



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**



**Nottinghamshire  
Health & Wellbeing Board**

# **Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy**

**2021-2025**



**...giving children  
the best start**

# Foreword

**Foreword by Councillor Philip Owen, Chair of the Children and Young People's Committee and Cllr Kevin Rostance, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Health and Well-Being Board**

Giving children in Nottinghamshire the best start in life is a priority that we can all sign up to. All children have the right to grow up with the best health possible, to be protected from harm and to have access to an education that enables them to fulfil their potential. We know, from research, that a great start in life for all is one of the key ways to success.

We want every child in Nottinghamshire to have the best possible start in life, because we know that a good start shapes lifelong health, wellbeing and prosperity.

We're proud to support Nottinghamshire's new Best Start Strategy which has been developed in partnership and builds on the existing relationship with key partners from Nottinghamshire County Council, Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Acute and Community Health Service Providers, Early Years Providers including schools, the private, voluntary and independent sector, as well as parents and carers.

We recognise that by working together we will be more effective in enabling all children to get the best start in life. There is much to be gained by creating a more integrated approach which maximises the benefits of services working together better and involving the public and communities at every stage.

## **By working together, we have a better chance of achieving the 10 key ambitions of this strategy:**

- 1. Prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood**
- 2. Mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes**
- 3. Babies and parents/carers have good early relationships**
- 4. Parents/carers are engaged and participate in home learning from birth**
- 5. Parents/carers experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported.**
- 6. Children and parents/carers have good health outcomes**
- 7. Children and parents/carers are supported with early language, speech and communication**
- 8. Children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of overall development**
- 9. Children have access to high quality early years provision**
- 10. Parents/carers are in secure employment**

We look forward to seeing the positive outcomes of this strategy and to see our children and families aspire to achieve their potential.

# Introduction

## What do we mean by Best Start?

Giving children the best start in life is a fundamental part of improving health and reducing inequalities. The earliest years of a child's life have a significant impact on their long-term development and their life chances.

Giving a child the 'best start' begins before birth, with good pre-conception and maternity care. Pregnancy and the early years offer a unique opportunity to shape the lives of our children: if a child receives appropriate support during their early years, they have a real chance of maximising their potential.



# Background

## Why focus on giving children the Best Start?

“ The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and wellbeing - from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational achievement and economic status ”

**Michael Marmot, 2010, Fair society, Healthy Lives**

How we treat young children shapes their lives – and ultimately our society. If we get the early years right, we pave the way for a lifetime of achievement. If we get them wrong, we miss a unique opportunity to shape a child’s future.

The first 1001 days - from conception to the age of 2 - are a critical period of development. This is because the earliest experiences, starting in pregnancy, shape a baby’s brain development and have a lifelong impact: during the first two years of life the brain develops a remarkable capacity to absorb information and adapt to its surroundings. From birth to 18 months, connections in the brain are created at a rate of one million per second.

From a baby’s perspective, their environment is made up almost entirely of the relationships with their parents or carers. The quality of this environment influences the development of their brain and social behaviours in a way that forms a foundation for their future experiences, and the way they will be equipped to respond to them.

Loving, secure and reliable relationships with parents, together with the quality of the home learning environment, support a baby’s emotional wellbeing, brain development, language development, ability to learn, and capacity to develop and maintain good relationships with others.

Babies are born ready to learn; however, their development is dependent on their parents and caregivers as their first teacher. Play helps to develop social, intellectual, language and problem-solving skills and is one of the main ways that babies learn about the world. From birth, a natural flow of affectionate and stimulating talk supports a baby’s brain and language development.

When a baby’s development falls behind the norm in the first year of life, it is more likely to fall further behind in subsequent years than to catch up with those who have had a better start.

Research shows that access to high quality early learning experiences, together with a positive learning environment at home, are vital to ensure children reach a good level of development.

Securing a successful start for our youngest children, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is crucial. Attending any pre-school, compared to none, predicted higher total GCSE scores and the more months spent in pre-school, the greater the impact (DfE, 2016).

