

Report to CABINET

Families First Partnership Programme

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Shaid Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Officer Contact: Julie Daniels, Executive Director Children and Young People

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Reason for decision

To support Local Authorities to deliver the Children's Social Care reforms outlined in the Children's Wellbeing and School Bill and Families First Partnership Programme guide March 2025, Oldham Council has received a £2.2m Prevention Grant from the Department for Education (DfE). The conditions of the grant outlines expectations to utilise up to 30% of the grant for transformation resources to support the Local Authority to deliver significant reforms as well as to support the delivery of partnership services under a new operating model. This report outlines how the new policy change and programme will be delivered in Oldham and seeks approval of the resources required to ensure smooth implementation in line with the national guidance.

Recommendations

1. To note the council's implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme in Oldham.
2. To approve the governance arrangements to oversee the co-design and implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme in Oldham.
3. Approve the use of part of the Prevention Grant to recruit the roles as identified in the report to drive design and delivery.

4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director Children and Young People and/or their nominee to procure a Systems Transformation Lead in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules.
5. Delegate authority for future decisions regarding the delivery of the programme, resources and use of the Prevention Grant to the Executive Director Children and Young People, in consultation with the portfolio holder and the Director of Finance.
6. Delegate authority to the Borough Solicitor and / or their nominees to carry out all legal formalities.

Families First Partnership Programme

1. Background

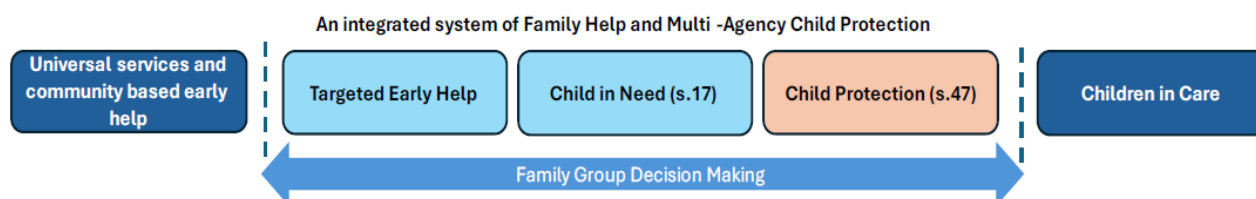
The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was introduced into Parliament on 17 December 2024. The bill is an important step towards delivering the government's Opportunity Mission to break the link between background and future success.

The following key policy changes are outlined in the bill and form part of the Families First Partnership Programme:

- Family group decision making
- Multi-agency child protection teams
- Strengthening the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- Information sharing duty and consistent identifiers

The aim of the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme is to transform the whole system of help, support and protection, to ensure that every family can access the right help and support when they need it, with a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevent crisis.

Figure 1: Vision for a reformed system



Ten funded Families First for Children (FFC) pathfinder local partnerships have been testing these system reforms since July 2023, including Warrington and Wirral in the north-west.

Over £500 million has been made available through the final local government finance settlement: England, 2025 to 2026, to support local authorities working with their safeguarding partners to invest in transformation and expansion of preventative support in financial year 2025/26. This will build on the extensive existing spend from local authority, partner and other agency budgets on preventative services.

Oldham has been allocated £2,242,104 from the Children's Social Care (CSC) Prevention Grant.

There is an expectation that around 30% of the new funding will be spent on the costs of transformation and co-design, ensuring leaders have the capacity to undertake this important reform backed with funding, as well as to support the delivery of partnership services under a

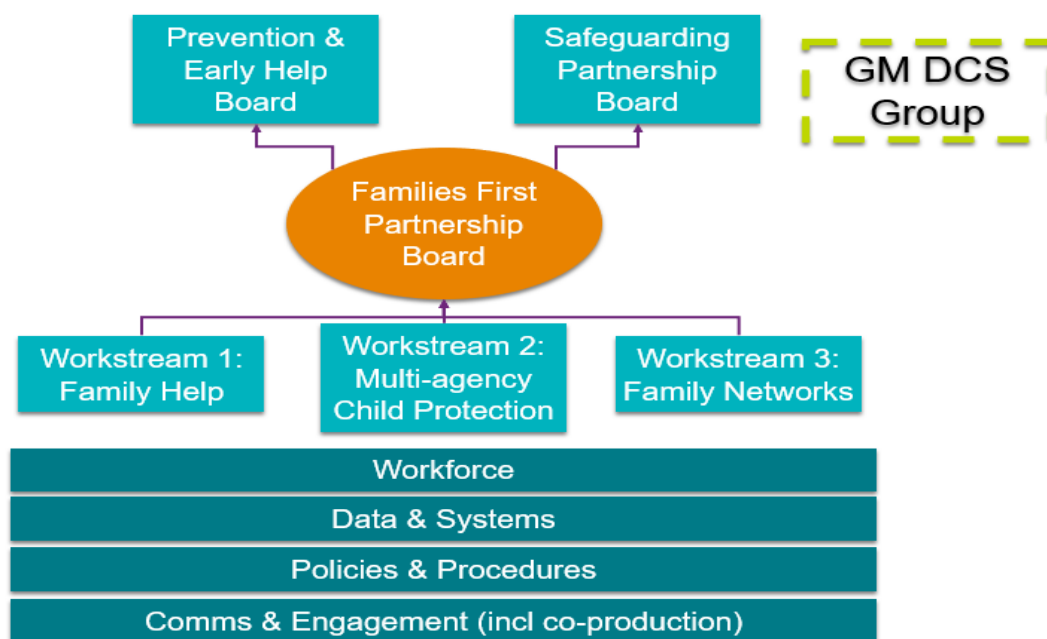
new operating model, such as commissioning of services and training and areas identified as the programme develops and further guidance is issued by the DfE.

