

**Children's, Adults, Health & Well-Being Policy Scrutiny Committee.**  
**15<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

# **Bath & North East Somerset Families First Partnership Programme**

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**Improving People's Lives**



# Purpose

- Provide the Committee with an information update about the Families First Partnership Programme of reform
- Set out the statutory context of the programme
- Describe the B&NES local implementation plan
- Give an update on the DfE allocated funding and commitments
- Highlight any key risks and issues
- Set out the local priorities, progress and key milestones and next steps.



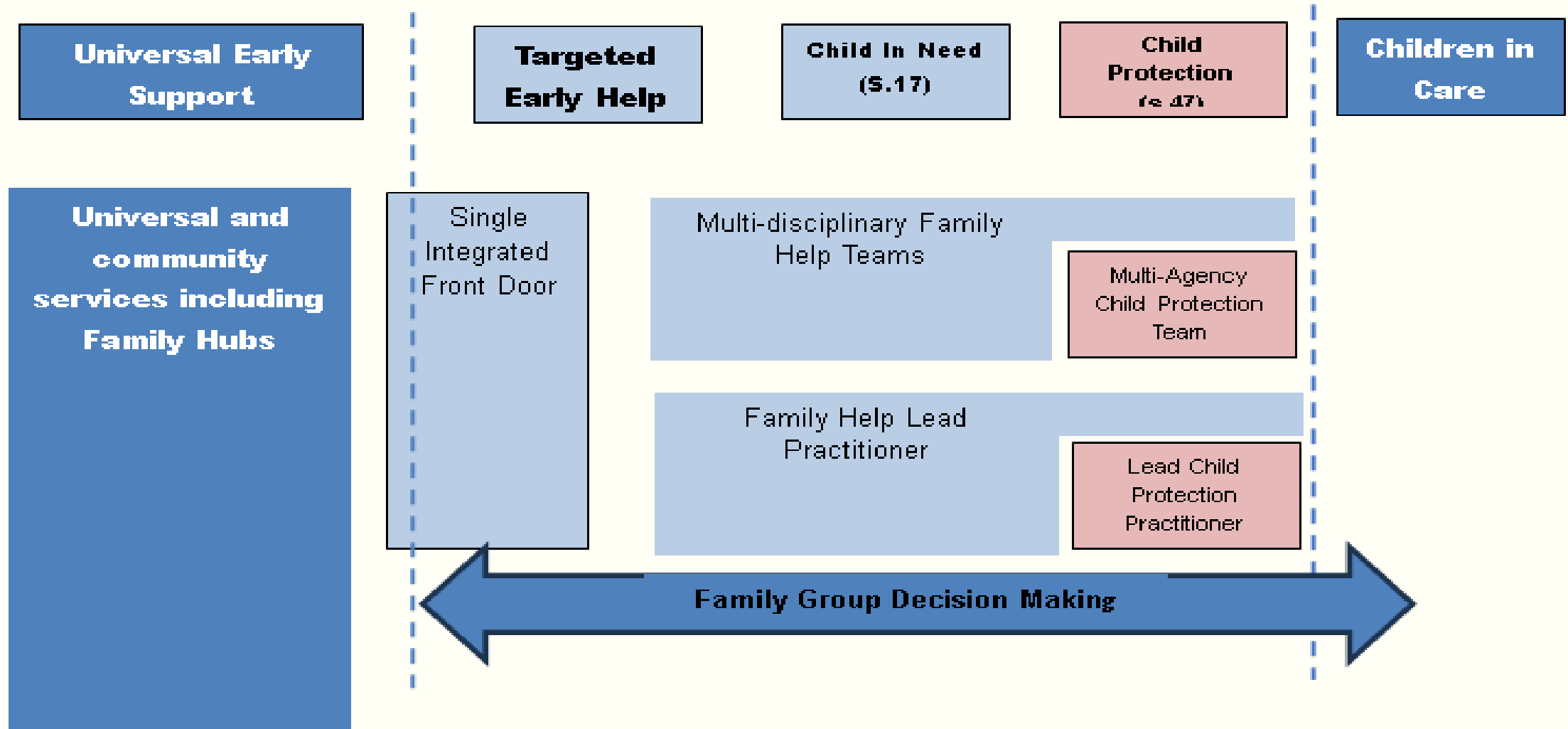
# Recommendations

1. Note the national requirements and local response to the Programme
2. Comment on the proposed approach to service design and engagement
3. Identify any areas for further scrutiny or assurance

