improvement in the quality of social care practice through investing in our children's social care workforce, ensuring appropriate caseloads and reflective learning time available for our social workers, and further developing the Kent Social Work Academy.*
- *Embed our 'One front door' approach, working with partners to ensure referrals to children's social care are efficiently and consistently managed to provide the child or family with the right help at the right time.*
- *Embed a whole-family approach, tackling the underlying problems that might cause concern in a child's family, such as domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental health."*

Financial Implications

From July 2023 to March 2025, the DfE is investing over £45 million to design and test radical reforms in a number of local areas, across the following policies:

- family help
- child protection
- family network support packages (FNSPs)
- safeguarding partners

£19.5 million funding is available for Wave 2 of the FFC Pathfinder in the financial year 2024-2025.

DfE have banded funding based on the threshold of Children in Need. Due to the size of Kent, the bid can be up to and including £5m. The bid submission for KCC is £4,996,042, with a specific delivery breakdown, to be spent on transformation for evaluation in 2025.

- **Legal Implications**

Kent County Council will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the DfE if approved.

- **Equalities implications**

An initial Equality Impact Assessment is underway.

- **Data Protection implications**

The DPIA would be further developed once data flows understood between different partners.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Directorate held an informal briefing for all Members of the Children’s Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 15 December 2023.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

To not accept the offer, if it is forthcoming from the DfE for KCC to become a Pathfinder in Wave 2 of the programme. KCC has significant pressures and challenges and is advanced in integration, this funding would boost the delivery of integrated teams in adopting the FFC model of delivery. It is highly likely that this will be the direction of travel for all Children’s Services. KCC would be required to transform services in the future without transformation funding.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date