

Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 14 October 2026
Subject:	Families First Partnership Programme	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet Members on the Families First Partnership reforms, how we are structuring services in Bury in line with the reforms and how we are using the Families First grant funding to help us achieve this.
2. The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme is a national programme led by the Department for Education, which outlines how safeguarding partners should work together more effectively for children and families. The Programme sets out the Government's expected operating model for safeguarding partners, with national implementation expected by March 2027. Certain elements of the reforms are now underpinned by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, whilst other elements are delivered through programme guidance and grant conditions.
3. The FFP reform is a partnership approach, refocusing children's social care system towards prevention, with a more robust multi-agency child protection system in place and greater emphasis on the use of family networks and family group decision making. Services for children and families will become more joined up and focused on working with families, with systems that offer help at the right time and right place.
4. To achieve, the FFP aims, there are three key elements of the programme which work together to provide earlier and seamless support and protection for children and their families. These strands:
 - Family Help, which is a single offer of support across early help and social care.
 - Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT) which is a multi-agency expert team supporting decisions and overseeing child protection practice across social care, education, police, and health.
 - Family Decision Making, which supports more family network meetings and support for parents in making and informing decisions about their lives.

5. There is a focus on multi-agency neighbourhood teams, with consistent lead practitioners and one shared assessment and plan – joining up services to provide early support and stronger relationships with children and families. This aligns with our Family Safeguarding model of practice.
6. There is an expansion of our existing and successful Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Support Service and Kinship Care Support Service. This will support permanence and stability for children and young people, as well as keeping some children within their family network.
7. Our delivery plan was submitted to DfE in December, progress against which is monitored through quarterly returns and quarterly meetings with the DfE Regional Office.
8. In Bury we have developed structures and services around the FFP programme reforms and included staff and partners in discussions regarding our proposals. The next stage is to go through formal consultation.
9. 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 Act 2026 to improve help and protection for children. Bury has been allocated £2.9m for fiscal years 2025-26 and 2026-27, and £2.5m in 2027-28, replacing what was previously Supporting Families funding as part of the consolidated Childrens, Families and Youth Grant Determination.
10. The FFP programme funding is ringfenced for direct investment into the national implementation of Family Help, multi-agency child protection teams and support for family networks and should support local authorities to rebalance spending away from accommodating children in care and increase spend on prevention. New investment into FFP is not designed to displace existing prevention funding (such as targeted early help and child in need services and any other non-statutory spending). FFP funding must be used alongside existing prevention spend to provide additional investment. Department for Education (DfE) will monitor this through asking local authorities to provide additional spend data through the quarterly FFP monitoring returns to ensure existing prevention spend is not displaced, and that overall spend is starting to rebalance the system.
11. 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. Through the grant funding, we have agreed to fund 3 roles in Health to support implementation including the requirement to have health presence in the MACPT, and discussions with GMP continue as they seek to develop a

consistent, GM-wide approach to implementation. They have assured us that we will have GMP presence in the MACPT by 1st April 2027.

Recommendation(s)

12. Cabinet is requested to:
- a. Approve the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme operating model as set out in this report.
 - b. Approve the use of Families First Partnership Programme grant funding to support implementation of the model and associated service transformation arrangements.
 - c. Approve commencement of formal consultation with affected staff and trade unions regarding the proposed organisational and staffing changes arising from implementation of the Programme.
 - d. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children and Young People, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Monitoring Officer, to take such actions as are necessary to implement the approved model and associated operational arrangements.
 - e. Note that implementation of the Programme will contribute to compliance with relevant statutory duties and the reforms introduced by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

13. Implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme is part of the national children's social care reform programme and provides Bury with an opportunity to strengthen our Family Safeguarding model of practice, while also delivering services in line with relevant statutory guidance, including Working Together to Safeguard Children, and the Families First Partnership Programme delivery expectations
14. Families First is a significant system reform programme that will improve outcomes for children and families through earlier intervention, strengthened multi-agency safeguarding and greater family involvement in decision-making. Approval will enable the Council and its partners to comply with national policy expectations, secure the benefits of government investment, establish robust governance and accountability arrangements, and support the delivery of a sustainable, integrated model of family support across Bury

