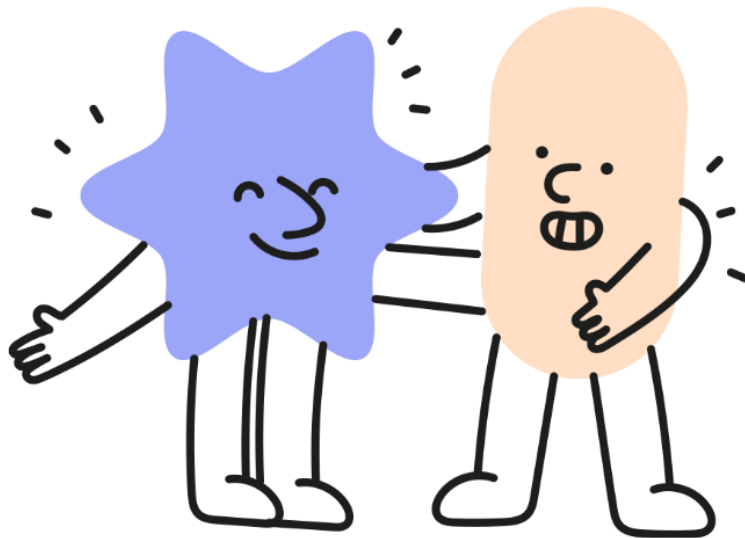


**Bolton
Family
Hubs**

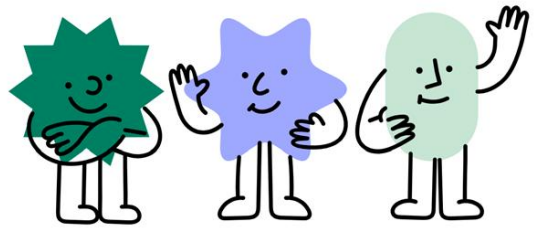


Best Start in Life Local Plan 2026-2029

March 2026 version 1



Introduction

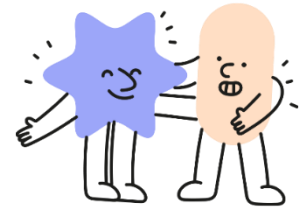


In July 2025, the Department for Education published the **Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life Strategy**. The strategy outlines the government's vision for early years support from pregnancy to age 5 and its plan for delivering on the Plan for change target of 75% of children in England achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of reception by 2028.

Best Start in Life Local Plans should be developed to identify local needs, gaps, and opportunities, bringing together activity already underway across different programmes.

Within this plan it outlines our priorities under core services and system enablers, the outcome of delivery against these priorities will support on improving our Good Level of Development.

Vision and Target



Our vision for 2030 is:

By working together, we will empower families to provide the nurturing care children need to thrive. We will enhance the availability, quality and impact of universal information, advice, and support. This supports our vision that every child is Safe, Healthy, Achieving and Belonging.

Our target:

By 2028, **72.8%** (this equates to **343** more children than today) of children – and **61.8%** (this equates to 69 more children than today) of children accessing Free School Meals – reach a Good Level of Development.

There will be an ongoing year on year improvement in the Good Level of Development.

Where we are now.....



23,460

Children in Bolton aged 0-5

75,599

Children in Bolton aged 0-17

24.4% Bolton

Percentage of population who are children

20.8% England

Pupils achieving a Good Level of Development at Early Years Foundation Stage

64.2% Bolton

68.2% England

Better support for families



There are 8 Best Start Family Hubs across Bolton, attended over the last year by

10,389 Parent/ carers
6,487 Children

6,837 events and sessions delivered in the last year

6,382 families receiving support from their midwives

Accessible Early Education and Childcare



70% Early learning 2-year-olds take up

95% universal 3- and 4-year-old take up

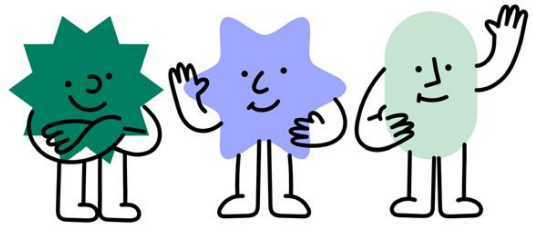
318 children supported through Early years Inclusion fund

High Quality Early Years and Reception



259 funded early years providers in Bolton

98.5% of all providers are judged Good or better



Context

Our child outcome priorities are that every child is Safe, Healthy, Achieving and Belonging.

Over the past 4 years, the Family Hub and Start for Life programme has strengthened Bolton's early years delivery model, driving improved outcomes for children aged 0 to 5 through the following:

1. Better support for families through the Best Start Family Hubs and Start for Life programme
2. More accessible Early Years and Childcare
3. Improved quality in early years including reception

We have located our Best Start Family Hubs in the most deprived communities across 6 neighbourhoods and 3 districts, and there is a multi-agency and integrated approach across the networks and community settings.

