



Families First Partnership Programme

Updated guidance – April 2026

Overall summary

The 2026–27 guide moves decisively from **vision to operationalisation**. Delivery expectations, monitoring indicators and timelines are now explicit and nationally consistent, with:

- **Mandatory systemwide implementation by March 2027**
- **New monitoring and data duties**
- **Detailed workforce expectations** (FHLP, LCPP, MACPT, MDT)
- **Stronger statutory alignment** (Working Together 2026, Bill duties)
- **Introduction of Family Network Support Packages**
- **Full integration of education and childcare settings**
- **Front door and CMS modernisation requirements**

The 2025 document remains foundational, but far broader and conceptual. The 2026–27 guidance is a **delivery manual**, setting clear expectations, deadlines, workforce requirements and accountability mechanisms.

The 2026-27 update is less permissive, more operational and more accountable. It signals that **Families First is no longer a reform programme to prepare for, but the core operating model for safeguarding, early help and child protection in England.**

Key elements

- Much **clearer delivery expectations and accountability** around **Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection and Family Networks**
- **Stronger emphasis on Safeguarding Partnership accountability**, rather than local authority-only ownership.
- **Family Help now firmly aligned with Early Help and Child in Need**, removing ambiguity about how thresholds and pathways should operate stipulating one lead practitioner, one multi-disciplinary team and one plan, flexing as needs change.
- Partners are now **expected to establish operational MACPTs, embed the LCCP role and ensure clear interfaces between MACPTs and Family Help teams.**
- The guidance **strengthens expectations on police, health and education** participation and resourcing.
- **Education and childcare settings are strengthened as safeguarding partners** in practice, including education involvement in front door decision making.
- Expectation that **Family Group Decision Making is embedded across all levels of the system.**
- The **introduction of Family Network Support Packages**, giving practical weight to family-led plans, not just meetings.
- More guidance around **system enablers and national delivery support.**

Working together to safeguard children – updated guidance

Alongside the Families First Partnership programme guidance update, the government also published an update to their [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) guidance.

An element of this updated guidance relates to practice around the role of the child protection conference chair.

How Working Together to Safeguard Children's wording has changed

"The conference chair...should be a practitioner, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case..." (2023 and preceding versions)

"The conference chair...should be a practitioner with relevant skills, in-depth knowledge and experience in frontline child protection activity, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for supporting the child. This can be the lead practitioner for protective action for that child..." (2026 version)