

Meeting: Children's Overview and Scrutiny **Date:** 23rd July 2025

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Family First Partnership Programme – 6 Month Update

When does the decision need to be implemented? For Information

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 In November 2024 a new policy statement was issued by central government called 'Keeping children safe, helping families thrive', outlining a vision for the future children's social care system and a set of core legislative proposals. Following this 'The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill' was introduced into the House of Commons on 17 December 2024.
- 1.2 These reforms build on the "Stable Homes, Built on Love" strategy initiated in 2023. Although the terminology has changed under the current government, the core principles remain focused on improving outcomes for children and families.
- 1.3 Alongside the above the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) reforms is a comprehensive set of initiative aimed at transforming children's social care in the UK. It was introduced as part of the Government's children's social care implementation strategy and responds to recommendations from various reviews and reports.
- 1.4 The new children's reforms aim to significantly improve children's social care and education in England and aim to create a more effective, transparent, and supportive system for children and families. Alongside the National reforms, Torbay will be utilising the Transformation year to also include the development of a number of local workstreams.
- 1.5 This report sets out the progress to date made as a partnership along with detailing a road map going forward as well as the intended impact of the Reforms and wider transformation work on children and families in Torbay.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 As noted above, the directive to implement the Children's Social Care Reforms has come from central Government following a number of commissioned reviews of children's social care as well as a number Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.
- 2.2 The Reforms will be embedded in legislation via the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill set to come in force in 2027.
- 2.3 The DFE have determined that 2025/26 will be a 'Transformation Year' with an expectation on all Local Authorities that the Reforms will be embedded in practice by 31st March 2026.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision.

- 1. That members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Transformation progress to date and raise any concerns about this that can be taken back to the Transformation Board for further discussion and resolution.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Initial Local Area Plan

Appendix 2: Reporting Timeline

Background Documents

[Children's social care: reform statement - GOV.UK](#)

[Families first for children \(FFC\) pathfinder programme and family networks pilot \(FNP\) - GOV.UK](#)

[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024-25: progress of the bill - House of Commons Library](#)

1. Introduction and Progress Report

General Update

- 1.1 We have continued to attend share and learn sessions put on by the DFE which have allowed pathfinders to convey their experiences throughout the implementation of the Family First Partnership Programme. It should be noted that none of the pathfinder LAs have taken the same approach and despite some LAs having significant funding and 2 years to get this work completed none of them are in a state of absolute implementation. This inevitably is raising concern across partners in relation to the time constraints placed around the transformation year.
- 1.2 As further planning work is undertaken other issues are becoming apparent. For example, System C, the provider of our case management system, has now publicly stated that the configuration and architecture of their software does not lend itself to the seamless end-to-end system expectations set out by the DFE due to the LCS and EHMs being independent work areas.
- 1.3 Despite the evident challenges that the Reforms are throwing up at the current time, we are pressing ahead with the necessary work to progress both the national work as well as our own local work.

