

Briefing Paper: Families First Partnership Programme (2026–2027)

Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

Date: 15th July 2026

Audience: Statutory and relevant safeguarding partners across education, local authority services, health, police, voluntary and community sector

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing provides safeguarding partners with a concise overview of the key expectations set out in the [Families first partnership programme guide year 2](#). It highlights the changes partners will need to support during 2026–2027 as local areas move from planning and transformation into full delivery of the Families First Partnership (FFP) reforms.

Context and Rationale

The Families First Partnership Programme is a national reform programme designed to rebalance the children's social care system towards earlier help, stronger family support and more effective multi-agency safeguarding. The programme aims to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the earliest opportunity, reducing escalation to crisis and enabling more focused action where there are concerns about significant harm.

The reforms are built around three connected components:

- A single Family Help offer that brings together targeted early help and child in need support.
- New Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs) providing expert child protection decision-making.
- Greater use of family networks through Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and Family Network Support Packages (FNSPs).

The programme places strong emphasis on partnership working, information sharing, evidence-based practice and shared accountability across local authorities, health, police, education and wider safeguarding partners. Full implementation is expected by March 2027.

What This Means in Practice

Partners will be expected to work together to create a more seamless system of help, support and protection.

Family Help services should provide earlier, whole-family support through multidisciplinary teams, using a single assessment and plan and a consistent lead practitioner relationship wherever possible. Children and families should experience support as one coordinated service rather than moving between different thresholds and teams.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams will become the centre of expertise for child protection activity. These teams will bring together social care, health, police and education professionals to lead child protection decision-making and ensure timely, consistent responses to significant harm. Family Help practitioners will continue to work alongside children and families throughout this process.

Partners will also be expected to strengthen engagement with family networks. Family Group Decision Making should become a routine part of practice, helping families develop their own plans and

solutions wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. Family Network Support Packages should be used to remove barriers that prevent family members from supporting children.

Education settings, family hubs, voluntary organisations and community services are expected to play a stronger role in identifying needs early, contributing to planning and supporting families before difficulties escalate.

Key Messages for Partners

- Prevention and early intervention remain the core focus of the reform programme.
- Family Help should operate as a single, integrated offer across targeted early help and child in need services.
- Multi-agency working is essential and should be reflected in service design, governance, workforce planning and delivery.
- Family networks should be identified, engaged and supported at every stage of a child's journey.
- Education, health, police and community partners have a critical role in safeguarding and should be fully integrated into local arrangements.
- Information sharing, evidence-informed practice and effective use of data are key enablers of success.
- All safeguarding partners share responsibility for implementation and for demonstrating progress through local governance and national monitoring arrangements.

Safeguarding / Quality Impact

The programme is intended to improve outcomes by ensuring children and families receive support earlier and experience more consistent relationships with practitioners. It seeks to strengthen protection for children at risk of significant harm through expert multi-agency decision-making while reducing unnecessary escalation into statutory intervention.

For local partnerships, successful implementation should support stronger multi-agency accountability, improved information sharing, greater family involvement in decision-making and better alignment with the expectations of Working Together 2026, Ofsted inspections and Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs).

Engagement and Next Steps

Partners should use 2026–2027 to embed the new delivery model and ensure reforms are fully operational by March 2027. Key areas of focus include:

- Supporting implementation of Family Help services and multidisciplinary teams.
- Contributing to the development of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams.
- Strengthening Family Group Decision Making and Family Network Support Package arrangements.
- Reviewing local thresholds, pathways and governance arrangements.
- Improving information sharing and use of data across partner agencies.
- Ensuring workforce development plans reflect the skills and knowledge required for the new model.
- Monitoring progress through partnership governance structures and agreed performance measures.

Successfully delivering these reforms will require sustained commitment from all safeguarding partners, with a shared focus on earlier help, stronger family networks and better outcomes for children and young people.