Ensuring children are able to get the best from education is vital. School readiness is a strong indicator of how prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally. Not enough of our children are starting school with the range of skills they need to succeed. Educational attainment is one of the main markers for wellbeing through the life course, it is therefore essential that no child is left behind at the beginning of their school life.

There is a clear economic case for investing in the early years of children's lives. Investing in quality early care and education has a greater return on investment than many other options. For every £1 invested in quality early care and education, taxpayers save up to £13 in future costs; and for every £1 spent on early years education, £7 would need to be spent to have the same impact in adolescence.

Supporting healthy pregnancies and protecting and promoting the health of infants are also key to providing the best start in life: stopping smoking in pregnancy has a hugely positive impact on the health of mother and baby, as does good nutrition, vaccination and immunisation, and breastfeeding.

A parent's ability to support their child's health and development can be adversely affected by a number of issues including domestic abuse, being a teenage parent, experiencing stress, or by having many vulnerabilities or

complex social needs. Parents can be affected by experiences from their childhood too; events in their childhood can have a profound effect on their lives as adults, affecting their physical or mental health and influencing their parenting behaviour.

Having a low income also has an impact: at age 3, children from poorer backgrounds have fallen behind in terms of cognitive outcomes, social skills and whether they experience behavioural issues. This doesn't mean that every young child growing up in relatively advantaged circumstances will necessarily experience good development, nor that children facing disadvantages won't achieve positive outcomes; however, young children facing various disadvantages are less likely than others to experience good development.

In summary, this time in a child's life represents a phase of increased vulnerability, yet also provides a short window of significant opportunity to improve outcomes. We recognise the need to engage families and children much earlier, taking a wider partnership approach, starting in pregnancy and before children access early education and childcare. This strategy will help us to achieve that.

Further information, evidence and local data can be found in the 1001 Days and Early Years and School Readiness joint strategic needs assessment chapters.

<https://nottinghamshireinsight.org.uk/research-areas/jsna/children-and-young-people/>



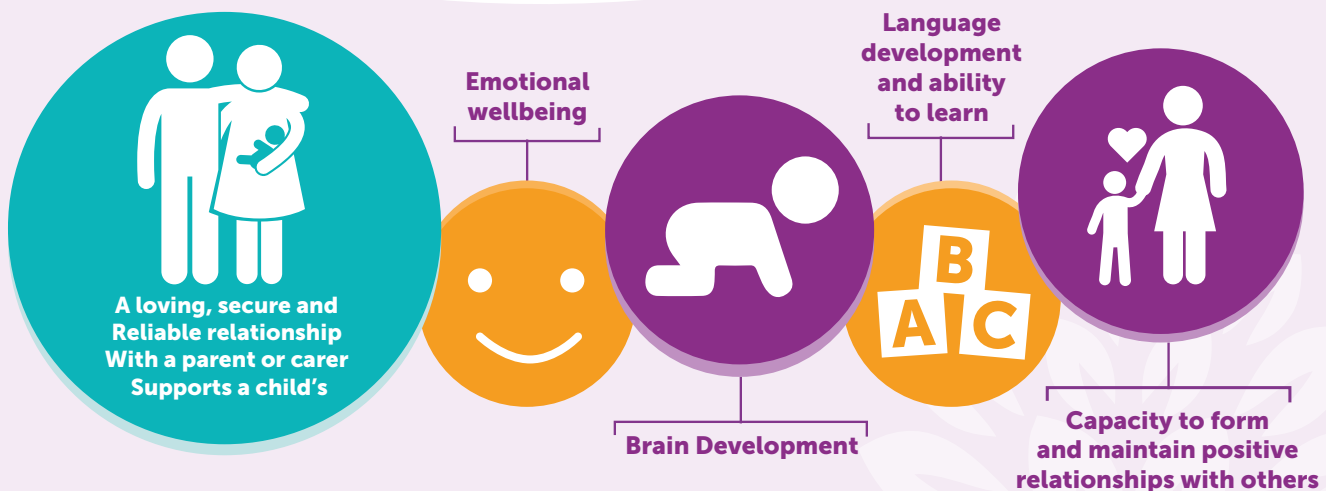
# Passionate about giving every child the best start in life