Alternative options considered and rejected

15. Not applicable. The Families First Partnership Programme is a national reform programme supported by programme guidance, grant conditions and elements of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which seeks to reform how services to children and families are delivered by local authority children's services and partner agencies

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Background

16. 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.
17. The social care reforms have four overarching guiding principles:
- 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.
18. 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.
19. The three key delivery strands to the FFPP are:
- Family Help
 - Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)
 - Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

Elements of the reforms are now underpinned by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. In particular, the Family Group Decision Making duty came into force on 15 July 2026. Other aspects of the reforms, including the Family Help operating model, continue to be implemented through the Families First Partnership Programme, safeguarding guidance and associated funding arrangements.

Family Help

20. 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.
21. 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 for the period that 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 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). All child protection plans will be managed by qualified social workers.
22. Family Help teams will work in neighbourhoods: Bury East, Bury West and Bury North, Prestwich, and Whitefield. This is aligned to Bury's neighbourhood model and ensures connectivity on the same footprint with wider public service leadership teams and integrated adult health and care teams. This ensures that families have easier access to services and lead practitioners build stronger relationships with professionals and community resources.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)

23. 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.
24. 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.

25. 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).

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

26. 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 these children and their families increases the likelihood of stable, long-lasting relationships through which children can safely live within their family networks.

Kinship Care

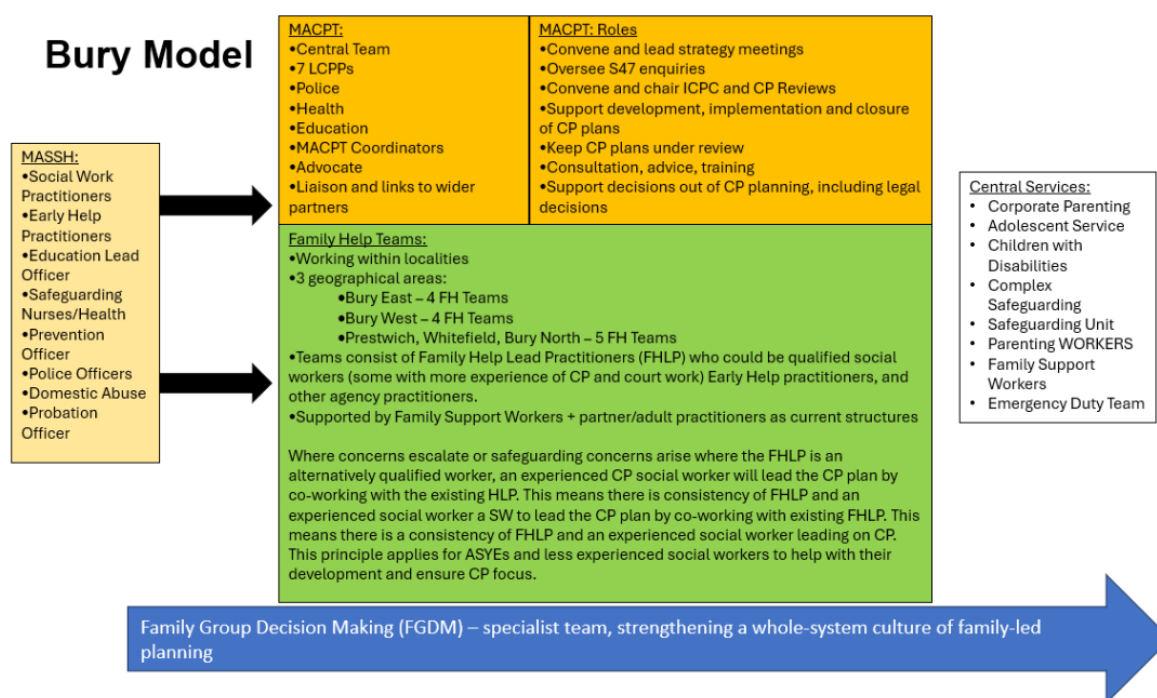
27. As part of the wider support for parents and carers we are expanding our existing Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Support Service and Kinship Care Support Service. This will support children in more stable and permanent homes.

