

Families First Newsletter



February 2026

What is the Families First Partnership?

The Families First Partnership (FFP) is a national Department for Education (DfE) programme designed to transform how local areas support children, young people and families. It brings together services across social care, health, education, police and the voluntary sector to create earlier, more coordinated and family-centred support.

The Programme is progressing at pace:

- Conducted 4 co-design events for our Family Help workstream, where we have gathered valuable insights from practitioners.
- Produced an overview of options for an end to end system
- Support A+I social work teams to transition from working across Oldham to working in a specific district
- Supported recruitment to new roles to support early intervention and prevention
- Our data analyst has worked hard to produce data packs for each district to demonstrate the local needs



Meet your FFP Team

The Programme is led by leaders across the system that bring expertise from across the partnership from Early Help, VCSFE, Youth Work, Children's Social Care, Police and Health. We are sure you'll recognise some names in the list of Families First Partnership workstream Chairs:

- Families First Partnership Programme Board: Tony Decrop (Oldham Council, Director of Children's Social Services and Early Help)
- Family Help: Paul Axon (Positive Steps, Chief Executive) and Michelle Bernasconi (Oldham Council, Assistant Director of Social Work)
- MACPT: Matt Walker (Greater Manchester Police, Detective Superintendent Serious - Organised Crime and Vulnerability) and Jen Robertson (NHS, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children)
- Family Networks: Nick Whitbread (Oldham Council, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting) and Bruce Penhale (Oldham Council, Assistant Director of Early Help)

Our four enabler workstreams are chaired by:

- Data & Systems: Abi Ajayi (Oldham Council, Head of Performance) and Alison Odongo (Oldham Council, Transformation Programme Manager)
- Comms & Engagement: Jodie Barber (Oldham Council, Assistant Director of Youth and Communities) and Rachel Lord (Positive Steps, Service Lead for Families and Communities)
- Workforce Development: Jude Brown (Oldham Council, Assistant Director of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance)
- Policies & Procedures: Martine Lewis (Oldham Council, Principal Social Worker)

We're also delighted to welcome Kumud Joshi, our new Business Systems Analyst, to the Programme Team. Kumud will play a key role in shaping the changes to our case management system and supporting the development of a single assessment and plan to strengthen multi-agency working.

Our Programme Team now includes:

Sheila Garara (Oldham Council, Assistant Director of Children's Services Integration, Programme Director), Leanne Boylan (Programme Manager), George Angus (Project Manager), Kumud Joshi (Business Systems Analyst), Emily Goldsmith (Senior Data Analyst) and Oliver Erturk (Programme Support Officer).

What have we heard across Oldham

Co-designing Family Help

Over the past few weeks, the Families First Partnership (FFP) has hosted three additional co-design events across the North, West and Central districts to gather practitioner feedback and shape the development of Family Help in Oldham.

Across all 4 sessions so far, over 250 professionals have engaged in total (82 in South, 41 in North, 71 in West and 58 in Central), representing a broad mix of partners and services.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended, shared honest reflections, and contributed ideas—your input is directly informing our next steps.

Additionally, a massive thank you to all our speakers who really helped highlight the characteristics of the districts they work in and the key local issues that we need to focus on.



What would you want our families to say:

"This is a plan and support for me! Not against me."

"I love having my one go to person!"

"I understand what's happening."

"I've got a great relationship with my worker who has been with me every step of the way."

"I feel listened to and heard."

"I don't feel judged."



What do you want families to feel?

Across all four district events, there was remarkable consistency in how practitioners want families to experience support:

- **Heard, respected and not judged** – families feeling listened to, believed and treated with dignity
- **Supported, not done to** – support that is with families, where they understand and own their plan
- **Safe and trusting** – confidence that services are on their side and there to help, not assess or blame
- **More confident and empowered** – families feeling better able to cope, problem-solve and move forward
- **Hopeful about change** – seeing real, positive differences in day-to-day family life and for their children

This shared vision shows a workforce deeply committed to compassion, relationships and doing the right thing for families.

What have we heard across Oldham

What outcomes and impact do we want to see?

Practitioners across Oldham were equally clear about the difference they want FFP to make for families:

- 🚫 **Simpler, clearer journeys with earlier help** – families accessing support sooner, with less stress, fewer barriers and far fewer handovers
- 🔄 **Less repetition** – families only telling their story once because professionals are connected and informed
- 👤 **Stronger, more consistent relationships** – one trusted worker walking alongside families, helping build trust and sustained progress
- ⭐ **Real, lasting improvements in family life** – happier homes, better wellbeing and children thriving with improved school attendance and engagement
- ❤️ **Greater independence over time** – families feeling more confident, capable and less reliant on services in the long run

Altogether, the impact practitioners want to see is a system that genuinely helps families live safer, happier, more stable lives.