The Best Start approach is underpinned by a range of national policy guidance including:

- Marmot: Fair Society, Healthy Lives, and the Marmot Review 10 years on: Health Equity
- First 1000 days of life, Health Select Committee
- 1001 Critical Days: the importance of the conception to age 2 period, All Party Parliamentary Group Cross Party Manifesto
- Frank Field independent review of poverty and life chances
- WAVE Trust report Conception to 2 years: The Age of Opportunity
- Social Mobility Commission's State of the Nation
- Public Health England's Health Matters

Ensuring families prosper and achieve their potential is a priority within Nottinghamshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2017-2021, and the aim to give every child a good start in life is a key priority in the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2022.

## Giving every child the best start in life



The Health and Wellbeing Board facilitated a workshop to shape this new Best Start Strategy, and the accompanying Best Start Partnership Steering Group, which will lead and oversee the work.

### The workshop:

- Shared findings of the recent joint strategic needs assessment chapters: '1,001 Days – Conception to Birth' and 'Early Years and School Readiness',
- Celebrated the unique opportunity that pregnancy and the early years offer to shape a child's life,
- Explored local successes and challenges, and generated ideas for improvement,
- Developed a shared understanding and commitment to drive accelerated improvement,
- Sought multi-agency engagement and ownership of evidence-based interventions to support children's best start in life.



## Recognising the impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has widened existing inequalities across society. It is important that we reflect and acknowledge the changing needs of babies, young children and their parents/carers as a result of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions.

Several national reports have examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic across the early years. Many parents found their ability to cope with their pregnancy or baby had been impacted and reported that the changes brought about by Covid-19 had affected their baby or young child. Many more families are experiencing food insecurity and the number of children living in poverty is rising. There is a

risk to child development, including to social and emotional development, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions. Domestic abuse is likely to have increased. There is also a higher prevalence of emotional and mental health needs in parents and children, and fewer opportunities to identify and support them.

Families with lower incomes, those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and young parents, have been hit hardest by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is more important than ever that we target our joint efforts to support these families. The needs of Nottinghamshire's babies and young children must be centre-stage.

## Building on previous successes - key achievements

We are committed to building on our previous successes and have worked with our partners to identify our key achievements and good practice. These are summarised in Appendix One.

# Our vision

**For every child in Nottinghamshire to have the best possible start in life, because we know that a good start shapes lifelong health, wellbeing and prosperity.**

For partner agencies to work together to improve the life chances of all children in Nottinghamshire; working as a multi-agency Best Start Partnership Steering Group to engage and support families prior to conception, in pregnancy, and across the early years.

For partners, families and communities to work collaboratively to ensure every child has a healthy and fulfilling start to life and starts schools with the range of skills they need to succeed.





# Our ambitions

## **The Best Start recognises the importance of, and are committed to supporting:**

- Healthy pregnancies
- Preparation for parenthood
- Parental mental health and good attachment
- Parent-infant interaction
- Opportunities to support a child's cognitive, language and social and emotional development
- High quality and accessible early years education
- Identifying and supporting our more vulnerable parents as early as possible

To achieve Our Vision, we have developed **ten ambitions** for Nottinghamshire informed by the evidence base and our engagement with partners.

## **The ten ambitions for Nottinghamshire are as follows:**

1. Prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood
2. Mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes
3. Babies and parents/carers have good early relationships
4. Parents/carers are engaged and participate in home learning from birth
5. Parents/carers experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported
6. Children and parents/carers have good health outcomes
7. Children and parents/carers are supported with early language, speech and communication
8. Children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of overall development
9. Children have access to high quality early years provision
10. Parents/carers are in secure employment

## **The work of the Partnership will be underpinned by a number of key principles:**

- Clear leadership and accountability
- Partnership working, engaging a broader and more diverse range of partners
- Co-production and engagement with families
- Using evidence-base practice
- Using whole family and strength-based approaches
- Resources and collective action targeted in areas of greater deprivation and with groups most at risk of poor outcomes
- Digital innovation and making better use of social media communication channels
- Trauma-informed care

# Our actions

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## Prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood

Transition to parenthood starts before and during pregnancy. Pregnancy, birth and the weeks and months beyond are a key time of change and development for parents, as well as for their baby. This is an extraordinary and life-defining time however it is also a demanding time, and while most parents do well, some may struggle to cope with the changes or to adjust to their new roles.