Bury's Proposed Model

28. The Family Safeguarding will continue to be our model of practice in our work with children and families.
29. Bury will re-align Targeted Early Help, Duty and Assessment and Family Safeguarding Teams to work as integrated Family Help Teams based within the three neighbourhood localities. Whilst we will allocate workers into neighbourhood teams, we are not yet able to move all staff out into the localities due to lack of suitable premises. Whilst undertaking the same work as they do now, these teams will work together to ensure that children and their families receive an earlier and seamless service, with one worker throughout their involvement.

30. We are developing a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team with our partners in Health, Police and Education, in line with the Families First Partnership Programme and associated safeguarding guidance. This will support the Local Authority in ensuring that children are safe and that partners are fully involved in making tough decisions. We will strengthen the involvement of parents, carers and wider families in decision making by expanding the use of family network meetings and an Advocacy Service to support parents and carers who are involved in the child protection process.

Figure 1: Bury's proposed model



Staff Structures and Impact for Staff

31. Whilst the Families First Partnership is intended to support service growth and increase overall capacity through additional staffing, the proposed future operating model may impact a small number of existing roles within the service. As a result, there is a potential for a limited number of redundancies. Any employees affected by these changes will be supported in accordance with the Council's Redeployment and Redundancy Procedures, with every effort made to identify suitable alternative employment opportunities where available.
32. We have held informal discussions with all staff within Children and Young People Services and have responded to their questions. We have focused on the impact for staff and have developed a link where staff can ask questions and see responses to questions. We have also had meetings and discussions with partners through governance boards, but also in helping develop aspects of the new structure and services. We are working with Voluntary and

Community Sector in commissioning Advocacy Services and helping us gain views of communities.

33. Consultation is due to begin mid-October until end of November 2026. A closure of consultation meeting should take place early December 2026 to confirm the outcome of the consultation to staff. The Families First Restructure Consultation report sets out this in more detail.

Family Help Teams

34. Summary of proposed changes to deliver services through Family Help teams:

- **Heads of Service** – there will be changes to the responsibilities under each of the Heads of Service.
- **Service Managers** – there will be changes to the responsibilities under each of the service managers. There is no change to the job descriptions. *There will be 1.5 additional posts across the structure.*
- **Team Managers** – there will be no changes to job descriptions. Team Managers will manage alternatively qualified lead practitioners as well as social workers and advanced practitioners. As with other posts, they will change teams and will work within a neighbourhood locality. *There will be 3 additional posts across the Family Help Teams.*
- **Team Leaders in Targeted Early Help** – will become **Family Safeguarding Neighbourhood Co-ordinators**. There are different elements of their role:
 - Supporting a strong infrastructure that enables schools, health services, community organisations, and other partners to identify emerging need, lead support plans and access specialist advice, consultation, and interventions to families before concerns escalate into statutory services. Through the Early Help Navigators, they will support the team around the family plans.
 - Ensuring that these partners and communities are also supporting lead practitioners in providing multi-agency support to children once they are receiving Family Help support.
 - Work alongside management on moving staff into neighbourhoods, using their knowledge and links with partners and communities.
 - Co-ordinate the work of the Family Safeguarding Adult workers, managing demand, allocation, quality, and maintaining links with host agencies.

There are no additional posts required.
- **Advanced Practitioners (Social Work Qualified)** – advanced practitioners will have reduced caseloads to fulfil their responsibilities in supporting less experienced staff as well as taking on responsibility for child protection work

where the family help lead practitioner is not a qualified social worker. There are no changes to job descriptions. *No additional posts are required.*

