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## Background

Family First is Blackpool's whole-family, early-help and relational practice model designed to make sure that children, young people, and their families get the right support at the right time. At its core, Family First is about:

- Strengthening resilience within families
- Reducing the need for statutory intervention
- Providing practical, holistic support earlier
- Ensuring families are partners—not recipients—in the planning process

It is grounded in the belief that families are experts in their own lives, and that empowering them leads to safer, more sustainable outcomes for children. The model supports practitioners to work in a consistent, strengths-based way and to build relationships that encourage trust, honesty, and shared decision-making.

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## Why it matters

Blackpool faces significant social challenges, with many families experiencing economic instability, insecure housing, health inequalities, and trauma. These pressures often lead to late, crisis-driven involvement from statutory services, increasing demand on social care and the number of children in care.

Family First aims to change this by providing earlier, more effective support to prevent crises, reduce the need for children to enter care, improve parental capacity, and strengthen family and community networks. In essence, it helps us work with families, not to them.

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## Information

The approach is strengths-based, meaning practitioners recognise and build on the abilities, resilience, and resources that families already have, rather than focusing solely on problems or deficits. It is trauma-informed, so staff understand the impact of past or ongoing trauma on family dynamics and respond with sensitivity. Family First is also relational, prioritising strong, trusting relationships between families and practitioners. Families are treated as partners in planning, actively involved in identifying needs, setting goals, and shaping the support they receive, rather than being passive recipients of services.

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**Relational Practice:** Practitioners build trust with families through active listening, empathy, and consistency, forming the foundation for effective, long-term support.

**Whole-Family Approach:** Support considers all family members and their environment, including siblings, extended family, and community networks, ensuring the broader context is addressed.

**Coordinated Early Support:** A lead professional coordinates input from multiple agencies—such as social care, health, education, and housing.

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### Key Features:

Early identification of needs, practical hands-on support, ongoing monitoring, and involving families in problem-solving and decision-making.

### Additional Features:

- Early identification of needs to prevent escalation into crisis
- Practical, hands-on support alongside advice and guidance
- Monitoring progress and adapting interventions as needed
- Encouraging families to engage in problem-solving and decision-making



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## Questions to consider

How can we ensure families access support before situations escalate?

What barriers prevent families from engaging early with services, and how can we address them?

How do we measure the impact of Family First on children, parents, and communities?

Which partnerships or resources are critical to improving early intervention?

How do we ensure that practitioners consistently apply strengths-based, relational approaches?

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## What to do

Identify families who would benefit from early intervention and engage them proactively.

Use a whole-family, strengths-based approach in all interactions.

Collaborate across agencies to provide coordinated, practical support.

Involve families in planning and decision-making to ensure interventions meet their needs.

Monitor progress and outcomes to adapt support and share learning across services.