

Families First Partnership Event

Event details, agenda & pre-reading

Date	Thursday 26 June 2025
Time	9:15am arrival for networking and coffee 9:30am start to 12pm
Location	The Mornflake Stadium, Gresty Rd, Crewe CW2 6EB
Purpose	To establish a shared understanding of the Families First reforms, generate energy and commitment across the partnership, and spark initial conversations for further development through future, more detailed workshops.

No.	Running order	Lead Presenter
1.	Welcome and introduction	Councillor Laura Crane , Lead Member for Children's Services Dawn Godfrey , Executive Director of Children's Services Josette Niyokindi , Associate Director of Quality and Safety Improvement Cheshire East Place
3.	What is Families First?	Kerry Madden , Families First Programme Director
4.	Group Reflections	Break out activity
5.	Ready, Steady, Go!	Kerry Madden , Families First Programme Director
6.	Closing remarks	Dawn Godfrey , Executive Director of Children's Services

No.	Essential pre-reading & resources to get us started!
1.	Cheshire East Families First Partnership Event Pre-reading (attached to email)
2.	Sign up to the Knowledge Hub – the one-stop-shop for the National Families First team
3.	Join the Families First Programme Knowledge Hub Group
4.	The National Guidance to support the implementation of the reforms



Families First Partnership

Cheshire East Partnership
Event, 26th June
Pre-reading



The Families First Partnership

The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme sets out a system-wide reform of family support, focused on early intervention, integration, and a whole-family approach. It aims to ensure all families—regardless of background or complexity of need—can access the right help at the right time, through a connected system spanning universal, targeted, and statutory services.

The model brings together **targeted early help**, **Child in Need**, and **Child Protection** into a **seamless continuum**, with **Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs)** maintaining consistent relationships and **Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)** providing statutory oversight where required. The approach supports dynamic, needs-led planning and aims to reduce duplication and escalation into crisis.

This transformation requires strong local leadership, integrated workforce development, and alignment with local priorities to build a resilient, responsive system that puts children and families at the centre.

Over the past 18 months 10 Local Authorities have been testing and co-developing these reforms with Central Government. As we co-develop what these reforms mean for us in Cheshire East we will build on the learning shared from the 10 Pathfinders. Further information can be found in the Guidance document [[The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#)] and on khub.net, which contains a wealth of resources from the 10 Pathfinders.

During the event we will spend time immersing ourselves in the details of these reform areas and collectively agree what we want successful implementation to look and feel like in Cheshire East.

It would be incredibly helpful if you could familiarise yourself with the reform areas in advance of the event. This pack provides a very high-level summary of each area.

We look forward to seeing you on the day!



Reforms to Family Help

Family Help reforms represent a major step towards a *seamless, integrated, whole-family approach* to support. It brings together **targeted early help and Child in Need (CIN)** services within a single, responsive continuum of support, within the existing legislative framework. The focus is on flexibility, relationship-based practice, and early intervention, ensuring families get the right help at the right time, with minimal disruption or handovers between services.

At the heart of the reforms are **Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs)** – skilled professionals (social workers or alternatively qualified practitioners) who act as the consistent point of contact for families. They lead assessment and planning, coordinate a multi-agency “Team Around the Family” (TAF), and retain the relationship even when child protection concerns arise. Their work spans from early help through to supporting delivery of child protection plans alongside **Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs)** and **Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)**.

Delivery of Family Help reforms requires building or expanding **multi-disciplinary teams**, to include co-working/co-location between a wide range of practitioners such as domestic abuse, mental health, youth justice, SEND, and housing.

Key operational changes in Family Help include:

- A **single, evolving assessment and plan** that follows the family, reducing duplication and ensuring continuity.
- A **refreshed threshold document (to be in place by March 2026)**, clarifying fluid movement between levels of need and removing unnecessary gatekeeping.
- A reformed **front door** model with integrated triage, aligning MASH or early help contact points with Family Help services and making access more inclusive and de-stigmatised.

Family Help also strengthens support around *reunification, family group decision-making*, and children affected by *parental imprisonment*. Local systems should proactively engage families in identifying their lead practitioner, reflect on lived experiences (including protected characteristics), and ensure support is holistic and sustainable.

