

Schools Safeguarding Forum

2nd July 2026

Safeguarding
in Schools

Southwark
Council

Social care: Early Help and Families First

Shane Steere-Jones
Service Manager, Family Help Pilot

What is prevention, early help and support

Prevention, early help and support;

- involves providing support to children and families at the **earliest stage** of need to stop problems from escalating
- is the **total support** that improves individual, family and community resilience and outcomes or **reduces the chance of a problem getting worse**
- is not a single service. It is a **network of services**, processes and interactions that aim to help residents at the earliest opportunity. **Identifying needs, connecting to support**, ensuring fair and **consistent access** to the right help.

Why is it important?

Providing timely support is vital. Identifying and addressing a family's needs early can:

- increase protective factors that positively influence a child's wellbeing,
- help families build resilience and confidence
- and reduce the need for more intensive support and decrease risk factors that may be negatively impacting a child's life.

Research suggest that early help and intervention can:

- protect children from harm
- help families early to prevent them from needing crisis services
- improve children's long-term outcomes across all domains
- improve children's home and family life and their daily lived experience
- support children to develop strengths and skills to prepare them for adulthood.
- reduce the need for a referral for statutory child protection services

Accessing prevention, early help and support

Many families, at different times will need extra support for a variety of reasons. Most of the time this can be met through everyday services such as schools, nursery, the voluntary and community sector, Best Start Family Hubs or GPs but sometimes families might need extra support to achieve a good start in life and achieve the right outcomes.

In Southwark prevention, early help and support is offered by a range of services in the community including:

- Nurseries, schools, colleges
- Best Start Family Hubs
- Health visitors and midwives
- Housing
- Mental health and wellbeing organisations
- Community and VCS providers
- Southwark Children and Families Service
 - Family Early Help (level 2 targeted early help)



Best Start Family Hubs

- 'one stop shop' for face-to-face support, information, advice and guidance on a range of needs and services
- places at the heart of the community where families with children of all ages 0-19 up to 25 for those with SEND can access various support
 - Health services
 - Early language
 - Emotional well being
 - Debt, money management and social welfare
 - Housing
 - Parenting support
 - And much much more
- **Family Navigators** based at each Hub are available to help families access the right support
- Families can drop in to any Hub



**FAMILY
HUBS**

Best Start Family Hub locations

Best Start Family Hub locations

Start for Life activities take place in all our Best Start Family Hubs and community spaces across the borough.

Our Best Start Family Hubs are made up of a main site and neighbourhood sites across the local areas.

Drop in or contact any of our Best Start Family Hubs to find out about the range of services for Southwark families including early education, play and learning sessions, parenting programmes and one-to-one support.

1 1st Place Best Start Family Hub

Neighbourhood sites:

- 2 Coin Street Family and Children's Centre
- 3 Victory Primary School

See page 4 for details

4 South Bermondsey Best Start Family Hub

Neighbourhood sites:

- 5 Ellen Brown Children Centre
- 6 Rotherhithe Children & Family Centre
- 7 Pilgrims Way Primary School