# Background

- The Families First Partnership Programme (The Programme) is a national reform arising from the Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill and outcomes of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care
- Joint Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DoH) Programme guidance was published 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025
- Key Objectives of the Programme
  - Strengthening early family support and reducing reliance on statutory services and the number of children who need to come into our care
  - Integrate Family Help, Child in Need and statutory child protection to create a seamless system of support for children and families
  - Establish a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT) to support and oversee child protection concerns
  - Embed Family Group Decision Making across all services (FGDM) to ensure family inclusion in planning and support decisions.
  - Create an Integrated Front Door for all contacts and referrals.
- Influenced also by the National Panel's review of two high profile child deaths published in 2023 – underpinning the requirement to develop an MACPT with experienced Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs)

# An Integrated System of Family Help and Multi-Agency Child Protection



# B&NES Local Response

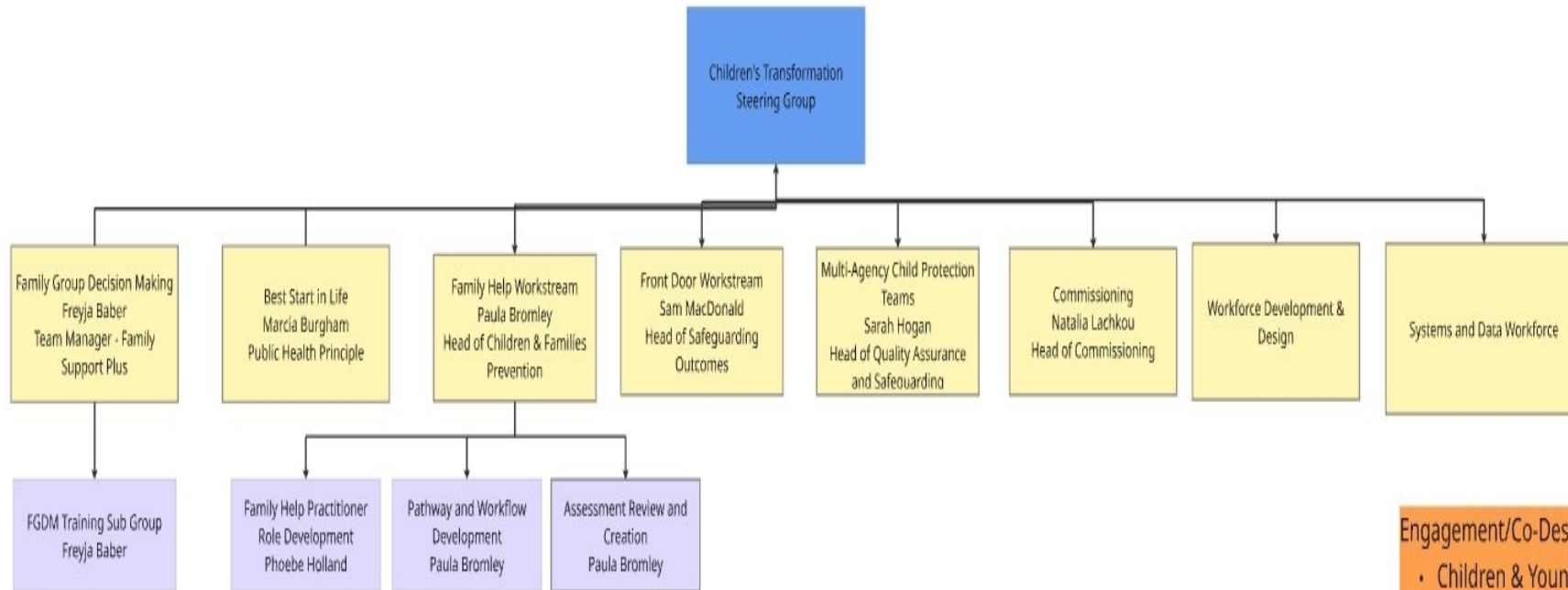
- *Vision: To Create a system of help and support that places families at the centre of all decision-making, ensuring every child grows up safe, supported and able to thrive within their family and community. Supported by continued commitment to strengthening and expanding our current prevention approaches so that families received help at the earliest opportunity, reducing the need for statutory intervention and preventing escalation of risk.*
- Supported by:
  - An integrated approach prioritising early intervention and prevention
  - A commitment to work collaboratively across agencies to collectively identify emerging needs and respond in a timely way with tailored, holistic support.
  - An approach to empowering families through Family Group Decision-Making with families having a strong voice in genuinely influencing decisions that affect their lives.
  - Developing a culture that values partnership, promotes inclusion and delivers consistent, high-quality support.