What outcomes and impact our partners want to see from FFP:

"Story not having to be repeated."

Healthy, happy, safe families and neighbourhoods.

"Supporting and facilitating meaningful change — if we don't think it will be positive, we should stop and think again."

"More availability to be present with families"

"Families feel HEARD... their voices can clearly be seen in the plans and actions."

"Positive feedback from families — they are HAPPY + HEALTHY!"

"Giving families the tools to navigate their lives."



Co-Design with us!

As we are still in the co-design phase of our programme, please see below the QR codes and event links for our Family Help (FH) Co-Design Events!

At these sessions, you can expect:

- Information about the Families First Partnership and Family Help
- Collaborative activities to explore how FFP can work in practice and help us co-design what it will look like in Oldham
- Networking opportunities with colleagues and partners
- A chance for you to write down your thoughts on our current offer and what you want to see change from FFP

We're planning events to connect with children, young people and parents/carers in our community. If you'd like to get involved or share your insights, email us at familiesfirstpartnership@oldham.gov.uk.



Sign up, for your chance to get involved!



East District Family Help Co-Design
Event

Thursday 26 February
Satellite Centre, Wellington Rd,
Greenfield, Oldham OL3 7AQ

1:00pm to 4:45pm

[\[Click Here to Book\]](#)

If you have missed an event...

... Not to worry!

While the co-design events have been a brilliant arena for hearing and sharing ideas the Families First Partnership Programme is based on a simple ethos in Oldham; **"No Decisions About Me, Without Me"**

That's true for Families and Children, but it is also true for the partnership as well. Having handed the pen to yourselves at these events, our priority is compiling your feedback into a Family Help Vision. The Family Help Steering Group are designing how we can consult with you on the draft vision.

If you have any suggestions on how we can engage with you and your team, please drop us an email:

FamiliesFirstPartnershipProgramme@oldham.gov.uk

What have we been up to?

MACPT Leadership Focus Group

With the lead of our MACPT chair Matt Walker (pictured on the left here), we recently brought together leaders from Police, Education, Health and Children's Social Care for a focused MACPT session.

The insights shared were thoughtful and constructive, and enabled a conversation amongst leaders across the partnership at the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Development day.

✨ Watch this space for opportunities to get involved — your voice will be key in designing Oldham's MACPT.



Designing our End to End System

As part of the Families First Partnership reforms, we've started reviewing a set of end-to-end operating model options to help us design a more joined-up, multi-agency system of support for children and families. This work is about understanding how Oldham can re-design pathways to strengthen decision-making, and ensure the local safeguarding system is proportionate and responsive to professional worry.

Routed in feedback from professionals this end-to-end system must offer de-stigmatised, earlier help, clearer safeguarding responses, stronger partnership working, and a more consistent experience for families. Over the coming weeks, the FFP Board will continue refining these options and preparing for wider consultation with practitioners and partners across the borough



Family Networks Co-design Plans

The Family Networks Steering Group is developing **co-design approach** to make sure your voice is central to how Family Networks are further enhanced.

We're aiming to begin these sessions **towards the end of February**, so keep an eye out for updates on how you can take part.

✨ Your insight will be key — watch this space!

Integrated Targeted Early Help and Child in Need

We've started developing a clear roadmap for bringing together Targeted Early Help and Children in Need into one integrated Family Help pathway. Our focus is on building a more seamless, multi-agency approach that makes support easier to navigate and more consistent for families.

Our early priorities include:

- Aligning Assessment and Intervention Social Work Teams to a district geography, offering more consistency for staff, referrers and families and children
- Trialling in the South how TEH and A+I can work more closely together to support families.
- Engage with local partnerships on increasing delivery of multi-disciplinary working

We're Recruiting!

Oldham Council is currently advertising roles within Children's Social Care that support the Families First Partnership's work to strengthen help, protection and domestic abuse prevention across Oldham. These posts play an important part in improving outcomes for children, young people and families. See below for further details.

Senior Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

This role leads the creation of a new Domestic Abuse Prevention Team within Early Help, as part of the Families First Partnership's work to strengthen support for children and families. The post will oversee Prevention Officers across Oldham's districts, helping shape a more coordinated, preventative approach to domestic abuse, ensuring victims receive timely support and professionals feel confident responding.

Closing Date

- Sunday 22nd February 2026

[Click here to apply for this role](#)



[Click here to apply for this role](#)



Family Group Decision Making Co-ordinator

This role supports the expansion of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) across Children's Social Care and Early Help. This post will help coordinate and facilitate family meetings, strengthen the involvement of family networks in planning, and contribute to embedding family-led practice across the service. The post forms part of a well-established team playing a key role in the Families First Partnership's ambition to improve outcomes through stronger family-based decision making.

