

Families First Programme

Reorganisation – Quick Reference
Guide

September 2026

Introduction

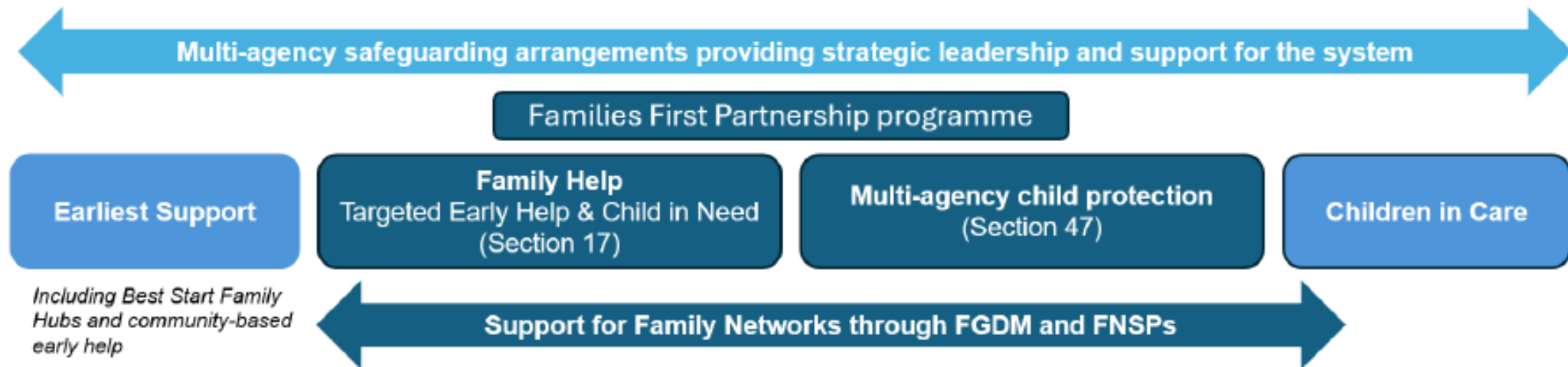


- In March 2025, the DfE published the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme guide setting out how the reforms should be implemented.
- Following the publication of the new programme guidance in March 2026, timelines for implementation were revised by government.
- It is expected that councils design and move into arrangements which meet the new expectations by end of March 2027.

Introduction – national reform

In March 2025 the Department for Education launched the Families First Partnership Programme Guidance mandating wholesale reform of the children's social care system.

the national programme aims to deliver a [r]ebalancing [of] the system of help, support and protection. The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme shifts focus towards intensive earlier help for families, more expert, focused multi-agency child protection practice and greater use of family networks.



Introduction – programme requirements

- Integration of the pathway into help and support – establish ‘one front door’ – removing the separate access points into Family Early Help and Safeguarding services.
- Integrate targeted early help and child in need case management into a single Family Help service
- Establish dedicated multi-agency child protection teams
- Embedding Family Group Decision Making across teams

What this means for schools

- No longer having to refer to either Family Early Help or the MASH. Just one access point for requests for help and support and referrals. This will mean new contact details, and some changes to our referral forms – but the impact on schools of those changes will be minimal.
- Your children and families would no longer be allocated to different services. They will get help from a single Family Help team, with a mix of social work qualified and alternatively qualified staff.
- No more step-up, step-down or step across to other Children's Services and workers, as needs change, and better coordination with schools to support effective transition back into universal support
- The only time a child might move between workers is if they escalate to child protection, and we're previously being supported by a someone who isn't social work qualified, or if they move into long-term care.
- Under a 'neighbourhood model' each area of Southwark would have dedicated teams, and a dedicated Service Manager who will be responsible for working with the children living in those areas. Tasked with building stronger relationships with schools and ensuring you have a direct line into the right person when you need it.
- We know that primary age children are more likely to live and go to school in the same neighbourhood, but that's less likely for secondary age pupils – one of our proposals is to create a dedicated borough-wide adolescent Family Help function that will strengthen relationships with secondary schools.

Introduction – our road map

Southwark's Families First Partnership Programme

Implementation roadmap

The key stages expected during our programme of social care transformation. We have already started development of our plans – timeframes may change based on our test-and-learn findings and other factors including government requirements. We will let you know if this happens.