2. Current Position

2.1 Proposed Governance

Outlined in the chart below is the proposed governance arrangements to deliver the FFP programme. There will be three key workstreams; Family Help, Multi-agency Child Protection and Family Networks, underpinned by four interdependent strands of activity; workforce, data and systems, policies and procedures and communication and engagement.

The programme will be driven by the newly formed FFP Board chaired by the Acting Director of Children's Social Care and overseen by the Prevention and Early Help Pillar Change Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive (People) and the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership.



2.2 Programme Resources

To successfully drive the design, management and implementation of the programme, the following additional resources will be required, as recommended in the FFP guide (March 2025) in Appendix 1.

Families First Programme Manager (Workforce, Practice & Partnerships) - responsible for the co-design and implementation of a new operating model, including practice guidance, policies and procedures, workforce and partnership culture, learning and development and communication and engagement across the partnership and with children, young people and families through co-production principles to support transformation and wider delivery. To be employed on a full-time basis on a two-year fixed term contract as grade SM2.

Systems Transformation Lead - to support effective transformation to fit-for-purpose digital and data systems, to develop new workflows within the Mosaic case management system. To conduct end to end process mapping from the front door through to children in care services. To be recruited three days per week as an interim professional via a recruitment agency, at a rate of up to £550 per day (inclusive of agency mark up costs) for 12 months. This is to ensure we acquire a highly skilled and experienced professional in a market that all Local Authorities will be competing within to deliver the programme requirements.

Senior Data Analyst/Evaluation Lead – to support effective data reporting and analysis of demand, delivery performance and evaluation of impact. To be employed on a full-time basis on a 12-month fixed term contract as grade 8.

Project Manager – to support the programme lead in project management including project initiation, governance arrangements, plans, risk and issues register and tracking project timescales and decision making. To be employed on a full-time basis on a 12-month fixed term contract as grade 8.

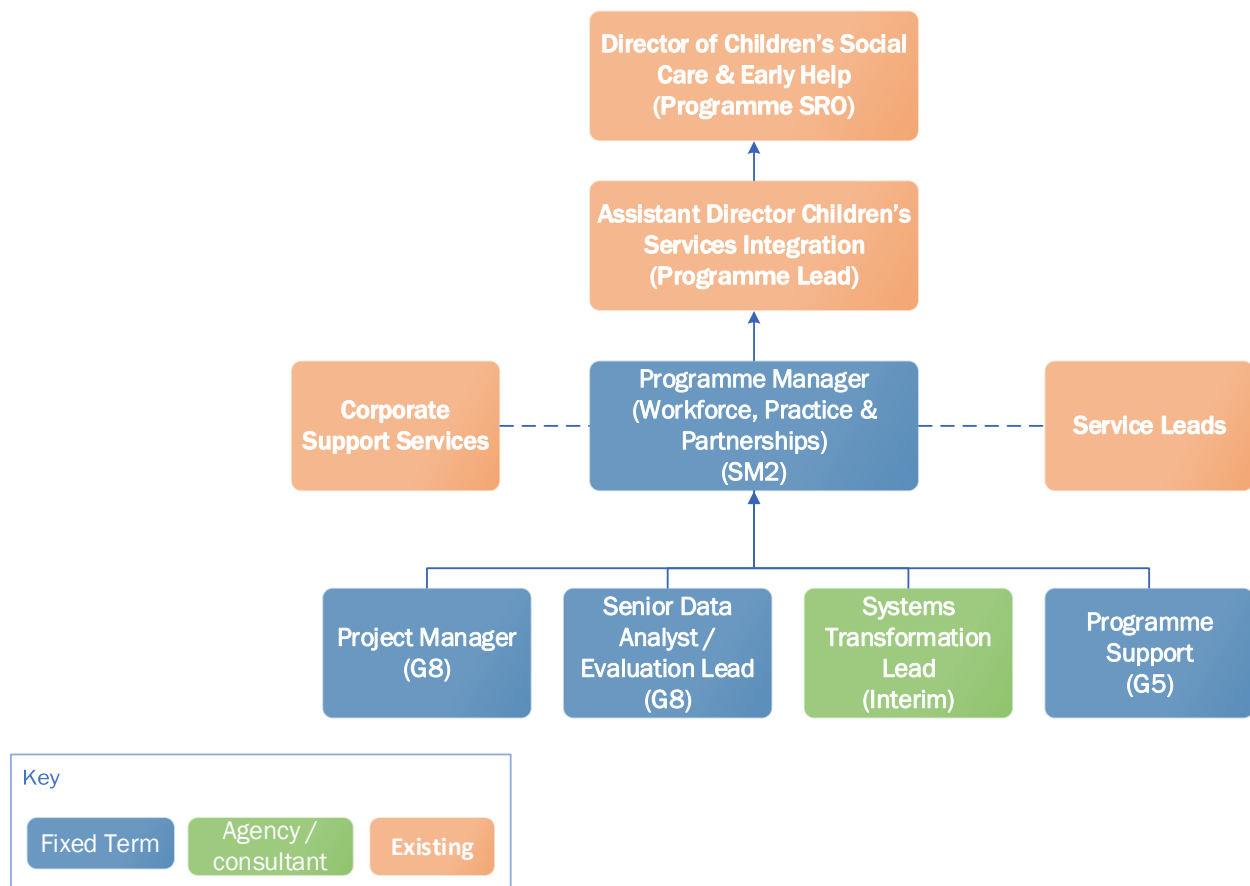
Programme Support – to provide administration and financial support to the programme. To be employed on a full-time basis on a 12-month fixed term contract as grade 5.