See page 5 for details

8 Ann Bernadt Best Start Family Hub

See page 6 for details

9 Rye Oak Best Start Family Hub

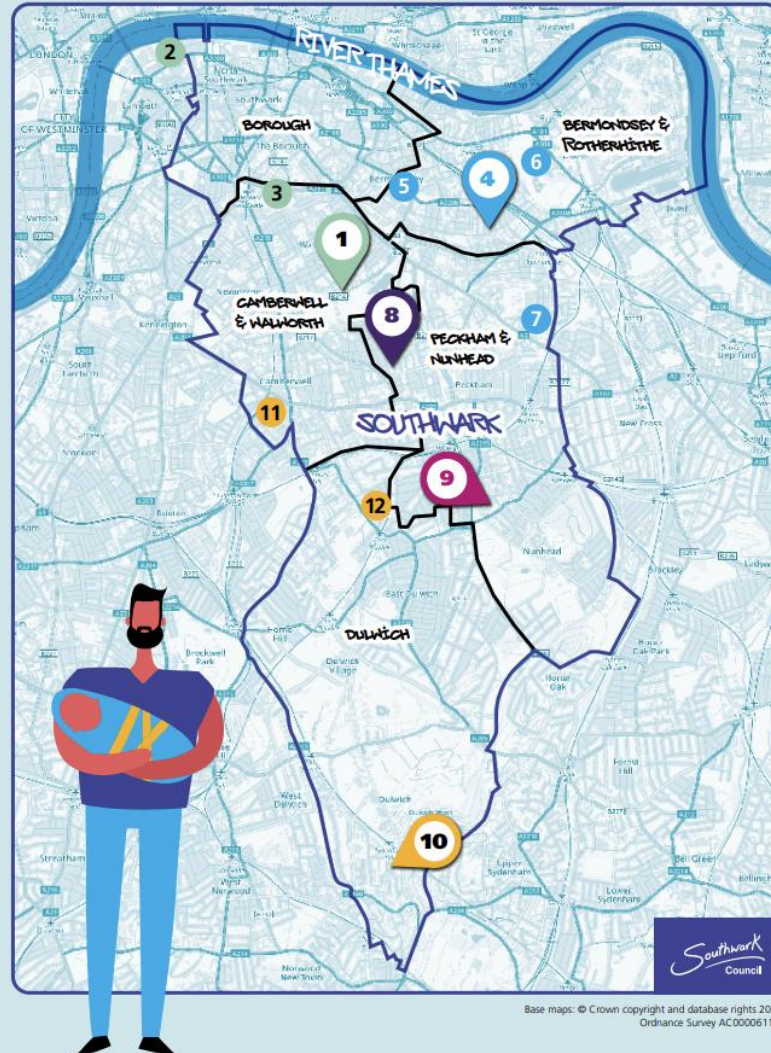
See page 7 for details

10 Dulwich Wood Best Start Family Hub

Neighbourhood sites:

- 11 Crawford Primary School
- 12 Albrighton Community Centre

See page 8 for details



Contact details

1st Place

Tel: 020 7740 8070

Email: BBWCFC@1stplace.com

South Bermondsey

Tel: 0207 358 2878

Email: ccadmin@pilgrimsway.southwark.sch.uk

Ann Bernadt & Rye Oak

Tel: 0203 848 5780

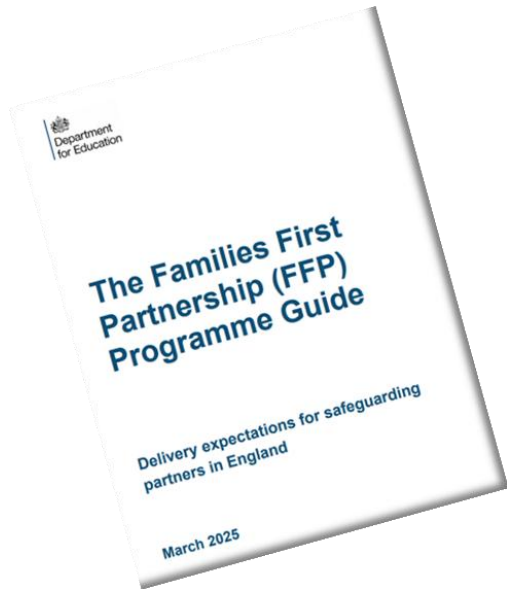
Email: childrenscentre@ivydale.southwark.sch.uk

Dulwich Wood

Tel: 0203 848 5780

Email: childrenscentre@ivydale.southwark.sch.uk

Families First Partnership Programme



- The government has asked local areas to change how they deliver children's social care.
- In March 2025, the DfE published **Families First Partnership (FFP) programme** guide setting out how the reforms should be implemented
- This reform programme intends to deliver a reimagined end-to-end children social care system with a focus on prevention and early intervention
- The new structure will prioritise integrated working, remove barriers and hand-offs within the system
- It aims to bring together targeted early intervention with statutory safeguarding into a seamless **Family Help approach**
- It is expected that councils design and move into arrangements which meet the new expectations by end of **March 2027**

Families First Partnership Programme

There are four key element of the reforms:

- integrated Family Help services
- new multi-agency child protection teams
- increasing family group decision making
- revisions to safeguarding partnership structures

Southwark's transformation

- a phased 'test and learn approach
- co-designing the reforms in collaboration with frontline staff, safeguarding partners, children & young people and families
- Pilot teams created

Families First Partnership Programme

Over the longer term – there will no longer be a Family Early Help Service, Assessment & Intervention Service and a Safeguarding & Family Support Service – **just a single Family Help service.**

A single referral route – no separate front doors into early help and statutory social care.

Single lead **Family Help Practitioner (FHP)** supporting children from referral and assessment to closure or permanence in care if necessary, working across all thresholds.