Closing Date

- Sunday 22nd February 2026

Families First Partnership Communications Officer

This role will support the strategic communications needed to deliver Oldham's Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme. As Communications Officer, you'll help shape clear, engaging internal and external messaging, develop multi-channel campaigns, and use insight to drive high-impact communications that help embed the new operating model and strengthen early intervention across the borough.

Closing Date

- Sunday 8th March 2026

[Click here to apply for this role](#)



Family Activity Days!

We have two fantastic **free** Family Activity Days taking place this February Half Term, delivered by our community partners **Yuvanis Foundation** & **MADHLO** and supported by the Families First Partnership.

Please encourage your families to come to these events - all people need to do is just turn up. It's a great opportunity for them to enjoy a really fun and **completely free day** with their families. If you would like the posters to share with your families, just email us at familiesfirstpartnership@oldham.gov.uk.

Yuvanis Family Activity Day – Monday 16 February

📍 St Thomas Church, St Thomas Circle, Werneth, OL8 1SF

🕒 11am–2:30pm

What families can expect:

- 🏸 Badminton
- 🎧 Silent disco
- 🚲 Smoothie bikes
- ✂️ Craft stations
- 🎯 Soft archery
- 🎷 Jazzminton
- 🍴 Free food provided
- … Opportunities to share experiences and views on local services

Provided by **Yuvanis** and the Oldham **Families First Partnership**



FAMILY ACTIVITY DAY!

JUST TURN UP! IT'S COMPLETELY FREE!

Feb Monday 16

St Thomas Church, St Thomas Circle, Werneth, Oldham, OL8 1SF

11am to 2:30pm

Activities include:

- Badminton
- Silent Disco
- Smoothie Bikes
- Craft Stations
- Soft archery
- Jazzminton

A great day for families looking to have fun in their community during the school holidays!

Free Food for All Attendees!



Getting the right help at the right time!

Come along and speak to our professionals on what services you would like to see in your community for children, young people and families. We want to hear about your experiences.



Provided by **MAHDLO** and the Oldham **Families First Partnership**



FAMILY ACTIVITY DAY!

JUST TURN UP! IT'S COMPLETELY FREE!

Feb Sunday 22

Egerton Street, Oldham, OL1 3SE

11am to 3:30pm

Activities include:

- Escape room
- Painting
- Football


A great day for families looking to have fun in their community during the school holidays!

Free Food for All Attendees!



Getting the right help at the right time!

Come along and speak to our professionals on what services you would like to see in your community for children, young people and families. We want to hear about your experiences.



Mahdlo Family Activity Day – Sunday 22 February

📍 Mahdlo Youth Zone, Egerton Street, Oldham, OL1 3SE

🕒 11am–3:30pm


What families can expect:

- 🎯 Escape room
- 🎨 Painting
- ⚽ Football
- 🍴 Free food provided
- … Space for parents to talk to professionals about the support they'd like to see locally



Useful resources

National Updates


Finding your way through all the resources on K-Hub can be overwhelming. To make things easier, we've created a handy guide that saves you time and explains what each document is for—so you can access the information you need, quickly and confidently.

 [Click here to access our K-Hub Index.](#)


Our Dedicated FFP Oldham Padlet

-  Key DfE Policy Documents & Presentations
-  District demand and data profiles


This is your go-to resource for everything Families First in Oldham! [Click here to access it!](#)

 **Research in Practice have some fantastic webinars coming up! We would encourage you to sign up!**

Families First: Using Foundations' evidence in local social care reforms will explore the development of the Guides, the robust evidence that underpins them, and the practical ways you can embed their key principles and recommendations to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in your local area.

 [Click here to sign up](#)


Children and families Partnership Conference: Making Families First a reality conference will examine how key approaches – such as kinship care, Family Group Decision Making, and the Family Help Lead Practitioner role – are driving system-wide change. They will also explore how children and families' voices are shaping policy and practice, and how local partnerships are translating national reform into meaningful, practical improvements on the ground.

 [Click here to sign up](#)

Closing thoughts & Get Involved!

As the partnership continues to co-design, we want to keep capturing your views and voice.

We are always looking forward to working with you to design this system and begin to plan how to test and learn elements of the Families First Partnership Programme. Please take this opportunity to ensure your voice is heard - your feedback can be anonymous and will help to ensure we are prioritising actions that matter to you!


 [Share your thoughts in this quick form.](#)

Tell us:

- Specific questions around the areas of works
- What types of engagement you'd like to see
- How we can improve our approach to communications and engagement

We will be putting together a Frequently Asked Question hub soon so if you have any questions or want to know more about FFP, just email our shared inbox: familiesfirstpartnership@oldham.gov.uk.

Thank you for your incredible engagement — we're excited to share more updates soon.

 Forward this newsletter to anyone who might be interested and encourage them to sign up to our mailing list.

