

# SCRUTINY REPORT



**MEETING:** Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**SUBJECT:** Children's Social Care Reforms

**REPORT FROM:** Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children & Young People

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Beth Speak, Children's Transformation & Improvement Manager

---

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

### 1.1

1.2 Following publication of the Independent review of children social care in May 2022, the government outlined a commitment to deliver transformational whole-system reform as set out in their 'Stable Homes, built on love' Strategy.

1.3 The social care reforms have four overarching outcomes:

- Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need.
- Children and young people are supported by their family network.
- Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes.
- Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.

1.4 This report gives an overview of the reforms and the approaching to implementation in Bury.

## 2.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

- May 2022 – publication of Josh Macalister's Independent Review of Children's Social Care
- February 2023 – publication of the Stable Homes, Built on Love Strategy, the Government's implementation strategy for improving social care.
- December 2023 – publication of four key publications, outlining the changes, actions and plans to support delivery of the strategy:
  - National kinship strategy 'Championing Kinship Care'
  - Children's Social Care National Framework
  - Refreshed multi-agency statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
  - Digital and data strategy
- November 2024 - Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive policy paper published, which the Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill will put aspects of the reforms into law.
- December 2024 – Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill introduced into Parliament.
- March 2025 – Families First Partnership Programme Guide published setting out delivery expectations for safeguarding partners in England to support national rollout from April 2025.

## 3.0 FAMILIES FIRST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (FFPP)

3.1 The Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) seeks to transform the whole system of help, support, and protection, requiring safeguarding partners to bring together targeted early help, child in need and multi-agency child protection into a seamless system, including

services and workforces such as family support workers, social workers, and other highly-skilled, experienced, alternatively qualified practitioners. The intention is that children, young people and their families can receive the right level of support at the right time to meet their needs.

**3.2 The three key delivery strands to the FFPP are:**

- Family Help
- Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)
- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

**3.3 Family Help**

Family Help will take place at the heart of communities, bringing together services under a combined, multi-disciplinary Family Help team. It will wrap support around the whole family at the earliest opportunity, using the expertise of the multi-disciplinary practitioners and led by Family Help Lead Practitioner (FHLP) who will be drawn from a range of disciplines with the right knowledge, skills and experience to support families who need help and support. Practitioners will use single family help assessments and plans which all involved practitioners can access, supported by a shared practice framework.

The FHLP will have a focus on the whole family, recognising this is the best way of improving outcomes for children and young people and they will remain the main point of contact for the family as long as they require support. They will have the knowledge and skills to draw on relevant evidence-based interventions and be alert to all forms of significant harm. Where concerns do escalate and require support within child protection processes, they will remain involved although the work will then be led by the Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCPP).

**3.4 Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)**

Multi-agency child protection teams will bring together experts from across agencies, ensuring the right decisions are made at the right time for children and seeking to protect all children from actual or likely significant harm, both inside and outside the home.

MACPTs will have a core membership of skilled and suitably qualified social workers, police officers, registered health practitioners and education professionals. Consideration should also be given to inclusion of probation, domestic abuse services and youth workers.

Embedded in the MACPTs will be Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs) who will be qualified social workers with substantial frontline child protection experience, skilled at identifying and responding to all types of significant harm, know how to work skilfully and confidently with families and parents in child protection, support partners to consider the influence of different extra-familial contexts and ensure MACPT members maintain a consistent focus on best interests of the child.