- **Advanced Practitioners (Alternatively Qualified)** - this is a new role and a career opportunity for alternatively qualified practitioners. This ensures that we retain our excellent targeted early help staff and offer them opportunities for progression. *Additional 5.5 additional posts required.*
- **Social Workers** – social work job descriptions will not change, but they will undertake the role of Family Help Lead Practitioners. However social workers within our Duty and Assessment team will now be required to retain relationships with children and families beyond the child and family assessment. We will not have a Duty and Assessment Team in our new Family Help structure; this is in line with ensuring that families retain a consistent relationship with their lead practitioner. Social workers will also be in different teams and working to specific neighbourhoods, within a team where there are also alternatively qualified lead practitioners. Social workers will still have the key responsibilities for complex child in need and child protection work and supervision and team manager responsibilities remain the same. *No additional social worker posts required on the establishment within Family Help.*
- **Targeted Early Help Workers** – they will become Family Help Lead Practitioners and will be part of the Family Help teams, working alongside social workers. As they currently work in neighbourhoods, it is unlikely that their base will change. The new Family Help Lead Practitioner role will enable these workers to support children and families who are subject to a child in need plan. This is in line with the new Working Together Guidance, but we will ensure that they are appropriately supported, with additional Advanced Practitioner roles. We have written new job descriptions for targeted early help workers, with some career progression from level 1 to level 2. *No additional posts are required.*
- **Family Safeguarding Adult Practitioners** – our approach to implementation of Families First is via our Family Safeguarding model of practice, and additional adult practitioners will be required to ensure that we can continue with our model of practice across all team. This addresses one of the fundamental aims of the reforms in building genuinely multi-skilled, multi-agency teams. *We will require 3 additional mental health workers, 3 additional early break workers and 1 domestic abuse practitioner.*
- **Business Support** – teams will need to be aligned to the new service structure. Business Support do not currently support all the social work teams who will form part of the new structure. Business Support staff from MASSH, DAT and Family Safeguarding will come together to provide Business Support for the new Family Help teams; to ensure fidelity with the Family Safeguarding model across all 13 teams we will require additional capacity. We have trialled running this at lower levels than recommended but the support around group

supervision has fallen to the team managers as a result. We recognise that a consistent approach to Family Safeguarding group supervision and therefore ensuring support to deliver this is a priority. *3 additional posts are required.*

Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT)

35. Summary of proposed changes to implement the MACPT:
- **Child Protection Chairs** – will be offered the new MACPT **Lead Child Protection Practitioner** roles. There are more MACPT roles than CP Chairs so we will be advertising for these posts. The numbers of LCPPs will be based on an analysis of workload and we are currently projecting that we will need *approximately 3 additional LCPPs.*
 - **Advocacy** – the Families First guidance promotes the support for parents and carers who are involved in the child protection process. We are working with the Voluntary and Community Sector to recruit to this post and looking at the feasibility of providing volunteers to support parents and carers.
 - **MASSH** – Following a peer review of MASSH, we will be recruiting additional staff to manage increasing demands and ensure that there is sufficient capacity to undertake checks and triage information. *There will be an additional 2 team managers (1 qualified social worker and 1 early help), 2 social workers and 4 Referral Information Co-ordinators (RICs).*

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

36. The requirement to offer Family Group Decision Making before care proceedings in most cases is now provided for by section 1 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which commenced on 15 July 2026 e:Proposed changes to deliver FGDM services in line with the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children and Families First Partnership Programme guidance include::
- We already have an established and well-performing FGDM team, but we will be expanding posts to ensure that we meet demand and can provide this essential support to families earlier in their involvement with services. *Additional 2 additional FGDM practitioners required.*

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

Please summarise how this links to the Let's Do It Strategy.

37. The Families First Partnership Programme is aligned with Bury's Let's Do It Strategy and supports the delivery of its core principles. The proposed operating model adopts a neighbourhood-based approach, with Family Help teams aligned to local communities and wider public service delivery arrangements, ensuring support is delivered as close as possible to children,

families and communities. It is enterprising in its focus on system redesign and prevention, shifting resources towards earlier intervention, reducing escalation to statutory services where appropriate, and securing better long-term outcomes for children and families. It reflects the principle of working together through integrated multi-agency Family Help and Child Protection arrangements, shared assessments and planning, and strengthened collaboration between the Council, health partners, education, police, the voluntary and community sector, and families themselves. The Families First Programme is fundamentally strengths-based, building on Bury's established Family Safeguarding model of practice and expanding the use of Family Group Decision Making to recognise and mobilise the strengths, assets, relationships and networks that exist within families and communities. Through these reforms, the Council and its partners will be better placed to provide coordinated, relationship-based support at the right time, improving outcomes for children and young people while supporting the wider Let's Do It vision of enabling residents and communities to thrive.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA and make **specific reference regarding the protected characteristic of Looked After Children**. There must be a signed off EIA template appended with a full analysis or explanation as to why an analysis is not needed for the report to be put forward to Cabinet. Sign off to be completed by the Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Manager (contact I.cawley@bury.gov.uk for advice).*