1 Winter 2025

- Family Help pilot teams launched
- Interim Family Help training offer launched
- Test and learn

2 Spring 2026

- Continuous evaluation and learning from the Family Help pilot
- Interim single assessment tested and launched
- Consultations on implementing One Front Door
- Single plan development
- Updated core training offer launched
- LCPP pilot development

3 Summer 2026

- Integrated Front Door launched
- **Consultations on Family Help service reorganisation**
- Final single assessment and single plan proposals tested with children, young people, families and partners
- Final single assessment and single plan launched
- Family group decision making and family network engagement built into Family Help policy, training, procedure and recording

4 Autumn/Winter 2026

- Family Help service launched
- MACPT design finalised (pending partner agreement)
- Family group decision making and family network engagement built into child protection processes
- New practice framework for children's services launched
- Updated core training offer

We are here
–
Consultation
Launch



Why is this consultation different to others

In normal consultations we present a future state of services and seek feedback on those specific proposals

These proposals present two possible models for the future structure of services

We want to hear everyone's feedback on both models – and any alternative models or ideas that people have

We need your feedback to understand the best fit for Southwark – this could be a mixture of the two or something completely different

We need your views to get this right for all of us and for our children and families

Key principles directing this restructure

- The government programme requires us to move our services into:
 - A single seamless 'Family Help' service
 - Create multi-agency child protection teams
- We want to move to a neighbourhood-based model to align and strengthen our connection with schools, local communities and other partner agencies who are also moving to neighbourhood delivery, such as health services.
- As far as possible our goal is to minimise disruption to partner agencies, roles and staff. This means integrating teams into the single Family Help service, whilst retaining the same duties and activities as now within those teams.

Proposals – Family Help

Proposals – Family Help

Under the programme, safeguarding partners are required by March 2027 to bring together Targeted Early Help and Child in Need support and services into a single offer of Family Help, with alternatively qualified family help practitioners and social workers working together across a broad continuum of need.

The threshold criteria for Family Help as non-statutory and statutory support and services provided through:

- targeted early help (THE) under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004. This support is provided to children and families who are identified by practitioners to have multiple and/or complex needs, requiring a specialist and/or multi-disciplinary/agency response, where statutory support or intervention is not required
- statutory support, including assessments, delivered under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need, including how this applies for disabled children)

Proposals – Family Help

We are proposing to:

- Disestablish:
 - Family Early Help Service
 - Assessment & Intervention Service
 - Safeguarding & Family Support Service
- Establish a new single integrated Family Help Service

Proposals – Family Help

This will include redesign of all job roles within these services. Establishing the new posts of:

- One Family Help Team Manager (Social Work Qualified)
- One Social Work Qualified Senior Family Help Lead Practitioner
- One Alternatively Qualified Senior Family Help Lead Practitioner
- Three Social Work Qualified Family Help Lead Practitioner
- One Alternatively Qualified Family Help Lead Practitioner

Proposals – Family Help

We want your thoughts on two possible approaches for Family Help, or even completely different ideas:

Model A	Model B
all age neighbourhood-based Family Help Services	all age neighbourhood-based Family Help Services with a separate dedicated Adolescent Family Help function that is focused on adolescents at risk of harm outside the home or immediate entry into care.
12 teams under a Head of Service for East Southwark with teams allocated to the East Central and North East Neighbourhoods	16 teams under a Head of Service for Family Help with teams allocated to all different neighbourhoods across Southwark
12 Teams under a Head of Service for West and South Southwark with teams allocated to the North West, West Central and South Neighbourhoods	13 teams under a Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents & Youth Justice Services with teams working on a borough-wide basis with no allocated neighbourhood area.

Proposals – MACPT

Proposals – Multi Agency Child Protection Teams

The MACPT will lead all child protection decision making, drawing on the FHLP's experience and knowledge of the family, whilst the FHLP retains the lead relationship with and responsibility for supporting the child and family. The role of the MACPT is to:

- convene strategy meetings
- lead section 47 enquiries
- convene child protection conferences and forums
- oversee the development and delivery of child protection plans
- keep child protection plans under review
- provide case consultation for practitioners who need MACPT expertise
- maintain an understanding of patterns of significant harm in the local area and agency responses.

Proposals – Multi Agency Child Protection Teams

In addition to the services / teams being disestablished that have been mentioned previously we are proposing to also:

- Disestablish the Child Protection Chairs Team
- Establish a new Multi-Agency Child Protection Service

Proposals – Rapid Response Service

Proposals – Rapid Response Team

It has been widely recognised through work completed by some of our peer local authorities and local discussions that there is a need to retain an element of 'outside of case work' preventative capacity to support reductions in the throughput of families to Family Help and MACPT services, where a time limited piece of assertive outreach and intervention can potentially prevent escalation to longer term allocations.