# Programme Approach

- Firstly, we have gained an understanding of the needs and demand within B&NES across all services, undertaking a thorough analysis of:
  - Demand and caseloads
  - Staffing establishments
  - Use of financial resources to support the workforce establishment
  - Process and systems used across all services
- Based on this understanding a Programme Management approach has been adopted providing structure and resources need to affect change
- The Children's Transformation Steering Group (meeting monthly) oversees the Programme and has established the following workstreams:
  - Integrated Front Door: a single point of entry for those children and families needed help and support
  - Family Help: developing a seamless system that ensures early identification and support, led by Family Help Lead Practitioners from a variety of disciplines
  - Multi- Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT): establishing a team that brings agencies together to improve safeguarding responses and developing the role of the Lead Child Protection Practitioners to step in when a family's needs change and there are safeguarding concerns
  - Family Group Decision Making: provided opportunities for families to have agency in the development of their support. This will be provided right across Family Help and MACPT.



# Programme Governance



Discrete project for developing local Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children and Child Experienced.

- B&NES uses a structured approach with discovery phases to assess needs for effective programme implementation.

- Governance is overseen by a Transformation Steering Group meeting monthly to monitor progress and manage risks.

## Engagement/Co-Design

- Children & Young People
- Parents/Carers
- Stakeholders
- Commissioned Providers

Workstreams meet bi-weekly to refine plans, while subgroups handle specific tasks ensuring focused delivery.

- Dedicated groups address data systems and workforce issues, supporting coordinated planning and timely execution.



# Statutory Considerations

- The Programme does not have its own statutory footing as a standalone legal requirements
- Operates within the statutory framework for children's social care in England set out in the following statutory duties:
  - Children Act 1989 – particularly Section 17 (duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need).
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (statutory guidance) – which sets out the responsibilities of local authorities, health, and police as statutory safeguarding partners.
  - The Families First Partnership Programme guide explicitly states that it does not replace statutory guidance; rather, it supports implementation of reforms within those duties.
- The Programme is policy-driven, not a new statutory duty. It builds on existing legal obligations under the Children Act and statutory guidance like Working Together, while introducing reforms supported by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

# Funding

FFP Funding			
	Actual Spend Reported Q2	Commitment 2025-26	Total
Transformation Costs	£ 61,200	£ 206,833	£ 268,033
Partner Agencies	£ 40,000		£ 40,000
Workforce Dev		119410	£ 119,410
Sufficiency Data		50000	£ 50,000
Total	£ 101,200	£ 376,243	£ 477,443
To be allocated			£ 51,485

# Progress – Integrated Front Door

- Vision: To create a single, streamlined access point for all contacts related to Family Help and Child Protection.
  - Plans to include Early Help Practitioners to ensure families receive support at the earliest opportunity
  - Include Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs) to strengthen and support timely decision-making.
    - LCPPs – experienced child protection professionals, collaborating with partners to respond to significant harm concerns. Support Section 47 enquiries, chair strategy meetings and conferences.
  - Bringing agencies together in this way will reduce duplication, improve coordination and foster joint problem-solving and shared learning.
- **The working group has designed options for operating models that will implement a unified, accessible entry point with all referrals being triaged to the area of support.**

# Progress – Family Help and the Family Help Lead Practitioner

- Vision: Establish integrated, multi-disciplinary teams supporting families across a continuum of need, delivering a seamless and consistent service, reducing change for families as their circumstances evolve/risk increases.
  - Teams will be made up of a variety of disciplines with professionals working collaboratively to provide holistic support from the Family Help Lead Practitioner (FHLP)
  - FHLPs will be allocated families on a continuum of need ensuring, where possible, continuity of worker, and building trusted relationships with families – reducing risk and improving outcomes through strengths-based approaches
  - FHLPs will undertake whole family assessments and co-design Family Plans that will lead to sustainable improvements for families
- The working group has designed a variety of options for operating models that will implement multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams.

# Progress – Multi-agency Child Protection Team and the Lead Child Protection Practitioner

- Driven by the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel's review of high-profile child deaths emphasising the need for strong decision-making in respect of significant harm.
  - B&NES considering 2 options
    - (i) Where all family Help Teams have a multi-agency approach including a LCPP chairing strategy meetings, overseeing all child protection investigations and chairing child protection conferences
    - (ii) A core Multi-Agency Child Protection Team with a team of LCPPs supporting the whole service in these functions and managed outside of the Family Help teams to offer quality assurance and consistency of decision-making.
  - LCPPs will be social workers with substantial frontline child protection practice experience.
- The working group has worked to further develop these options ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

