

Parental Advocacy Service Tender

Decision Maker: Chief Executive

Service Area: Children's Services Integration

Directorate: Children and Young People

Report Author: Laura Farnworth Children's Commissioning Strategic Manager, Nick Whitbread, Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

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Date of Decision: 19 October 2026

1. Power to make the decision

The decision is being taken under the authorisation contained in Section 9C – Delegations to Specific Officers of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council Constitution for the Chief Executive to take any emergency decisions in respect of the Council's executive functions which cannot be delayed until the next Cabinet meeting.

2. Decision Sought

Permission is sought to undertake a robust and transparent commissioning and procurement exercise to commission a new service, Parental Advocacy.

The service will have a funding envelope of £83,000 per annum and will be awarded as a two-year contract with the option to extend for up to an additional one-year dependent on funding availability.

The Parental Advocacy service will be funded through Families First Partnership Grant to support and empower parents to fully understand processes, plans and decisions, enabling them to fully participate in Family Help assessments, child in need planning, child protection processes and Family Group Decision Making.

Recommendation - Approve the design, tender and contract award to the highest scoring bidder, of a new service, Parental Advocacy. The service will have a maximum funding envelope of £83,000 per annum as part of Oldham's Families First Partnership Programme with an initial contract period of two years from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2029 with the option to extend for a further one year up until 31 March 2030 subject to funding being available and the service still meeting need.

3. Reason for urgency

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 places local authorities under a statutory duty to offer Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) to all parents of children at risk of entering care, and to put independent advocacy support in place. Through Families First Partnership (FFP) work, there is an opportunity to design and commission a new service to support Oldham's families to help meet this statutory duty. The budget identified for this service is from an underspend in the FFP grant and must be fully committed by 31 March 2027.

4. Risk(s) of not taking the decision

Without a Parental Advocacy service, vulnerable parents in Oldham will not have access to the full support they need. This could lead to families requiring higher level, costly interventions and could result in more children being brought into the care of the local authority.

The FFP grant underspend could be clawed back by the Département for Education if the council cannot demonstrate that it is fully committed by 31 March 2027.

5. Financial impact if decision not taken forward

The council could lose the funding for the service if the DfE were to claw back any underspend from the FFP grant. Some children and young people could be brought into the care of the local authority at a very high cost without adequate advocacy support.

6. Statutory Officer clearances

a. Section 151 Officer

Name Lee Walsh

Date 14 September 2026

Comments

The preferred option is to approve the design, procurement and award of a new Parental Advocacy Service for an initial two-year contract period commencing on 1 April 2027, with the option to extend for a further one year, subject to the availability of funding.

The contract will be funded from the Children's, Families and Youth Grant through the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP), with a maximum annual contract value of £83,000. There is sufficient funding available within the approved grant allocation to support the contract through to 31 March 2029. Any decision to exercise the option to extend the contract beyond this date would be subject to confirmation of funding availability and approval through a separate report.

b. Monitoring Officer**Name: Alex Bougatef****Date: 11th September 2026****Comments:**

The exercise of emergency powers should be undertaken in consultation with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council. However, the Council has not yet appointed a Leader or Deputy Leader for the current municipal year; it is therefore not possible to consult them. In addition, there is no certainty about when a Leader or Deputy Leader will be appointed as the Council has failed at successive meetings to do so. For the reasons given in the report, an urgent decision relating to the report is required, and it cannot wait until the appointment of a Leader and Deputy Leader at some undetermined future date.