Service Leads – already in the business to contribute to and oversee the reforms as part of developing the programme into business-as-usual activity.

Corporate and partnership support - We envisage corporate and partnership support and resources will be required from services such as Communications, Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development, Finance, Information Governance, IT, Data and Insight, Property and Estate services, Legal, Project Management Office, Procurement.

For any interim professionals, the REED consultancy framework will be utilised as the Council's approved Managed Services Provider (MSP). In the absence of any suitable candidates via the REED MSP, the Commercial Procurement Unit will be engaged to consider compliant frameworks as an alternative means of recruiting.

The proposed FFP programme structure is outlined below:



3. Alternative option(s) to be considered

Option 1 – do not recruit and / or procure additional programme resource, deliver the programme in Oldham within existing transformation and service capacity. This is not the recommended option as the required pace and scale of change will be hindered if existing staff are to deliver the programme whilst continuing with business-as-usual activity and competing priorities.

Option 2 – approve the governance arrangements and the recruitment and / or procurement of the additional resources detailed in this report, as required to deliver the programme at pace and in line with national guidance.

4. Preferred Option

Option 2 is the preferred option as it will enable the council to deliver the programme at pace in line with national expectations and guidelines.

5. Consultation

Services across Children's Social Care and Early Help, wider partnership and children, young people and families will be consulted throughout the design, development and implementation of the programme supported by HR and Trade Unions.

6. Financial Implications

The preferred option detailed in the report is option 2, which is to appoint fixed term posts to deliver the FFP Programme.

The Council has been awarded £2.242m from the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant in 2025-26. The draft grant determination issued by MHCLG in April 2025 outlines an expectation that a proportion of the funding is on transformation activity which is around 30% of the grant.

The costs of the fixed term posts are detailed in the table below:

<u>Costs</u>	Duration	Grade/cost p.d.	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Families First Programme Manager	2 years	SM2	£ 76,000	£ 86,000	£ 8,000
Systems Transformation Lead	1 year	£550 per day	£ 59,400	£ 19,800	
Senior Data Analyst/Evaluation Lead	1 year	Grade 8	£ 46,760	£ 16,060	
Project Manager	1 year	Grade 8	£ 46,760	£ 16,060	
Programme Support	1 year	Grade 5	£ 33,980	£ 11,670	
			£ 262,900	£ 149,590	£ 8,000
<u>Funding</u>					
CSC Prevention Grant			-£ 262,900	0	0
Children's and Families Grant (formerly Supporting Families grant element)				-£ 149,590	-£ 8,000
			£ -	£ -	£ -

**It is assumed the posts will be filled by July except for the Families First Programme Manager which is mid-May.*

The estimated cost in 2025-26 is £263k which is eligible expenditure against the grant, however costs for 2026/27 (£150k) and 2027-28 (£8k) will require an alternative funding source. The guidance states, "transformation costs are categorized as one-off and/or set up costs for the grant" and there is no indication from the DfE the grant can be carried forward into future years. The guidance outlines the CSC Prevention Grant should be used alongside the Children and Families Grant which from 2025-26 includes the former Supporting Families funding. For the purposes of this report, the shortfall in funding for the transformation costs in 2026-27 and 2027-28 is assumed to come from

the Children and Families Grant. The service will have to specifically identify the budget as the grant is fully committed (83% for salaries 17% other costs).
(Nicola Harrop – Finance Manager)

