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# Lead director: Damian Elcock

## Families First Partnership Programme

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### Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: v1

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme is a national initiative introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) in March 2025. It aims to transform children's social care by promoting early, coordinated and family centred support.
- 1.2. The FFP programme will support safeguarding partners to bring together targeted early help, child in need and multi-agency child protection into a seamless system of help, support and protection. This includes services and workforces, such as family support workers, social workers and other specialist and alternatively qualified practitioners, coming together to support families.
- 1.3. Progress is being made in relation to the three core strands of the Families First Partnership Programme: Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams and Family Group Decision Making.
- 1.4. Since November 2025 a pilot of the Family Help model has been running in the south cluster (based in Eyres Monsell and Saffron Family Hubs). The learning from this will inform the wider rollout of Family Help in the remaining five clusters within the city. It is anticipated that this wider rollout will take place from Spring 2026.
- 1.5. Multi-agency strategic discussions across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland footprint are underway to begin to shape expectations around a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team, which will need to be developed and in place by March 2027.
- 1.6. Investment is being made within Leicester's family therapy team to support expansion of Family Group Decision Making offer. This will support fully embedded, system-

wide approach accessible across Early Help, Family Help, Child Protection, PLO, court proceedings and reunification.

## **2. Recommended actions/decision**

2.1. To note the details shared in the report and accompanying presentation.

## **3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement**

3.1. The Young People's Shadow Board meets on a bimonthly basis, offering opportunity for young people to play an active role in shaping decision making. For example, members have recently had input on revising consent forms to be used within the Family Help service.

3.2. The governance for the delivery of the Families First Partnership programme ensures that staff are given opportunity to shape delivery (including both through workstreams and membership of the practitioners' forum). Divisional briefings have been carried out with the wider workforce to communicate key updates and offer the opportunity to feed back.

3.3. The IMPOWER team has taken the lead on engagement with partners, building on foundations of partnership work established in the multi-agency IMPACT Board and through seconded health and police roles.

## **4. Background and options with supporting evidence**

### **Families First Partnership Programme Overview**

4.1. The Families First Partnership Programme is focused on shaping a system in which practitioners from social work, police, health, education and beyond work together to promote the wellbeing of children and keep them safe from harm.

4.2. The programme places a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevention crisis as well as utilising a whole family approach to ensure the needs of the adults in the household are also important.

4.3. There are three key components of the Families First Partnership model: Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT) and Family Group Decision Making.

### **Family Help**

4.4. The DfE's vision for Family Help is to bring targeted early help and child-in-need services together into multidisciplinary, locality-based teams that provide proactive, early intervention to prevent escalation.

4.5. Following co-design with 60 representatives from health, police, education, the voluntary and community sector, a locality-based Family Help model has been developed, moving away from centrally delivered services.

4.6. This model is currently being piloted in the south cluster. The pilot has brought Children in Need and Early Help staff together in a Family Help team based at Eyres

Monzell and Saffron Family Hubs, using a test-and-learn approach to trial co-location, workflows, cluster structures and impacts at the front door and for children, families, communities and partner services.

- 4.7. Early indications show improved joint working, increased referrals to partners, clearer multi-agency roles and stronger relationships, with co-location enabling more consistent decision-making and a shared “one team” ethos.
- 4.8. The Family Help pilot will be evaluated in April 2026 to shape the rollout of the model in the remaining five cluster areas. Capacity and demand analysis will guide how social workers are allocated to clusters so they can settle into new localities and build strong teams ahead of implementing new pathways and processes.
- 4.9. While the long-term vision is for the case management system to fully support the Family Help model, significant development is required as the current LiquidLogic system does not align with the desired workflows.

### **Multi-Agency Child Protection Team**

- 4.10. The DfE’s vision for Multi Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs) is to create co-located, multi-agency teams that work together to protect children, led by a dedicated child protection practitioner and tailored to local needs.
- 4.11. Although Leicester does not yet have a formal MACPT structure or defined pathways with LCPP and Family Help, strong multi-agency safeguarding practice is already in place.
- 4.12. Leicester’s existing conference processes, virtual strategy discussions and relational, child-centred practice provide a solid foundation for future MACPT development.
- 4.13. Work is underway with safeguarding partners across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to shape a shared vision for the MACPT model. A workshop was held in January to begin to define the future model and understand the resources required to implement a model that meets each area’s local needs and fully considers health services resources and pressures.
- 4.14. Following the initial strategic visioning workshop, further work is underway to refine the models discussed, enabling a robust SWOT analysis to inform a partnership-wide decision on the preferred direction of travel. MACPTs are expected to be fully embedded by March 2027.

### **Family Group Decision Making**

- 4.15. The DfE’s vision for Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is for families and their wider networks to play an active role in decisions about a child’s care, with support to help children remain safe and thrive at home.
- 4.16. Family network meetings are already well-established in child protection, pre-proceedings and court work, with growing use in kinship assessments, adolescent cases and placement stability.

- 4.17. Signs of Safety provides a shared practice framework for safety planning, though confidence in distinguishing meeting types varies, existing guidance is lengthy, and updates to LiquidLogic forms are needed for consistency.
- 4.18. Although network meetings currently occur mainly at higher levels of need, their use within Early Help and Family Help is increasing. To support this there is leadership commitment to making FGDM a mandatory offer for all families receiving support, reflected in recent investment in the Family Network team.
- 4.19. Leicester's family therapy team is expanding its dedicated FGDM capacity, and Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) workers regularly support meetings by explaining kinship expectations and long-term implications.
- 4.20. As capacity grows, work will focus on creating a clearer, more structured FGDM process across Family Help, child protection, pre-proceedings and court, supported by a concise end-to-end framework. A dedicated FGDM facilitator role and new service specification will follow recruitment.
- 4.21. Improving timeliness remains a priority, particularly ensuring FGDM happens within the first four weeks of PLO. Referral criteria will be refined without limiting access, and a strengthened reporting framework will track demand, outcomes and system impact.

## 5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

### 5.1 Financial implications

This report provides an update on the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme only. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 3 February 2026

### 5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, which is provided for information purposes only, from a childcare law perspective. However, it is positive to note the introduction and intentions of the Families First programme, which are consistent with the ethos and objectives of the Public Law Outline.

Signed: Sonali Unka, Principal Solicitor (social care and safeguarding- childcare)

Dated: 9 February 2026

### 5.3 Equalities implications

Our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) and those who do not. The Council also has an obligation to treat people in accordance with their Convention rights under The Human Rights Act, 1998.

This report summarises the progress to date on implementing the Families First Partnership programme within Leicester children’s social care and sharing good practice from the Family Help model pilot. The programme aims to ensure we take a co-ordinated and inclusive approach to supporting families. We need to ensure equality considerations are embedded within the programme at Leicester and the city’s demographic profile is taken into account.

It is recommended that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are undertaken as appropriate, for example when reviewing provision or commissioning services. The EIA process is iterative and should be reviewed throughout the decision-making process. It should be updated to reflect any feedback or changes arising from consultation/engagement, where relevant. EIA findings should be shared with decision- makers at each stage to inform their considerations and to support assessment of whether the aims of the PSED are being met.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 5 February 2026

#### 5.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. As service delivery by the council and partners generally contributes to the council’s carbon footprint, any impacts could be considered within delivery of related projects, such as encouraging the use of sustainable travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 4 February 2026

#### **6. Background information and other papers:**

n/a

#### **7. Summary of appendices:**

#### **8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

No

#### **9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?**

No