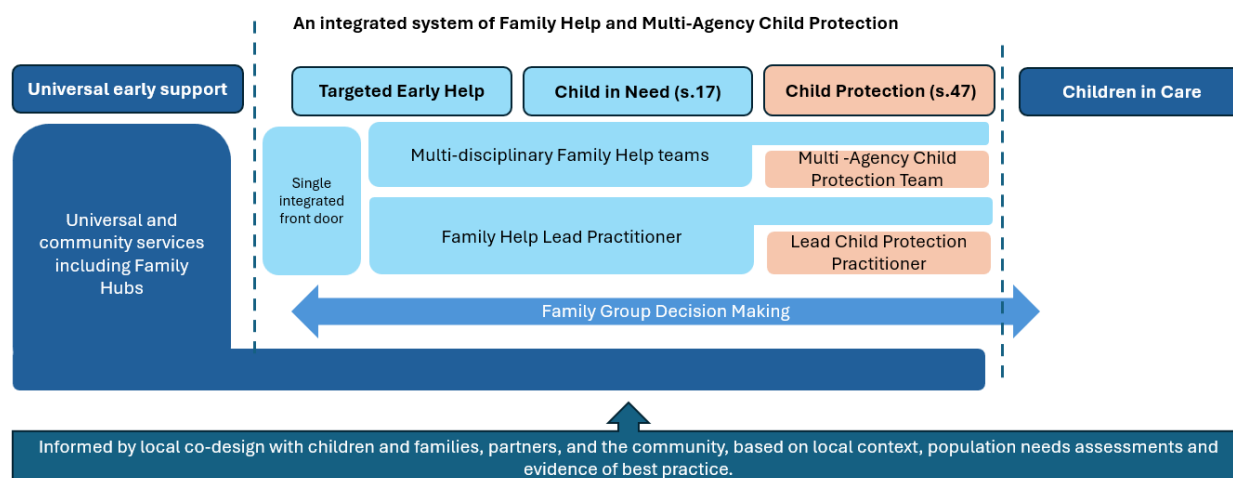
MACPTs will be responsible for key child protection processes which currently sit across service areas within children's social care: chairing strategy meetings and Child Protection Conferences, leading section 47 enquiries where significant harm is suspected, overseeing the development, review and closure of plans and onward planning, deciding whether to move into pre-proceedings and the Public Law Outline (PLO) process, providing relevant evidence to subsequent court proceedings and initiating emergency action (Emergency Protection Orders, Police Protection Orders).

**3.5 Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)**

FGDM is a voluntary process that enables a family network to come together and make a family-led plan. The plan will include offering practice support to parents and carers whilst prioritising the safety and wellbeing of the child. FGDM helps to ensure a family network is engaged and empowers to participate in decision-making while a child and their family is receiving help, support or protection. FGDM outlines a whole-family approach to support children and young people to remain with, or return to, the care of their parents or wider

families. Effective support for this children and their families increases the likelihood of stable, long-lasting relationships through which children can safely live within their family networks.

**Figure 1: Vision for a reformed system**



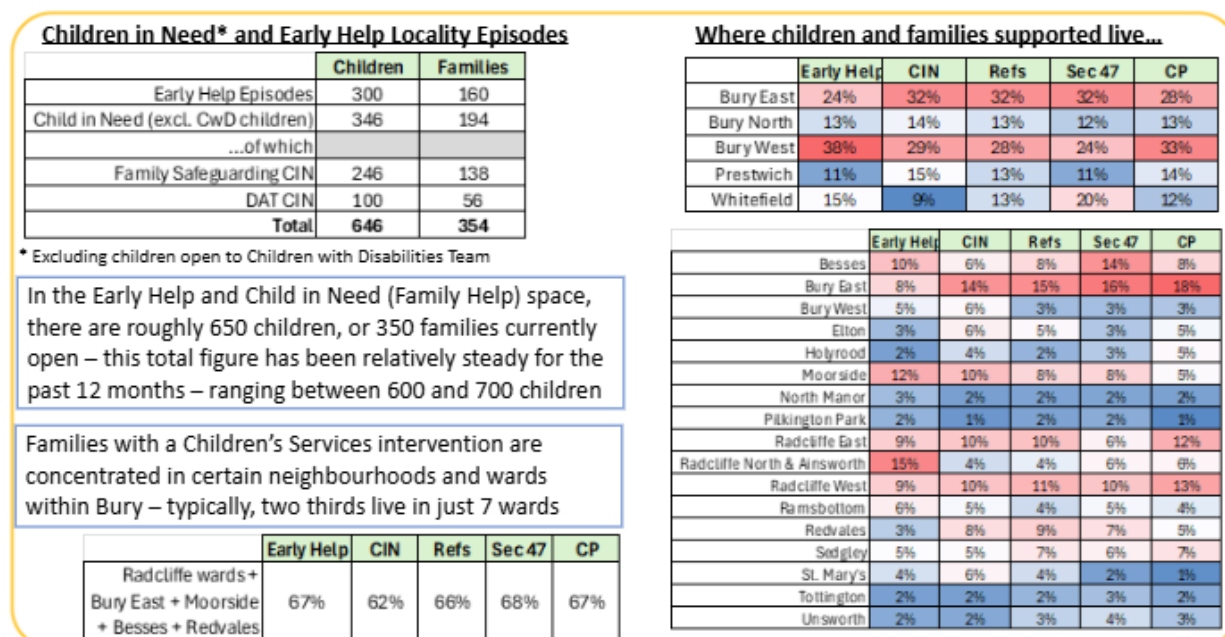
### 3.7 Funding

Nationally, £523 million has been provided for the FFP Programme in 2025-26 and this will continue in each year of the Spending Review period (£523m each year from 2026-27 – 2028-29). This money will fund additional children’s social care prevention services, and commitments in the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill to improve help and protection for children. Bury has been allocated £900,000 for each of the next 3 years with an additional transformation grant of £127,000 to support transformation activity across the partnership. Spending of the grant is monitored through quarterly returns to DfE/MHCLG.