7. Legal Implications

As part of the proposed action under option 2, it is proposed that a Systems Transformation Lead is procured on a consultancy basis. The Contract Procedure Rules govern procurement activity and incorporate relevant legislation. The options which shall be most likely available to the Service are calling off the consultancy requirements under an existing Framework Agreement or tendering the opportunity. Whether or not the tendering activity will be caught by the Procurement Act 2023 will be based on the contract values. Either way, the award and scoring criteria will be made available to bidders as will the form of contract.

Sarah Orrell – Commercial & Procurement Solicitor

8. Procurement

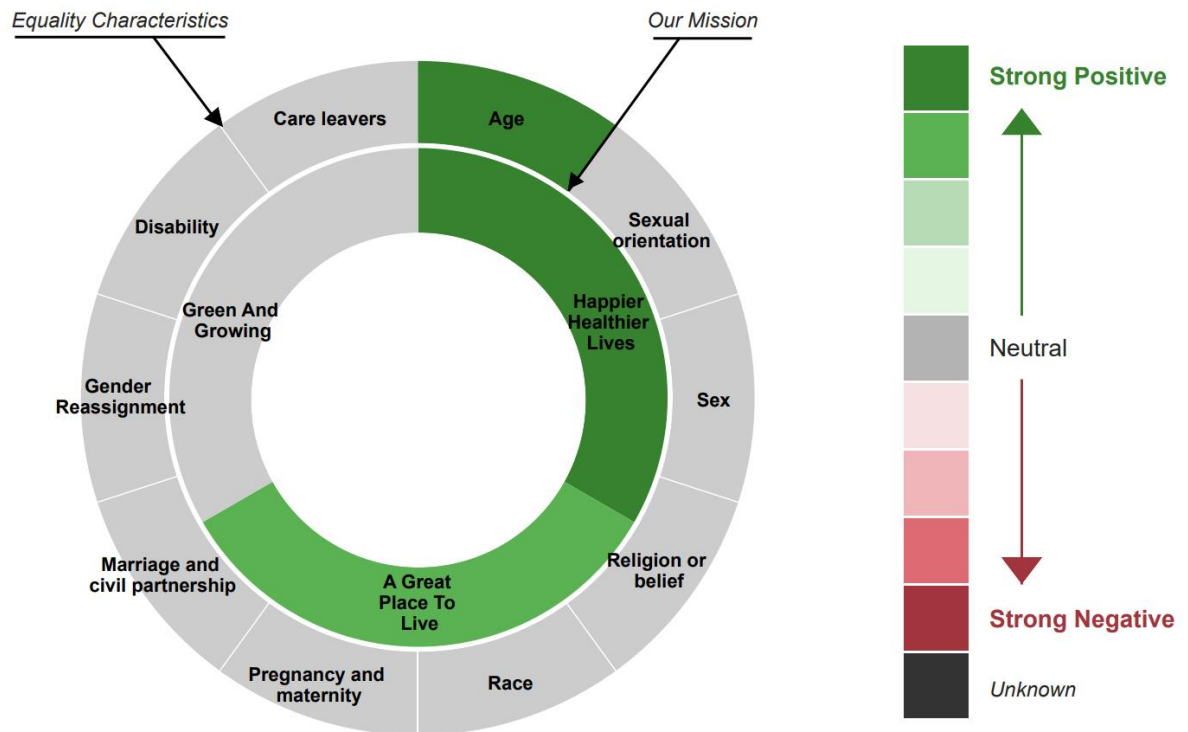
It is noted that the Systems Transformation Lead is to be hired on an interim basis. This accepts using the REED MSP as the first port of call. However, in the absence of suitable candidates, the Commercial Procurement Unit will be contacted to determine compliant frameworks for HR/agency support which can be accessed in support of recruiting interim staff. Many compliant frameworks are available, with ESPO generally providing the widest scope of recruitment agencies and a straight forward call off/mini competition process. The service just needs to determine how long REED should be given before this option is exhausted and CPU need to support in order that there is an expectation of dates and timeframes.

Jasmin Banks-Lee, Commercial Procurement Unit

9. Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

Families First Partnership Programme

completed/last updated by Sheila Garara on 23/04/2025



10. Key Decision

Yes

11. Key Decision Reference

CHS-03-25

12. Background Papers

None

13. Appendices

13.1 Families First Partnership Programme Guide



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13.2 Children's Social Care Prevention Grant Determination



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13.3 Equality Impact Assessment



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