

Families First Partnership Reforms – 7-Minute Briefing

What is Families First?

Families First Partnership (FFP) is a new way of organising support for children and families. It brings together early help, children's social care, health, education, police and the VCFSE so families experience a more coordinated system. The aim is to reduce duplication, provide earlier help, and ensure families receive one single assessment and one joined-up plan. The model is built on relationships, community support and multi-agency collaboration, with family voice at its core

What the Future Family Help Model Looks Like

The long-term ambition is a place based Family Help system operating within neighbourhoods. In this model, teams from across agencies work around clusters of schools, supported by a Multi-Agency team. A single Family Help Lead Practitioner becomes the main coordinating professional for each family, regardless of agency. Health, education, social care and community services contribute to one shared plan rather than separate ones. The focus is on relationships, clearer roles and earlier intervention

Phase 1: The Bootle Pilot

Phase 1 is the first practical step. It brings Children's Social Care and Early Help staff together in geographically based Pods within the Bootle neighbourhood. The aim is to test neighbourhood working through shared supervision, shared decision making and aligned practice. Location-based working will help us understand what co-location enabled, what barriers exist and what needs refining. Phase 1 allows us to test the single assessment and plan, examine caseload flow, establish communication methods, and identify risks and opportunities before wider rollout.

How Phase 1 Leads Into Phase 2

Learning from Bootle will shape how the wider multi-agency model is implemented. It will tell us what infrastructure is needed for joint decision-making, what common processes will work across agencies, and how the Family Help system can align effectively with the Neighbourhood Health MDT. It also provides insight into the practicalities of relationship-based working, co-location, joint supervision, and integrated planning.

What This Means for Partners

As Families First expands, partners will benefit from a more coordinated system with fewer duplicated assessments and clearer accountability. Joint working across health, education, police, CSC and the voluntary sector will become more consistent. Families will experience continuity and more timely support. For partners, it will also mean contributing to shared plans, working on a neighbourhood footprint, and aligning services where possible to support integrated practice. We now need partners to help shape the next stage. This includes considering how triage might work, what opportunities exist for co-location, what physical assets could support neighbourhood delivery, how shared or pooled resources might operate, and what digital or information-sharing solutions may be required. We want to identify both opportunities and practical barriers early, so we can design solutions together.

Why Change is Needed

Families and professionals told us the system is fragmented with duplicated assessments, unclear roles and too many workers involved. Families want continuity, staff want clearer pathways and better joint working. Families First responds to this

Next Steps

Phase 1 - the Bootle Pilot - will 'go live' on Monday 13 April 2026. Phase 1 will continue through 2026 as we refine the model. Wider rollout of Family Help across the remaining neighbourhoods is expected later in the year. Ongoing updates will be shared through newsletters, briefing sessions and subgroup work. Further information, resources and engagement materials are available through the Families First webpage.

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