Under the Family Help re-organisation we are proposing to create a Rapid Response function that will sit alongside the Front Door teams and will have capacity to provide a speedy response to immediate concerns to prevent families needing to move into the full Family Help service.

Other considerations

Working Patterns

We often hear feedback from partners and from staff about the availability of capacity to address and respond to need flexibly and at particular times where families are more likely to need a crisis response.

This has primarily focused on how different working arrangements could have a greater impact on vulnerable adolescents and those at risk of immediate entry into care, who would benefit from a rapid and stronger wraparound response.

There is a number of ways that we could achieve this – one way is amending contracts to include non-standard hours, another is increasing our voluntary alternative hours functions.

We want to hear all views on how we might test a new approach to different working arrangements to meet the needs of children and families outside of normal working hours.

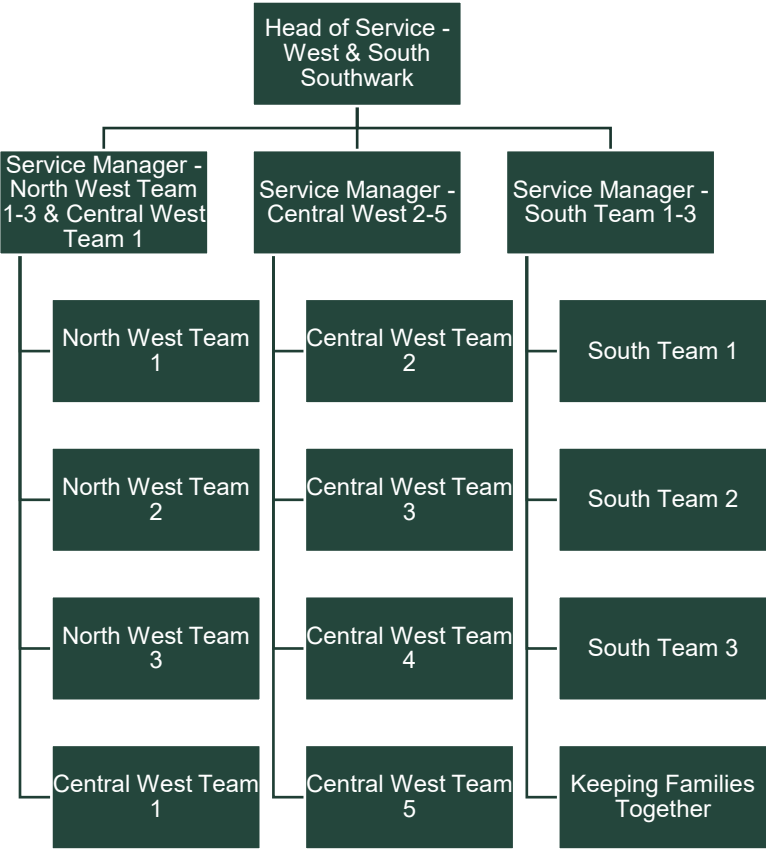
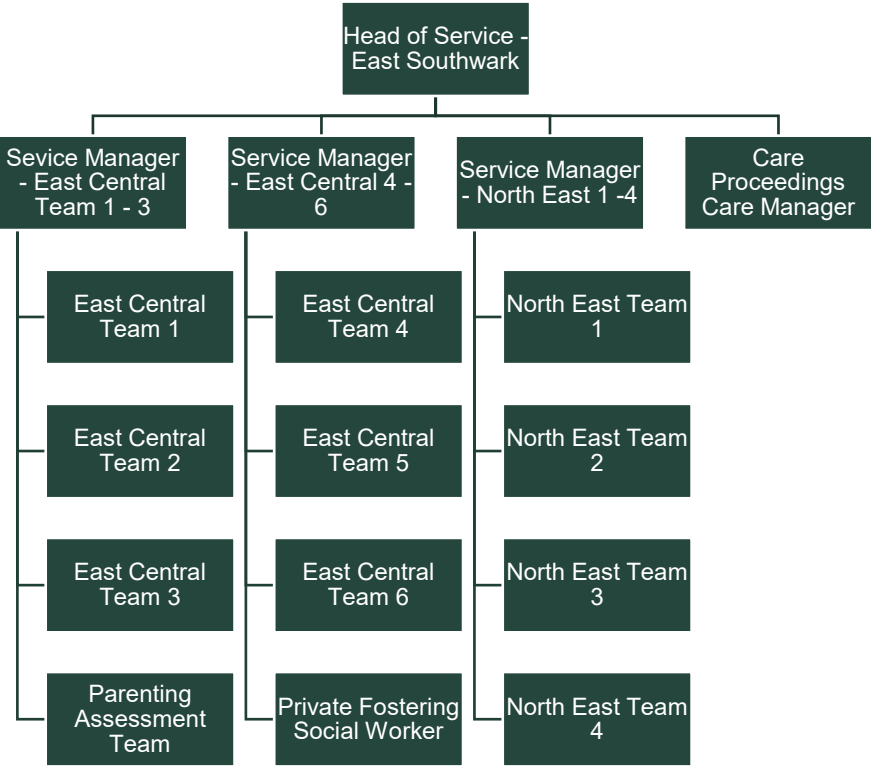
Timetable