# Progress – Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

- FGDM will be embedded throughout the system of help, support and protection – not just at crisis point
- Will be aligned with safeguarding processes supporting safe decision-making for children (Likely the Children's Well-Being and Schools Bill will introduce a statutory requirement to offer this before applying for a care or supervision order)
- Aimed at empowering families to take the lead in planning for safety and well-being
- We have well established approaches to Family Group Conferencing (wider family and friends' network has the opportunity to understand and talk about concerns and plan for the child(ren). Organised by a coordinator with social workers and other professionals in attendance- allows for private time for the family to create their own plan.
- We will ensure family led decision making is embedded within Family Help Teams and the MACPT – FGDM principles will be at the heart of practice.
- **The working group has developed options of how this will practically work in B&NES**



# Risks and Mitigations

Continued partner engagement to ensure full implementation of the reforms is critical

Regular engagement events/activities and senior leadership discussions to maintain engagement.

Current Early Help approaches mean there is more work to be done in this area than others.

This work has been defined and is being worked through workstreams and Business Change.

Service redesign is required to respond fully to the reforms – DfE Timescales are challenging

Regular discussion with the DfE to offer assurance around our plans with support of a July implementation date.

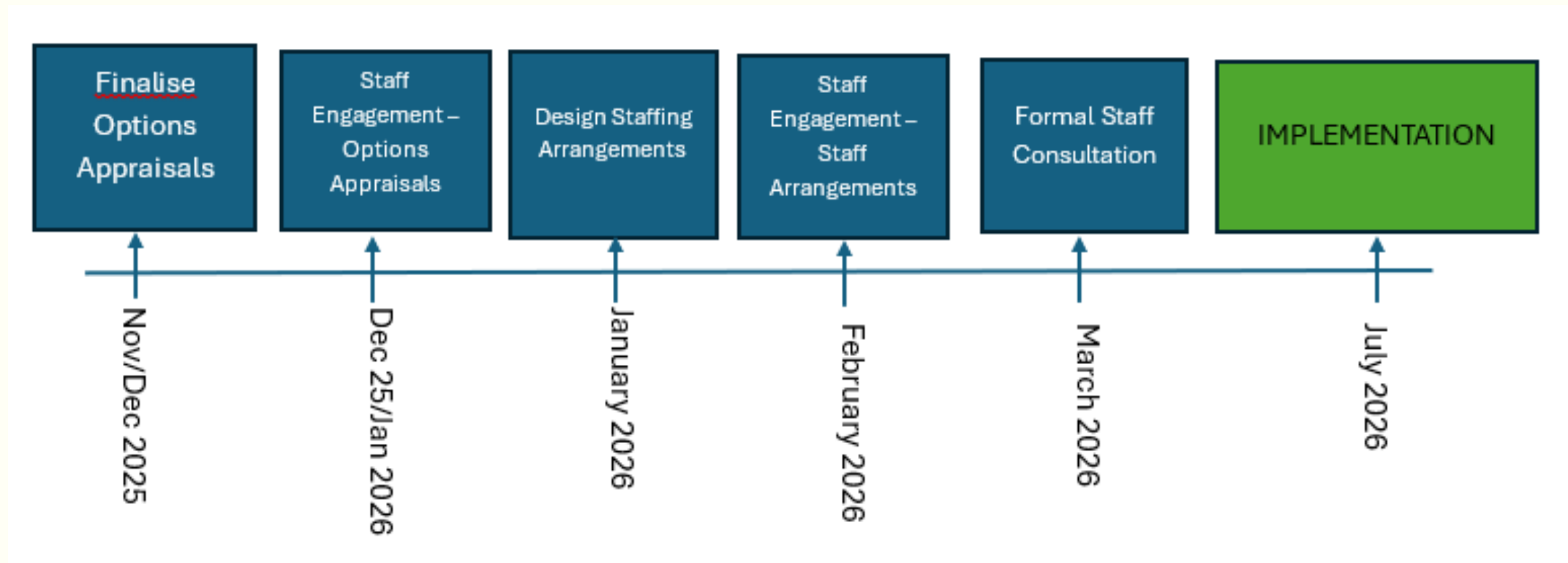
Workstream leads leading on changes alongside normal duties presents some risks around timely implementation.

AD Resource, additional business change resource to support workstream leads. Family Help workstream has additional support from the Consultant Social Worker. Additional project management resource appointed to provide additional capacity.

Availability of consistent data around demand, caseloads, and staffing establishment could be stronger

Heads of Service and managers have worked with the programme team to validate and endorse the data to enable capacity planning for the future.

# Key Timelines and Next Steps





# Questions