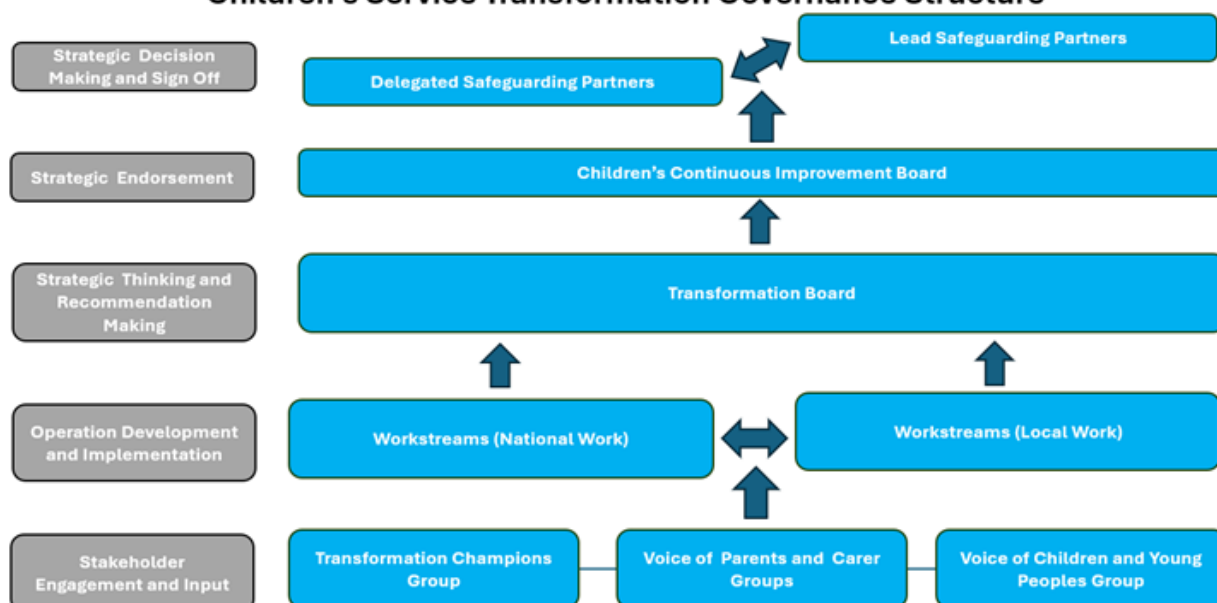
Transformation Team

- 1.4 We now have the Transformation Service Lead in post (from 19.05.25). Interviews for the Analysts took place on 25.06.25 and 01.07.25 with a candidate being appointed to start in August. The Project Lead post has gone out to advert with a closing date of 04.07.25 and interviews scheduled for week commencing 14.07.25
- 1.5 Further to the above, we are currently negotiating a fixed term secondment for a band 8c equivalent Health Professional to support the Transformation team. It is envisaged that the Job Description (JD) will be completed by the end of July 25 with a potential start date in the month of September 2025. The police have also indicated that they may be willing to second a 0.25fte officer into the Transformation Team but this is still to be confirmed.

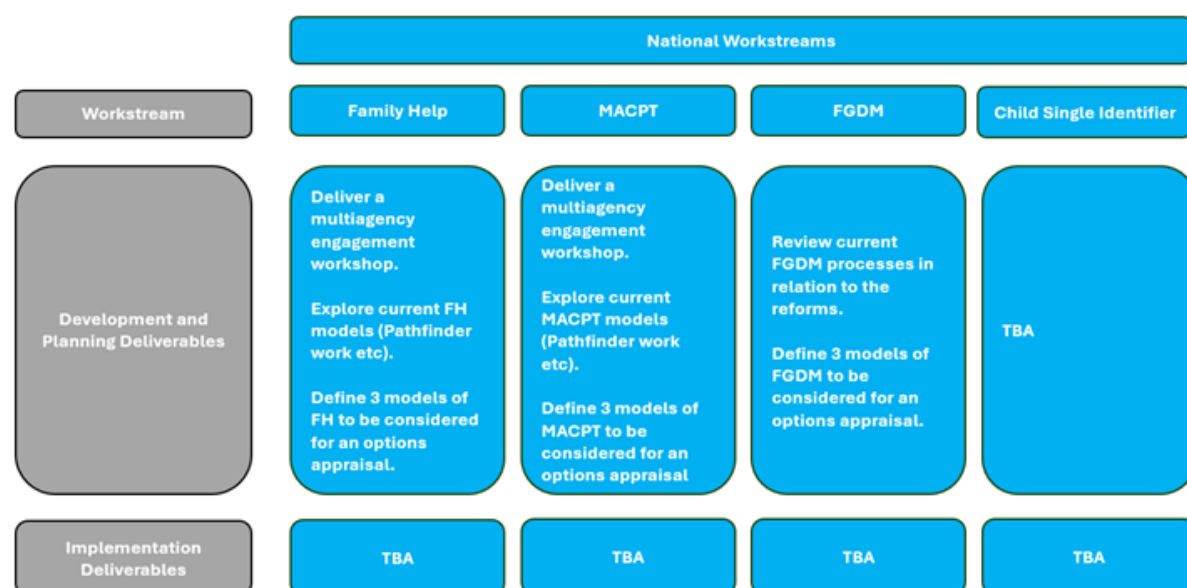
Governance

- 1.6 The governance around the Transformation work has now been finalised. As can be see below, the Transformation Board feeds into the CCIB where recommendations are either endorsed or rejected. Endorsed recommendations are filtered up to the DSP/LSP for ratification/decision signoff. The strategic views of the Transformation Board are informed by the focused operational work that will be undertaken by the workstreams that will be working to a clear set of deliverables at 2 phases – phase 1 being the development and planning phase and phase 2 being the implementation phase.