### 4.0 BURY IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The DfE have outlined their expectation that 2025-26 is the year of transformation as local areas invest time and resource into local design in the first stage of the programme. In June, Bury submitted phase 1 delivery plans to the DfE setting out leads from the safeguarding partners and first stage plans for co-design and readiness planning. Phase 2 of the delivery plan must be submitted by 19<sup>th</sup> December 2025.
- 4.2 There have been two immersive partnership workshops, supported by our DfE Delivery Partner Mutual Ventures, to socialise the reforms and established a shared vision for local implementation. A planning workshop with the delegated safeguarding partners – Social Care, Health, Police & Education – has taken place to agree our approach to implementation. This has considered Bury’s profile of need, geographical areas and strengths in the current system which are enablers to support pilot and implementation of the reforms.
- 4.3 We have already made significant progress in relation to Family Group Decision Making which will be the first implementation strand in Bury. This will include the scaling up of the current team to provide Family Group Decision Making and Family Network Meetings earlier on in a family’s journey through the system (Spring 2026).

Figure 4: Bury's current data



## In a week – work in Children's Social Care

This analysis looks at the average (mean) volume of work in a typical week, the median week; and then the 80<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for high volumes

	Front Door		Activity Overall							
	Requests	Referrals	Strats	Assmts Ended	Sec 47s Start	ICPCs	CP Start	CP end	CLA Start	CLA end
95%	321	79	57	101	39	13	13	13	8	6
90%	298	73	49	93	32	11	10	12	8	5
80%	278	65	46	85	29	9	9	8	4	3
Median	239	54	36	69	21	5	5	5	2	2
Average	236	52	36	68	21	6	5	5	3	2

This analysis in the pink columns looks at the volumes of new work – work that is undertaken on newly open children and families, i.e. removing the CP and assessment work being undertaken in the longer-term teams (CASS and FS)

	Activity in DAT			
	Strats DAT	DAT Assmts Ending	Sec 47s DAT	ICPCs DAT
95%	37	73	27	8
90%	33	68	25	8
80%	30	58	18	7
Median	22	43	12	3
Average	23	43	14	4

	Open Assessments		
	DAT	Other Teams	Total
95%	329	207	510
90%	315	201	502
80%	299	190	480
Median	269	171	430
Average	265	170	436

- 4.4 We will then plan to pilot a MACPT followed by a Family Help team, allowing us the opportunity to learn from each pilot before moving to full implementation. We will aim to pilot these from Spring 2026 as we work over coming weeks and months with partners to understand the pathways for children and families and consider how the pilots will be resourced and delivered. There are significant changes in this space, which will require a reconfiguration and restructure of services across the partnership (including children's social care) due to changes in how certain functions must be delivered and the changes in roles.
- 4.5 Once the learning from both pilots is fully understood we can develop more detailed plans for full implementation throughout 2026 and 2027. We will need to ensure our implementation ensures continued fidelity to our Family Safeguarding model of practice.
- 4.6 Significant IT system changes are required to support the reforms, with DfE guidance to the system providers expected in November 2025. It is currently unclear what elements of the system will be required to be configured by the provider, versus what we will have to design

and configure locally. System access will also need to be extended to partners to enable access to assessments and plans which will require development with dedicated resource.

- 4.7 Any redesign of service or delivery must involve staff, children and families (this is a national requirement) and other stakeholders to ensure the revised system reflects the views and needs of our borough. We have already begun to discuss the reforms with staff via engagement sessions and Extended Manager Meetings, and this will continue.