Planning pregnancy, promoting healthy behaviours and reducing or managing risk factors are important for improving pregnancy outcomes. It is important that prospective parents are supported with their mental health, smoking and alcohol use, weight management and activity levels, and with anything else that may have detrimental impact on their wellbeing.

### We will

- Support health and wellbeing prior to conception with a key focus on mental health, healthy relationships, smoking cessation, healthy weight and good nutrition
- Ensure parents-to-be have access to information and support that will equip them with the knowledge and skills they need. There should be a focus on the emotional preparation for parenthood as much as on practical skills
- Deliver targeted support to our more vulnerable parents-to-be including pregnant teenagers
- Have a greater focus on young men and fathers-to-be
- Empower a wide range of partner organisations to prepare prospective parents for parenthood
- Reflect the voice of young people, prospective parents and new parents
- Maximise opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and preparation for parenthood between pregnancies
- Champion high-quality relationship and sex education in schools (primary, secondary, special schools and alternative education providers) and organisations working with young people

## Mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes

Pregnancy is a critical period during which the physical and mental wellbeing of a mother can have lifelong impacts on her child. Supporting women's health in pregnancy is important for many reasons: for the safe delivery of babies, to prevent adverse health outcomes, and to promote a good birth weight, important because premature and small babies are more likely to have poor outcomes. Addressing these key factors will help to support good antenatal outcomes:

- Smoking in pregnancy
- Substance and alcohol use
- Healthy weight and good nutrition
- Screening and immunisation
- Low birth weight
- Healthy relationships

### We will:

- Work in partnership to reduce the proportion of women smoking in pregnancy
- Promote and support early access to maternity care
- Increase opportunities for women to receive continuity of carer across maternity services through the Local Maternity Neonatal System (LMNS)
- Improve the uptake of screening and immunisation
- Review and strengthen pathways of care and partnership working for women with complex social needs or multiple vulnerabilities. One aim of this is to reduce parental stress
- Ensure swift referral pathways are in place for expectant parents who are deemed as vulnerable
- Engage a more diverse group of partners in supporting healthy pregnancies
- Support expectant teenagers to access antenatal services which are non-judgemental, young people friendly and accessible; with tailored antenatal care provided for those most vulnerable
- Promote national and local digital resources such as the Baby Buddy app
- Improve communication and handover of care between maternity services and Healthy Family teams, and information sharing across other key services
- Engage more families-to-be in pregnancy in services that support their health and wellbeing

## Babies and parents/carers have good early relationships

Early relationships are important for building healthy brains and have an immeasurable impact on social and emotional development. The way babies' brains develop is shaped by their interactions with the world around them: parent-infant relationships and the quality of parent-infant interaction are very important.

Secure, responsive relationships between a baby and their parent is essential for healthy brain development. This relationship reassures a child that their needs will be met, which helps them regulate their emotions and supports resilience into adulthood. Good early relationships help a growing brain to become socially efficient and support emotional, behavioural and intellectual development. Infant mental health describes the emotional wellbeing of children in the earliest years of life, and reflects whether children have the secure, responsive relationships that they need to thrive.