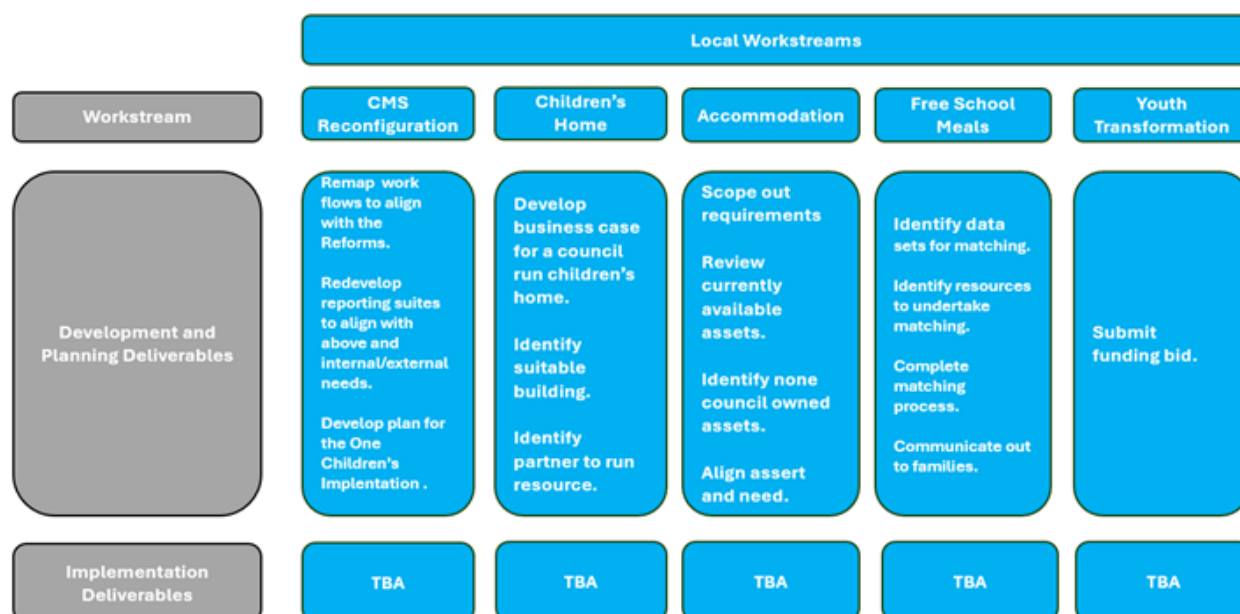
Children's Service Transformation Governance Structure



Children's Service Transformation Workstreams/Deliverables



Children's Service Transformation Workstreams/Deliverables



- 1.7 The Transformation Board has now met on 3 occasions whereby the terms of reference, governance structure and the initial local area plan have been agreed. A planned Extraordinary Transformation Board took place on the 24.06.25 whereby the initial local area plan was devised with the summary detailed below. The full plan is attached to this report (appendix 1).

Planning – Milestones

- 1.8 The initial plan to the DFE that is due for submission on 27.06.25 has been finalised and endorsed by the DSPs. The summary timeline for the overarching plan is as follows: -
- Onboard Transformation Lead (SRO) by the end of April 2025 (completed).
 - Onboard Transformation Service Lead by the end of May 2025 (completed).
 - Establish the Transformation team by the end of April 2025 (completed).
 - Establish Transformation governance by the end of May 2025 (completed).
 - Establish work streams by the end of June 2025 (on track).
 - Establish initial Transformation Champions Group (LA practitioners) by the end of June 2025 (completed).
 - Run initial partnership engagement and co-design workshops linked to Family Help and Multi-agency Child Protection Team workstreams by the end of June 2025 (booked).
 - Establish the wider Transformation Champions Group to include all partner agencies by mid-July (on track).
 - Agree Comms plan across the partnership and start delivering regular comms out to all stake holders by mid-July 2025 (on track).
 - Establish transformation practitioner drop-ins (led by transformation champions) by the end of July 2025 (on track).
 - Onboard Data Lead by the end of July 2025 (on track).
 - Onboard Project Manager by the end of July 2025 (on track).
 - Agree and establish partner secondments into the Transformation Team by the end of July 2025 (on track).
 - Complete data harvesting to establish a full set of baseline measurements for improvement by the end of July 2025 (on track).