See Section 1 (p.16) of the [Families First Programme Guide](#) for more detail on the full delivery expectations for Family Help.



Integrated Front Door

Every local area should ensure families get the right support at the right time through effective "front door" systems—the first point of contact for help. These systems vary but should be:

- Integrated with Family Help
- Accessible and non-stigmatising
- Focused on timely and appropriate support
- Provide an out of hours service, to provide support outside core working time

There is an expectation that an integrated Front Door will:

- Embed a relationship-based approach.
- Triage contacts and referrals to the right level of support.
- Connect families to universal and community services.
- Review how Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) can better align with early help or other family contact points.
- Involve a broad mix of professionals, such as education, health, police and youth workers.

The Guidance provides for local flexibility for the design of the Front Door. For example, it can be virtual, physical and/or co-located with partners, and Family Hubs can act as access points.

Local partnerships can determine the practitioners and agencies at the front door for example, including practitioners with expertise in:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Youth work
- Domestic abuse
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)



The expectation is the front door will collaborate with the MACPT to ensure alignment for swift child protection action.

Digital platforms and social media need to be considered to enable families and practitioners to navigate services.

Reforms to Child Protection

The reforms aim to deliver **more effective, inclusive, and responsive child protection** by embedding **expertise within Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)**, maintaining strong **leadership from Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs)**, and ensuring **seamless collaboration** with Family Help.

MACPTs will be **expert-led teams** delivering statutory child protection functions in line with *Working Together* and the *National Framework*. They will work closely with **Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs)**, who retain the relationship with the family, ensuring continuity. Core responsibilities include:

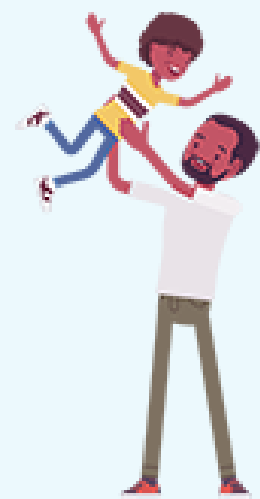
- Chairing strategy meetings and conferences
- Leading Section 47 enquiries and investigations
- Overseeing and reviewing child protection plans
- Providing advice and initiating emergency action
- Preparing for PLO or court proceedings

MACPTs must respond to **both intra- and extra-familial harm**, including domestic abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and online harms. They need to tailor practice to local patterns of harm and demographics, including cultural, ethnic, and community-specific factors. MACPT membership should include highly skilled, experienced and qualified social workers, police officers, registered health practitioners and persons with experience of education. Safeguarding partners should determine which other relevant agencies to include, e.g. probation, youth work, domestic abuse services, in line with **local need**.

The Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCPP) will be a qualified, experienced social workers embedded within MACPTs. They will:

- Lead statutory decisions, chair conferences (independent of FHLPs), and bring expertise on all harm types, including extra-familial.
- Support multi-agency practice, engage families effectively, and ensure inclusive, anti-discriminatory practice.

See Section 2 (p.28) of the [Families First Programme Guide](#) for more detail on the full delivery expectations for MACPTs.



Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

FGDM is a voluntary process enabling families and their wider networks to create plans that support a child's safety and well-being, aiming to keep children safely at home and out of local authority care where possible. Family networks may include relatives, friends, or other significant people in the child's life.

Evidence shows that children have better outcomes when they stay with their families. FGDM, especially through Family Group Conferences (FGCs), is effective in reducing the need for care proceedings and improving family-led decision-making. It empowers families with support from **Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs)** and **Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)**, who help ensure plans are safe, legal, and meet the child's needs.

FGDM should be integrated at all stages—Family Help, Child Protection, Care, and reunification. Local authorities must:

- Identify and involve the family network early.
- Offer FGDM at key decision points, especially at pre-proceedings.
- Ensure facilitators are trained and independent where needed.
- Seek the child's and parents' views throughout the process.
- Ensure plans are reviewed and integrated into ongoing support plans.

See Section 3 (p.37) of the [Families First Programme Guide](#) for more detail on the full delivery expectations for Family Group Decision Making.