Timetable

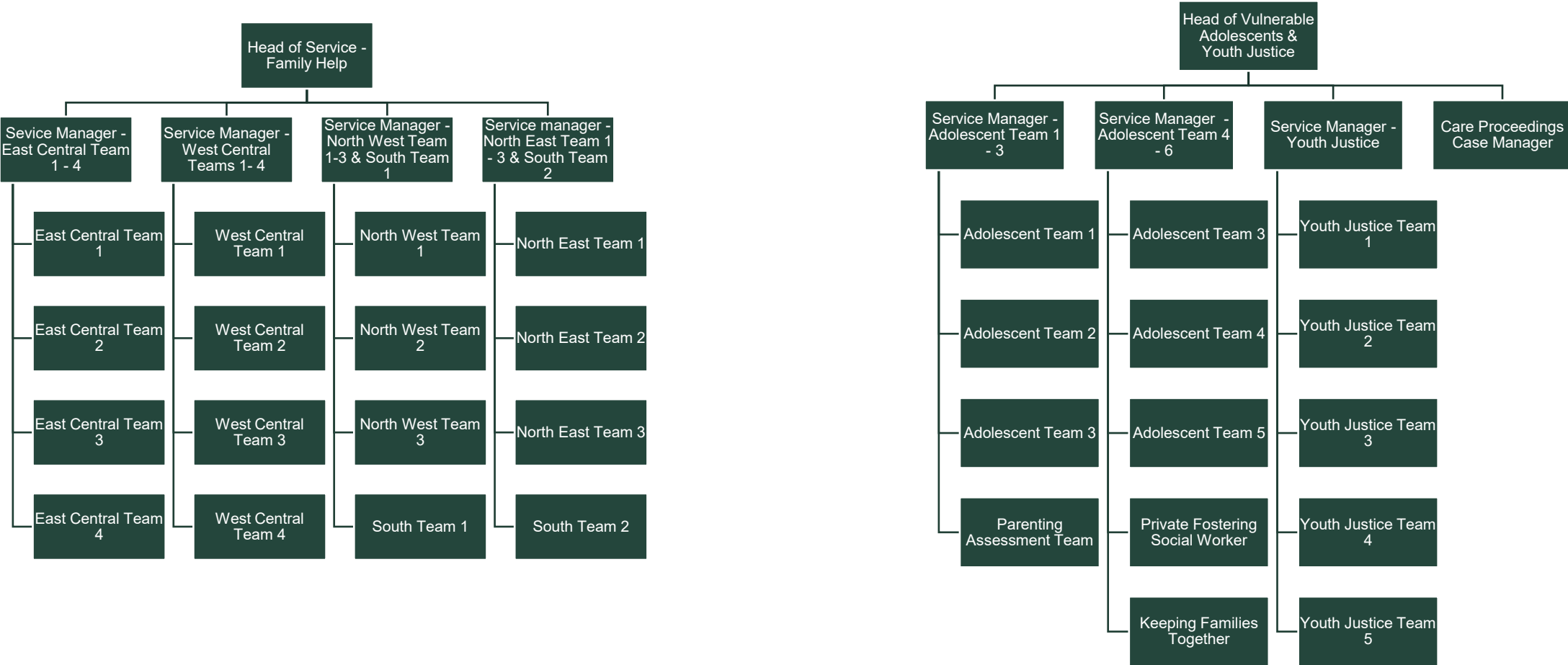
- Consultation – Group & Individual – 1st September – 30th September
- Deadline for feedback – 30th September
- Final proposals released to staff – 8th October
- Matching and any necessary interviews – 20th October – 30th October
- Implementation – November 2026 – February 2027

Proposed Service Structures

Model A: Proposed Family Help Structure



Model B: Proposed Family Help Structure



MACPT, ROTH & Rapid Response Structure