- Book next two partnership engagement workshops running up to phase two in January (workshop 2 end of September 2025 and workshop 3 end of November 2025) (on track) by the end of July 2025 (on track).
- Run parent carer/young people engagement events by the end of July 2025 (on track).
- Establish a regional working group by the end of July 2025 (on track).
- Establish regional consistencies by the end of August 2025 (on track).
- Onboard partner secondments by the end of September 2025 (on track).
- Run partner engagement workshop 2 by the end of September 2025 (on track).
- Define and agree on the Family Help (FH) structure, including community locations, by the end of September 2025 (on track).
- Define and agree on the Multi-agency Child Protection Team (MACPT) structure by the end of September 2025 (on track).
- Define and agree on the Child Protection Lead Practitioner (CPLP) role by the end of September 2025 (on track).
- Run partnership engagement workshop 3 by the end of November 2025 (on track).
- Establish a partnership development plan – initial by the end of June 2025 (on track) and follow-up by mid-December 2025 (on track).
- Re-design CMS workflows ready to go live by end of December 2025 (on track, however there is a risk here due to the way the software is currently structured).
- All reporting dashboards and reports aligned to new workflows by end of December 2025 (on track, however there is a risk here due to the way the software is currently structured).

1.9 The above milestones will set the foundation for developing a comprehensive implementation plan, which will be shared via the part 2 plan in December 2025 and set the scene for phase 2 of our work. An overarching reporting timeline is detailed in appendix 2.

SWOT Analysis

1.10 A multi-agency SWOT analysis was undertaken as follows: -

Strengths:

- The Early Help offer is well-developed.
- The Local Authority is ready to transition to the Family Help model following a comprehensive service redesign.
- The Learning Academy is well-established and supports broader partnership development.
- Universal services are effectively delivered through an established network of family hubs.

Weaknesses:

- The current Local Authority CMS has limitations due to its software configuration.
- Different recording systems across the partnership are not interconnected, which will significantly impact the child single identifier activity.
- High levels of child protection processes triggered (strategy discussions and s47 investigations).

Opportunities:

- A reduction in the number of children subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans will allow for greater focus on those children who need safeguarding arrangements, potentially reducing the duration of CP Planning and improving the quality of work delivered.
- The end-to-end system will include aspects beyond the Reforms, enabling further transformation work to be delivered to enhance the offer to children and families.
- Strengthening multi-agency arrangements and collaboration as outlined in Working Together 2023.

- The ICB footprint spans the entire Devon region, providing opportunities for regional sharing and learning.
- The Police footprint covers Devon and Cornwall, offering similar opportunities for regional collaboration with our neighbours in Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth on the basis of consistency where possible but not blanket uniformity as Torbay recognise the importance of developing a Family First Programme (FFP) that meets the local needs.
- Developing consistent approaches to certain FFP functions while maintaining the need for localized delivery of the Reforms.
- Developing a model of locality working that is aligned to the models partners are moving to.

Threats:

- The ICB footprint across Devon may place a strain resources and pose challenges in developing models regionally.
- The Police footprint across Devon and Cornwall may place a strain resources and complicate model development.
- Pressures from other Local Authorities in the region regarding different model proposals may over influence partners.
- Integrating Education, given the presence of numerous multi-agency trusts within the Local Authority.
- Managing workforce anxiety regarding the changes.
- National changes to the ICB delivery model.
- Budgetary cuts across partner agencies including the VCS.

1.11 Note that some matters lie in more than one component of the SWOT analysis.

Partnership Engagement

1.12 Our first partnership engagement workshops were held on 20.06.25. These were split into two workshops covering family help and multiagency child protection teams (MACPT). Attendance was extremely positive across the entire partnership including the VCS as noted below:-

Family Help	MACPT
LA = 25	LA = 17
Education = 25	Education = 18
Health = 4	Health = 2
Police	Police = 1
VCS = 6	VCS = 5
Housing = 1	Housing = 1
	TSCP = 1
	Probation = 1
TOTAL = 63	TOTAL = 46

Workstream Progress

1.13 July sees the commencement of the main workstreams with the partnership engagement workshops being used to promote the need for practitioners from partner agencies to come forward to support the workstream activity. This has been reasonably successful, but we do need a few more professionals from partner agencies to identify individuals to join the workstreams to support in shaping and influencing the models being developed.