FHPs will come from a variety of disciplines, with a mix of social work qualified and alternatively qualified practitioners.

A co-allocated lead child protection practitioner (LCPP) leading on strategy discussions, child protection enquiries and child protection plans alongside the FHP reducing the need for transfer and reallocation.

No step-up, step-down or step-across.

Families First Partnership Programme

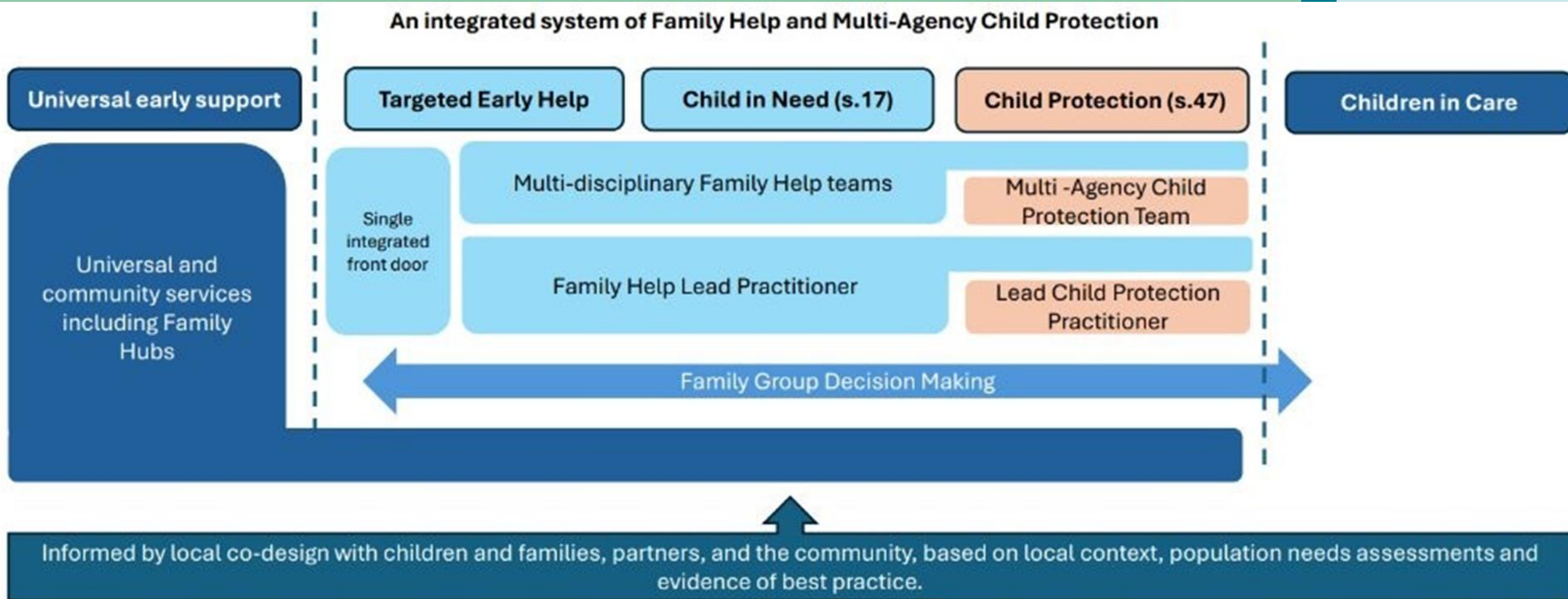


Diagram taken from the DfE's Families First Partnership (FFP) programme guide March 2025

Families First Partnership Programme

A key aim of the Families First reforms is to shift focus towards intensive earlier help for families.

Universal services and community-based early help play a crucial role in identifying emerging problems and providing support at an early stage.

As a community-based model for providing early help to families, Best Start Family Hubs (BSFHs) play an important role in delivering intensive evidence-based interventions for parenting and identifying families who may need more intensive support from Family Help and multiagency child protection teams.

For families who no longer require the support of targeted and specialist services, BSFHs, BSFH network sites and other forms of community-based setting can offer an ongoing, local support network, by providing early help, and playing an important role in early identification of family need, making appropriate referrals into targeted support.

Consider whether the family's needs are best met by these services rather than requiring a referral into Children's Social Care.

Reflections and questions?

Read more at: [Families First Partnership programme - GOV.UK](#)