Building on long-standing governance, the programme has sharpened local focus on raising the Good Level of Development, embedding integrated working across health, education, early family support and voluntary, community and faith sector, and improving early identification and intervention through coordinated support for children with SEND. Together, these developments reflect a more connected, accountable system designed to give every child the best start in life.

What we know about Bolton's needs and strengths

Percentage of children from ethnic diverse communities

Bolton	England
42.3%	26.6%

(Census 2021)

There were **73 spoken languages** recorded across Receptions Classes in Bolton.

(Reception profile 2025)

Percentage of population in low-income families

Bolton	England
37.5%	23.1%

(Children in low-income families local area 2024)

There are

54,000

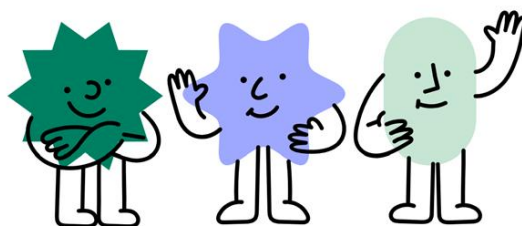
disabled people aged under 25 living in Bolton

Bolton is in the top 5 in England for 5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay

Bolton	England
42.8%	23.7%

Secondary Uses Service (SUS)

Context...



What we know about Bolton's needs and strengths

Our ongoing Needs Assessment continues to shape and refine the priorities within this plan.

We analyse Good Level of Development outcomes across a range of characteristics to identify our priority children and families, supported by a strong culture of sharing data and outcomes across the Best Start in Life Partnership.

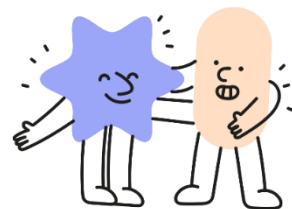
Initial analysis of children accessing their full Early Years Funding entitlement - including EL 2-year-olds (FRAS) indicates correlation with achieving a Good Level of Development. We want to inform parents about the difference that accessing early years education can make in giving their child the best start for school.

We are committed to ensuring the quality and accuracy of our data which underpins the 10 priority areas and utilising our data to inform our decisions.

What is our vision

Our vision is to support all families, and we are aware that some families will need more bespoke support. These include the most deprived families, children who are not on track to meet their Good Level of Development, children with emerging communication and language needs, families living in poverty and disadvantaged, children who struggle to access early years services and provision, fathers and male carers, families with mixed and vulnerable needs. We will further utilise our data to inform any bespoke support needed and take learning from feedback to drive improved outcomes.

Core Services



In developing our Best Start in Life plan we have considered the services that we provide to families both within the Best Start Family Hubs and within our communities. Against each of these services, a review has been carried out to determine what is already being delivered, what are the key priority areas and how outcomes will be monitored.

Home learning environment and parenting interventions

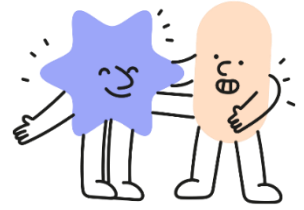
We will enhance and expand our established Evidence Based Intervention offer, including Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL), the Home Learning Environment programme, and Togetherness Parenting.

Priority actions:

1. Develop a Home Learning Environment delivery plan to reflect the needs and wants of priority families.
2. To produce a parenting delivery plan linked to antenatal and early parenting pathways.
3. Further define and resource our outreach model.
4. Agree shared outcomes, monitoring expectations and standardise evaluation.

Measures of progress:

- Engagement and completion rates of both evidence-based interventions and the digital Togetherness pathway
- Family feedback
- 18-month development check outcomes



Maternal and early years health services – Healthy Babies

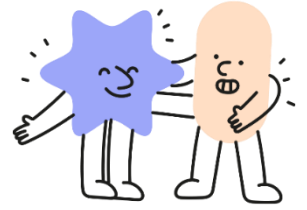
We will further enhance our integrated working between health, VCSE and Best Start Family Hub services to better enable access to health services including support for parent-infant relationships, perinatal mental health, infant feeding and nutrition, immunisation and oral health.

Priority actions:

1. Developing information sharing across the multi-agency partnership to have a greater understanding of child and family level data.
2. Strengthen leadership and harness partnership working to drive the healthy babies offer.
3. Achieving UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Accreditation for Best Start Family Hubs and the Foundation Trust.
4. Promoting the take-up of early health services.
5. Aligning the Family Help Strategy, Best Start Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan, including maternity, public health nursing and mental health services

Measures of progress:

- Healthy start take-up rates
- Vaccination rates
- Take up of the smoke-free homes offer
- Baby Friendly Accredited status indicators
- Take-up and impact of perinatal mental health services
- Infant feeding rates



Early Childhood Education and Care access and quality

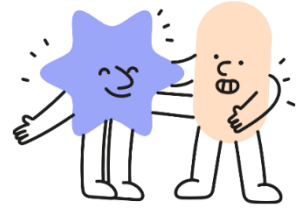
We will elevate our ambition with the early education and school age childcare sector to ensure a diverse range of high-quality inclusive places which meet the needs of children and families.