- 1.14 *Family Help* – This workstream will be set up following the recent partnership engagement workshops whereby practitioners across the partnership were asked to put themselves forward for this workstream. Lead identified but a partner agency co-lead is still needed.
- 1.15 Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (*MACPT*) - This workstream will be set up following the recent partnership engagement workshops whereby practitioners across the partnership were asked to put themselves forward for this workstream. Lead identified but a partner agency co-lead is still needed.
- 1.16 Family Group Decision Making (*FGDM*) – This workstream is in the initial stages of being set up but a lead and co-lead have been identified.
- 1.17 *Child Single Identifier* – This workstream is on hold for the time being whilst we await further information from the DFE. The general consensus is that this can't be undertaken at a local level.
- 1.18 *Case Management System (CMS)* – This workstream is being led by the Business Intelligence Service Manager and co-led by BetterGov (a commissioned partner) and will include the development of the workflows that are required to support the Reform changes. However, it should be noted at this stage that there are significant challenges with the Liquid Logic system in terms of bridging between EHM and LCS. System C themselves have admitted that the structure of the system software as it stands does not lend itself to the practice expectations within the Reforms. We have now met with a number of Pathfinders to see if they have found workarounds to this challenge but as yet to no avail. This is going to cause a significant case management control issue that has been relayed to the DFE who have stated that they will not be in a position to provide system providers with a full technical specification for 4 to 6 months.
- 1.19 *Children's Home* – A lead and co-lead needs to be identified for this workstream. However, a business case has been developed and approved in principle at DOM. The next stage is to develop a full specification in readiness for procurement activity as well as identify an appropriate building. This needs to be a multi-agency led piece of work as it will be used to accommodate our most vulnerable cared for children that are usually hard to place and therefore result in being accommodated out of county and invariably in unregulated provision.
- 1.20 *Accommodation* – 9 programmes of work have been identified under this workstream. The priority at this point is to move Family Time out of the ARC to free up that provision for a Chestnut SEND cohort of children that needs to be in place for September 2025. To facilitate this, 4 temporary locations have been identified so work is now underway to move the Family Time provision out of Chestnut to allow time over the summer holiday to prepare the provision for a September start. Numerous health and safety issues are frustrating the use of one of the identified temporary premises which is now causing a logistical challenge. We are working through these matters with TEDC, Health and Safety and Facilities Management.
- 1.21 A potential permanent Family Time/assessment provision has been identified within the basements under the library in Torquay. This provision is spacious and well equipped but will need significant investment to turn it into a purposeful provision that can work alongside a satellite provision in Paignton. This is in the planning stage. There is capital provision set aside for this project which will also double up as a parent assessment centre.
- 1.22 Work continues to identify appropriate accommodation for the other programmes of work with the whole of the Council's corporate asset register being reviewed.

- 1.23 *Youth Transformation* - Unfortunately, the bid Torbay submitted for the Youth Transformation funding was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, work will continue to review youth provision and explore areas ripe for development as we move towards a locality model of delivery across all services. The new Youth Hub team manager comes into post in August 2025 and will take up the lead for this workstream.

Implications of the Reform on Partners

Local Authority:

- 1.24 There will be a shift in relation to alternatively qualified practitioners (i.e. none social work qualified workers). The Reforms are clear that s17 CIN no longer needs to be managed by qualified social workers which will mean Family Intervention Team workers and Community Care Workers will, going forward, be allocated CIN work where appropriate. Conversely, children stepping down from child in need to Early Help can and will be managed by qualified social workers so that hand-offs for families are kept to a minimum.
- 1.25 Following the publication of *Stable Homes Built on Love*, the change to a seamless Family Help model of service delivery was anticipated and this triggered a complete redesign of Children's Services across the board. Phase one of the redesign will be implemented on 1st September 2025 with the disbanding of the Single Assessment and Operational Services and the setting up three new distinct service areas: Family Help, Assessment and Intervention and a Care Proceedings Team. Family Help will incorporate the Family Intervention and the majority of the CIN work as well as a number of specialized services including the Youth Hub and MASH. The Assessment and Intervention service will have teams dedicated to the more complex CIN work as well as child protection and pre-proceedings. There will be greater alignment with Education services as well as none-stigmatising approach to providing services to children with complex needs. Support here will be offered by Senior Family Help Practitioners. The care proceedings team will work with children from the point of the initial Court hearing.
- 1.26 At the point of implementation of phase one, this will have been nearly 12 months in the planning. Phase two will look at the establishment of the MACPTs. This is planned for February/March 2026 to coincide with the expectation as set out by the DFE in terms of the Families First Partnership Programme.
- 1.27 There still continues to be a significant amount of work to be done in relation to the CMS to ensure it is aligned with the practice policies and procedures.
- 1.28 To facilitate the move towards a seamless Family Help model, all Family Intervention Team workers and Community Care Workers in this area of service will be identified as Family Help Lead Practitioners. The expectation to undertake CIN level work will be supported via appropriate training that has previously been piloted through a programme designed by South Devon College.
- 1.29 With regards to MASH, there will be a need for this to be rebranded to represent a 'warm and welcoming' first point of contact for families to access to advice, guidance and support. There will be a need to expand the remit of MASH to embrace the philosophy of 'whole family' thinking. That will mean ensuring relevant professionals are available to address parent related issues such as housing, parental mental health, parental substance misuse etc.
- 1.30 A significant amount of work has gone into the redesign in readiness for phase one go live in September but there continues to be a significant amount of work to ensure phase two go live remains on track and is aligned to the Reforms.

Police/Health/Education

- 1.31 The move towards the expectation for alternatively qualified practitioners to manage CIN work will predominantly impact on Health and Educational workers who traditionally would have taken up the Early Help Lead Professional role. Previously, any escalation of need would have resulted in a MASH referral followed by a social worker undertaking a s17 assessment (single assessment). Going forward, the child will remain with the professional identified an escalation of need who will update the Family Help assessment to reflect the new needs and continue working with the family as the Family Help Lead Practitioner under s17. From the partnership engagement workshops, a great deal of anxiety was expressed about this expectation, and it is therefore important that the right level of training is offered across the partnership as well as the LA ensuring support and line of sight is maintained for children who are at the s17 level and being supported by partner agencies.
- 1.32 A further implication for partners is connected to the need to establish MACPTs. The teams will, as a minimum, need to consist of an experienced social worker, a relevantly qualified and registered Health professional, a relevantly experienced police officer and a relevantly experienced educational professional. We are currently analysing the data to determine how many MACPTs we will require – early indications suggest 3 teams which would marry well with our evolving locality model for Family Help. This will clearly have resource implications for all agencies.

VCS

- 1.33 We really value the contribution our VCS organisations make across the LA and in particular the part everyone plays in the Early Help work. Having assessed the data for the last two years it is evident that a number of VCS organizations actively input into both Early Help Plans as well as CIN Plans. However, only a small number have been allocated the lead professional role at Early Help. Therefore, we expect the impact on the VCS to be minimal in terms of taking on s17 Family Help Lead Practitioner roles. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the high level of impact that the VCS has on planning for children at all levels on the continuum of need. We would like to think where a VCS organisation is identified that it follows through as Family Help Lead Practitioner of a child that escalates to CIN with the support of the LA.

Adult Services

- 1.34 The Reforms place a big focus on 'whole family working' which means there is going to be a greater need for children's social care and adult social care and adult health care to work closer. This will require more integration of adult services into MASH as well as practitioners across all adult services being more active in planning for children across the whole continuum of need. This may also mean practitioners across adults taking the Family Help Lead Practitioner role if appropriate. This will clearly have resources implications as well as training needs for partners across all adult services as well as adjusting to a new way of fully integrated children-adults working.

Impact on Children

- 1.35 As we are at the design and development stage the impact on children is yet to be seen. However, the key objectives of the Reforms have the following intended aims:-
- Children's Services reforms will provide a seamless Family Help offer which ensures support is easily accessible, responsive and consistent; with a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevent escalation of needs.
 - All families will be empowered to strengthen their support networks through Family Group Decision Making, and through improved access to universal and voluntary community sector services within their own communities.
 - Establishing multi-agency child protection teams will bring a clear, fresh focus where there are child protection concerns, bringing experts together across agencies to identify actual or likely significant harm and take decisive action to protect children.