## 5.0 GM-wide partners

- 5.1 As one of the key principles of the reforms is multi-agency partnership working, it is important to consider the complexities for our safeguarding partners in Health and the Police, due to their own structures and footprints. Shared by the GM Safeguarding Alliance, GMP and NHS GM have published the approaches outlined in Figure 5a and 5b overleaf

Figure 5a:

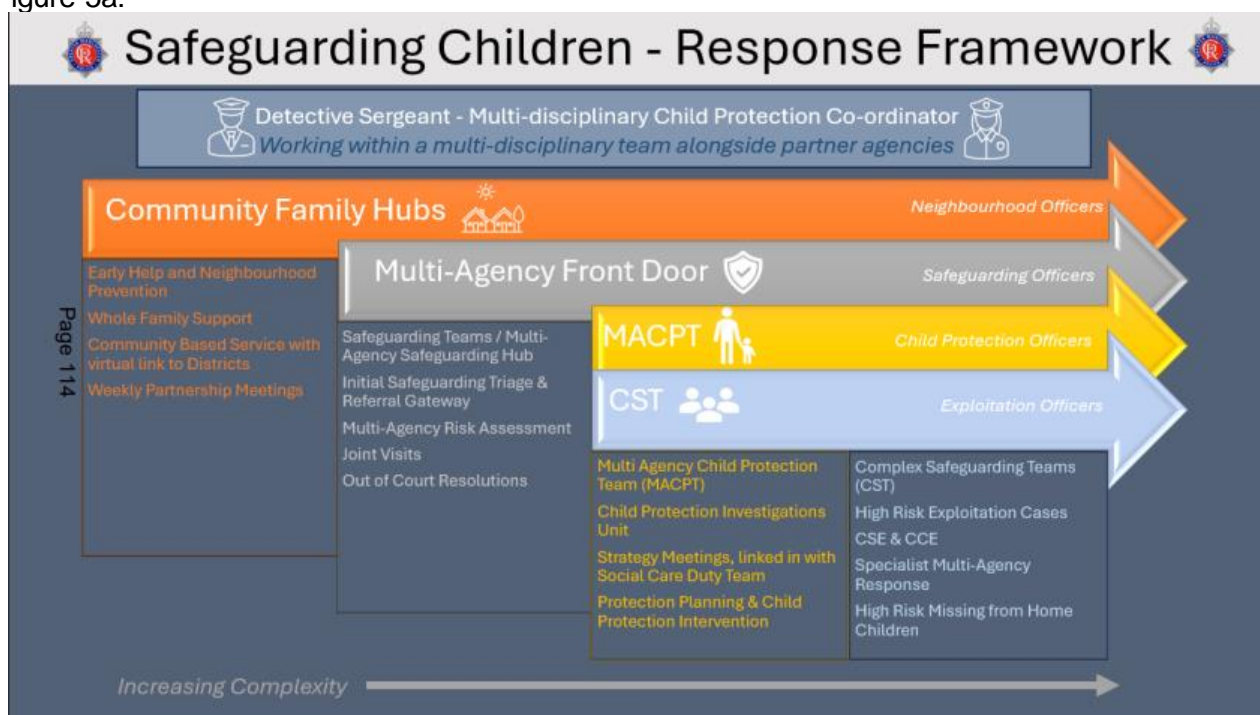
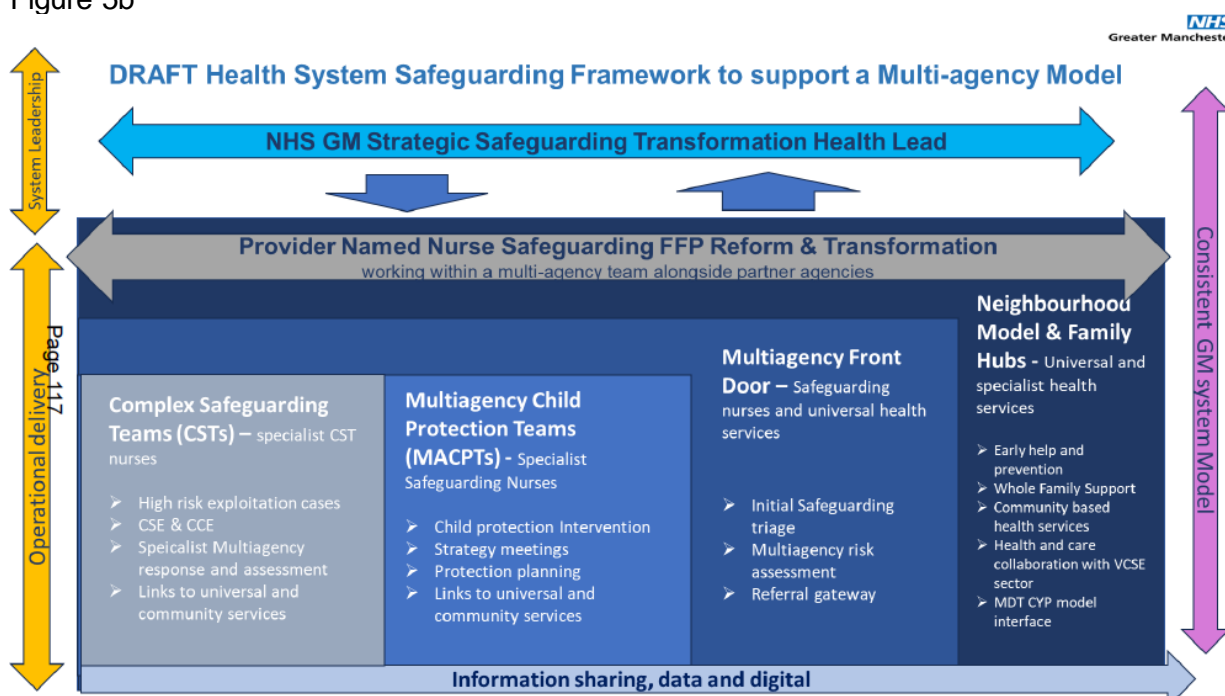
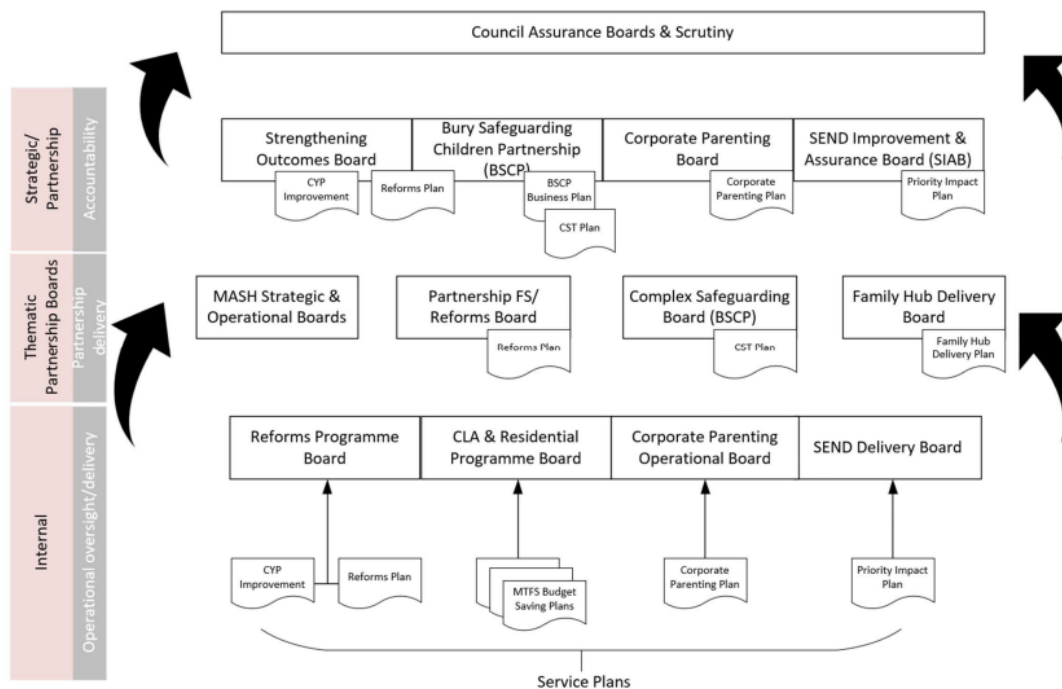


Figure 5b



## 6.0 Governance

- 6.1 Senior leaders (Chief Executives, Lead Members for Children, ICB leads, Chief Constables) must oversee reforms and ensure safe transition. The existing governance and assurance mechanisms in place will ensure shared accountability for the progress of the reforms. This includes Children's Overview & Scrutiny, Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership and Locality Board and our newly formed Strengthening Outcomes Board which has been established to provide partnership support and oversight to the CYP Improvement Plan – see diagram below.
- 6.2 Focused partnership oversight of the reforms in Bury will take place in the Family Safeguarding Strategic Partnership Board in recognition of the connection between the model and the reforms. Terms of Reference and membership are being updated.



- 6.3 In addition, quarterly meetings will take place with the DfE regional team and the delegated safeguarding partners to discuss progress with the reforms.

---

### List of Background Papers:-

[Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#)  
[Stable Homes Built on Love Strategy](#)  
[Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive](#)  
[FFPP Guide](#)

### Contact Details:-

*Beth Speak, CYP Improvement & Transformation Manager*

Executive Director sign off Date:\_\_\_\_\_

JET Meeting Date:\_\_\_\_\_