Priority actions:

1. Increasing the quality of the data we receive from stakeholders, enabling more robust sufficiency assessments to ensure the market meets needs.
2. Supporting settings to maintain the quality of early education provision under the inspection framework.
3. Identifying priority families who are not taking up their early education entitlement offers.
4. Further developing targeted outreach informed by evidence to increase the uptake of childcare entitlements.
5. Making best use of national programmes to maintain and develop our early education childcare offer.

Measures of progress:

- Take-up of childcare entitlements increases year on year
- Ofsted inspection outcomes continue to demonstrate high quality
- Monitoring of financial funding programmes



SEND support

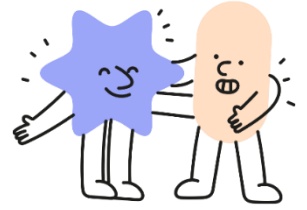
We will build on existing early identification processes and endeavour to put support in place earlier to help families access high-quality, joined-up care for children with emerging and identified special educational needs and disabilities.

Priority actions:

1. Recruiting specialist SEND practitioners for every Best Start Family Hub and linking them to our Family Help offer
2. Establishing a clear offer to wider community health, education and wellbeing support for those identified during early detection screenings.
3. Using the established multi-agency SEND development group, we will review SENIF and single point of access offer in line with the white paper.

Measures of progress:

- Family feedback on the ability to access quality SEND advice and support
- Children with SEND accessing their early years entitlement
- SENIF outcomes



Transition to school and reception year

We will strengthen multiagency working to further develop our shared understanding of school readiness. We will embed transition pathways for children and families into reception year, supporting children to meet all children's needs.

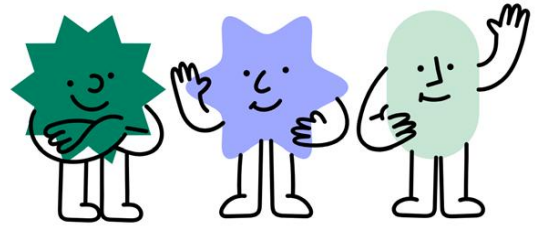
Priority actions:

1. Building on the existing work of the early education improvement group focusing on transition from setting to school for all children.
2. Enhancing transition for children with SEND needs.
3. Further developing processes for information sharing between a child's home, Early Childhood Education and Care setting and their new school.
4. Strengthening standardised information sharing about a child's strengths and needs between feeder settings and schools.
5. Reducing the number of children not able to access their full education entitlement.

Measures of progress:

- Child and parent feedback
- Feedback from schools and settings
- The number of children accessing their full education entitlement

System Enablers



To deliver against our Best Start in Life plan we have considered the key system enablers that underpin delivery against the priorities under the core services.

An evaluation has been carried out against these enablers to identify what we currently deliver and areas of priority along with how progress will be monitored.

Service integration and Best Start Family Hubs

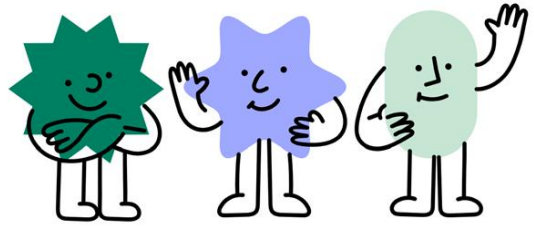
We will enhance partnership working and strengthen our universal family offer by building on our eight Best Start Family Hubs and existing co-located services. Working closely with Bolton Together, Bolton CVS and community leaders, we will broaden our reach and ensure families can easily access high-quality, joined-up support.

Priority actions:

1. Focusing on outreach and engagement in our priority groups and neighbourhoods that do not have a Best Start Family Hub.
2. Co-locating and connecting specialists, including SEND and Family Help practitioners.
3. Aligning the Best Start Local Plan with our development of Family Help and neighbourhood delivery model
4. Developing an infrastructure that enables high quality information and signposting to meets family's needs, both in person and digitally.
5. Creating stronger community networks to maximise support and consistent messages for families.