- Working together is crucial to delivering change and improving support for children and families across Torbay. Together, we will create holistic support which strengthens families and improves outcomes.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 There is no option but to implement these Reforms.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 Currently, funding is being provided for the Transformation year. It has been tentatively confirmed that funding will be made available till the end of this Parliament. However, the level of funding has not been confirmed. This could place the current service level at risk going forward as the old Supporting Families Funding has been replaced with the new grant funding.
- 3.2 Failure to have the Reforms in place by 31st March 2026 could result in the current funding being clawed back and future funding be withheld. It should be noted that although the Reforms are partnership wide, the financial risk lies solely with the Council.

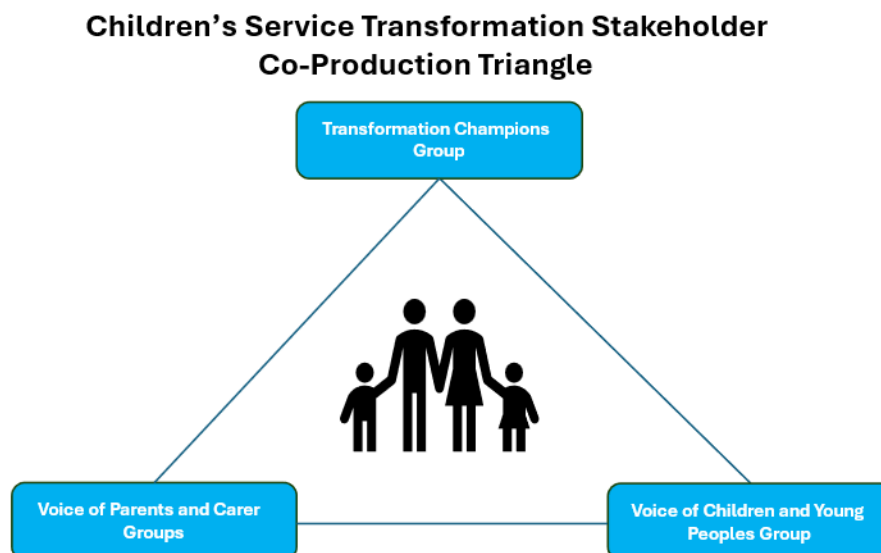
4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Reforms will be embedded in legislation via the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill set to come in force in 2027. Failure to have the new Families First Partnership Programme in place by then across the partnership will result in legal implications for the Council and Partnership as a whole.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 Feeding in and out of the workstream is a co-design triangle to ensure there is practitioner engagement at the operational level as well as input and scrutiny from children and

parent/carers.



6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

6.1 N/A

7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 N/A

8. Associated Risks

8.1 The main risk here at this stage is funding claw back if the Reforms are not implemented by 31st March 2026.

9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	Children, young people and their families will experience a seamless approach to family help and support. This will allow for a more proportionate and relational approach to		

	delivering help at the point of need.		
People with caring Responsibilities	The relational approach of the Reforms will make for more long-term relationships with alternatively qualified practitioners.		
People with a disability	Children with disabilities will benefit from a dedicate Additional Needs Team.		
Women or men	Parents will receive a seamless approach to family help that is none stigmatising and based on relational practice.		
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			No differential impact
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			No differential impact
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			No differential impact
People who are transgendered			No differential impact
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			No differential impact
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			No differential impact
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	The ambition of the overall Transformational work is to ensure that any child, no matter their level of need or their socioeconomic status, has access to the highest quality family help at the point of need no matter where		

	they are on the continuum of need.		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	Ensuring needs are identified and met as early as possible will ensure children's health, safety and wellbeing are met consistently. This will be further supported by an even greater shift towards preventative work as opposed to responding to issues that have already started to escalate.		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

- 10.1 The Transformation work that includes both the national and local workstreams will impact across the entire Council. This will include all of Children's Services as well as Adult Services and place-based services.

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 11.1 The Reforms will have an impact on services being delivered to both children and adults in the community given that s17 planning will not solely have to be managed by qualified social workers going forward. This may place pressure on the resources of those organisations.