A full equality analysis has been completed. It is anticipated that this activity will have mostly positive impacts with mitigations required in some areas so potential disadvantages are neutralised. There are no equalities concerns at this stage and the EQIA will remain under review as this activity progresses.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the Environmental impact of this decision. Please include the impact on both **Carbon emissions** (contact climate@bury.gov.uk for advice) and **Biodiversity** (contact S.Tinsley@bury.gov.uk and Dennis.whittle@bury.gov.uk for advice)*

1. N/A

Procurement Implications:

2. Procurement are working with CYP to ensure any requirements such as the Advocacy with the VCSE are compliant with Contract Procedure Rules and the wider Procurement Act 2023
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Legal Implications:

3. The Council's children's social care functions continue to derive principally from the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and associated safeguarding legislation.

The proposed model forms part of implementation of the national Families First Partnership Programme, which is intended to reform the delivery of family support, safeguarding and child protection services.

The Council is required to have regard to relevant statutory guidance, including Working Together to Safeguard Children. In addition, certain elements of the reforms now have a statutory footing through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, including the requirement for Family Group Decision Making prior to care proceedings in most cases. The Family Group Decision Making provisions commenced on 15 July 2026.

Other elements of the reforms, including the detailed Family Help operating model, Multi-Disciplinary Family Help Teams and wider implementation requirements, are delivered through the Families First Partnership Programme Guide, associated funding arrangements and local safeguarding partnership arrangements rather than through a single statutory duty.

The proposals within this report are considered capable of being implemented within the Council's existing statutory functions and legal powers, subject to completion of the necessary consultation, governance and employment processes where applicable. Any revised delivery arrangements involving partner agencies will need to continue to comply with statutory safeguarding duties, information-sharing obligations, public law requirements and data protection legislation

Financial Implications:

4. The Children, Families and Youth (Revenue) Grant is ringfenced combining the above delivery of FFP programme, of which currently £2,981,124 relates, and comes in to council alongside the Holiday Activity Fund included within this grant.
5. Additional Posts Proposed (estimated including on-costs)
 - CYP Directorate
 - 33 Full time equivalents at estimated £1,846,384

Transformation (up to 30%, £894,337)

3 Health roles, tbc, (cannot be statutory posts as above) estimated
£200,000

Transformation costs will be required to be phased reduction over life of grant once systems, delivery models and ways of working embedded into overall programme. This will need to be managed over life of grant alongside premises requirements across the 3 localities and respective infrastructure. Some transformation costs may be ongoing beyond the life of the grant linked to corporate requirements aligned with delivery (i.e. data post(s))

6. The above does not include either post that will be removed from the overall structure and any job evaluation and changes in pay grades because of this mandated reform.
 7. The Government expectations are for the successful delivery of the FFPP to generate savings across the country as they expect reduction in emergency interventions, social worker time and subsequent placements as well as save Bury council from the risks attached to non-statutory services being removed as part of savings programmes and related exit costs. This will also support the CYP directorate to strengthen its delivery of existing savings, particularly those that have been challenging linked to Edge of Care
 8. There is also the expectation that prevention areas proven to work (from agreed baseline measures) are re-invested in further to build upon this delivery.
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Appendices:

Please list any appended documents (please save these as clearly labelled separate documents in the Teams folder).

N/A

Background papers:

Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.

- May 2022 – publication of Josh Macalister’s Independent Review of Children’s Social Care
[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.
[Stable Homes Built on Love Strategy](#)
- 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.
[Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive](#)
- 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.
[FFPP Guide](#)

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
MASSH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub
FFP	Family First Partnership
MACPT	Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams
FGDM	Family Group Decision Making