Measures of progress:

- Percentage families accessing and engaging with Best Start Family Hubs
- Family feedback on ease of access and quality of services to meet their needs
- Monitor access to the digital offer



Workforce capacity and capabilities

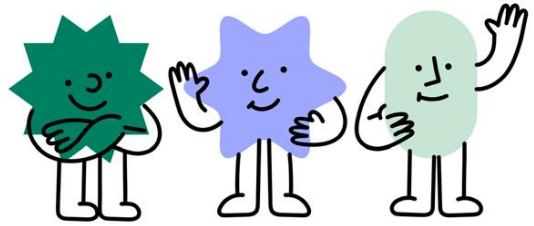
We will strengthen the knowledge, capacity and capability of our workforce so they can more confidently support and signpost families at the right time and in the right place.

Priority actions:

1. Confirming workforce training needs and provider needs, including CPD to support the effective delivery of EBIs for all children.
2. Continuing to deliver a coordinated programme of professional development that promotes a shared understanding of Best Start priorities and ways of working.
3. Reaching the full range of partners delivering within the Best Start in Life strategy.
4. Continuing partnership working to improve the recruitment and retention of the Early Childhood Education and Care workforce.

Measures of progress:

- Delivery of EBIs to fidelity
- Staff confidence levels
- Audit workforce knowledge to evaluate the impact of training
- Published childcare sufficiency report



Family involvement

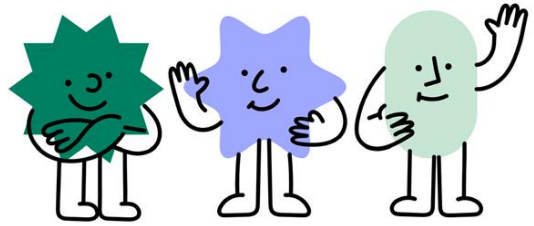
We will ensure family voice is at the heart of all of our plans and reflected in our delivery.

Priority actions:

1. Building on existing approaches to develop a framework to enable all families to have a voice and influence plans.
2. Developing innovative ways to strengthen our current parent panels.
3. Establishing regular feedback sessions with the voluntary and community sector organisations to share knowledge about family needs and priorities.
4. Developing processes to collate feedback across multi-agency partners to capture the authentic voice and opinion of priority families and establish close the loop systems.

Measures of progress:

- Number of parent panel members recruited
- The outcomes of the codesign work influence the offer
- Increased parental awareness and take up of support services
- Increased engagement with priority and underrepresented families.



Monitoring, evaluation and learning

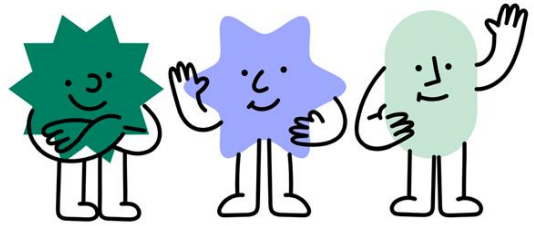
We will establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that aligns with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and national reporting requirements.

Priority actions:

1. Achieving the statutory target to increase Good Level of Development to 72.8%.
2. Establishing a shared outcomes framework across the system.
3. Robust monitoring of commissioned services.
4. Ensuring effective monitoring arrangements for childcare sufficiency take up and quality of provision.
5. Evaluating the impact and reviewing evidence-based interventions across the Best Start Family Hubs to inform delivery.
6. Enhancing data quality and partnership sharing of information.

Measures of progress:

- Good level of Development Increasing year on year to meet 2028 statutory target
- Outcomes framework signed off by Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board
- % of priority actions with defined success measures
- Routine collection of parent and practitioner feedback.



Accountability, Governance and Funding

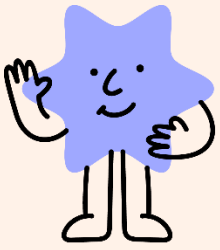
We will strengthen and innovate our governance and accountability arrangements to ensure the high-quality delivery of the Best Start in Life local plan. This includes a continued focus on multi-agency ownership, strong coordination, and shared responsibility for improvement. We will maximise the impact of our funding and resources by ensuring value for money and targeting investment towards priority communities to drive positive and sustainable change.

Priority actions:

1. Establishing the coordination of the Best Start in Life plan across the Governance structure to align with Family First reforms, NHS Neighbourhood plan and Live well strategy.
2. Continue to deliver robust monitoring and reporting of the funding across the Best Start in Life plan to ensure fidelity of spend.
3. Establishing robust budget monitoring for each area of the Best Start in Life Plan to ensure alignment to priorities and continued impact.
4. Exploring the potential of pooled funding and joint commissioning, facilitated by our governance and partnership boards.

Measures of progress:

- Defined roles, responsibilities and accountability for all partners within the Governance structure
- Highlight reports provide evidence to inform partnership decision making.
- Evidence of multi-agency involvement in governance (attendance, contributions),
- Parent voice formally embedded in governance
- Robust financial reporting and monitoring



**Bolton
Family
Hubs**



Thank you for reading 😊