### We will:

- Equip a wider range of practitioners with the knowledge and skills to support bonding, attachment and the early parent-infant relationship and understand the role of this in baby brain development
- Develop clear and consistent universal messages about the importance of sensitive, attuned and face-to-face interactions from birth onwards
- Routinely assess parent-infant interaction in the first few weeks of baby's life
- Implement evidence-based interventions that support the development of good early relationships across the 1001 days
- Deliver targeted support to parents experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, challenges with the early parent-infant relationship
- Champion early childhood mental health – the healthy social, emotional and behavioural development of young children – and act early to support emerging needs

## Parents/carers are engaged and participate in home learning from birth

Babies are born ready to learn, and their development is dependent on their parents and caregivers as their first teacher. From birth, learning comes from interaction with people and the environment around us. Play helps to develop social, intellectual, language and problem-solving skills and is one of the main ways babies and young children learn about the world. Home learning is one of the biggest influences on early year's outcomes. Every day conversations, make-believe play, and reading activities have a particular influence.

### We will:

- Ensure parents/carers understand the importance of their role as 'first educator' and are aspirational for their children
- Support parents/carers to develop good home learning environments and prepare their children for learning from birth. We will target these actions at families with low incomes and those living in areas of multiple deprivation
- Work with voluntary and community organisations to foster and promote opportunities for babies and young children to play, learn and have new experiences close to home. Ensure these opportunities are clearly communicated to parents
- Support parents/carers to improve their wellbeing and parenting skills as well as to understand their child's development needs
- Develop clear and consistent universal messages about the importance of home learning (interaction, play and supporting development) from birth



## Parents/carers experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported

Mental health issues can impact on a mother and her partner's ability to bond with their baby, and to be sensitive and responsive to the baby's emotions and needs. Around one in five women will experience mental health difficulties before or after birth, yet this may remain unrecognised or untreated. A women's mental health before and after the birth is closely linked to the development of good early relationships. Fathers can also find the transition to parenthood challenging and may need support for their mental health.

Parents/carers who are experiencing stress may be less able to provide a secure, healthy, nurturing environment for their child. In pregnancy, maternal stress can impact on baby's developing brain, though the effects of this are helped by sensitive and responsive parenting in the first year.

### We will:

- Work with partners to strengthen the pathway of care for women with mental health needs in the perinatal period, with a particular focus on mild to moderate and emerging mental health need
- Map and clearly communicate information about mental health support and services to all who might signpost, refer or wish to access
- Identify and engage people and communities that are not represented in services
- Share information about referrals and access to services with relevant partners so that opportunities to engage and support parents are not lost
- Develop a culture that recognises the importance of parental mental health and emotional wellbeing and the part this plays in healthy child development
- Share information about the changes in emotional and mental health that new parents may experience and support parents and carers to recognise and respond to these
- Promote a range of interventions that support the emotional and mental health of parents and carers of preschool children

## Children and parents/carers have good health outcomes

What happens during the early years influences health and wellbeing in later life: good nutrition is essential to a child's development, breastfeeding has particular benefit. Vaccination, immunisation and home safety are important for health promotion. Addressing these key factors will help to promote good health:

- Breastfeeding
- Screening and vaccination
- Good nutrition
- Weight management and healthy weight
- Safer sleep

### We will:

- Target existing resource, services and support at those most in need, including those in areas of deprivation
- Have a greater focus on promoting the health of whole families, including fathers, partners and households
- Increase uptake and promotion of the Healthy Start Scheme including a radical increase in the uptake of vitamins in pregnant women, babies and children to age 4
- Promote safer sleep messages across a wide variety of partners and equip these partners with the knowledge and skill to recognise and support families most at risk of sudden and unexpected death in infancy
- Continue efforts to improve the prevalence of breastfeeding, focused on areas of the county with the lowest rates
- Work to improve the food environment for families with young children through delivery of the Childhood Obesity Trailblazer by:
  - Making access to affordable, healthy food easier
  - Improving the quality of food provision through early years settings
  - Enabling parents to develop good eating habits with their children
  - Promoting consistent messages
- Develop key messages about health and wellbeing in the early years that are shared widely by a wider range of professionals and partner organisations
- Continue to educate and support parents to reduce the risks of avoidable injuries in babies and children

# Children and parents/carers are supported with early language, speech and communication

Language difficulties predict problems in literacy and reading comprehension, but they may also be indicative of problems in children's behaviour and mental health. Once children enter school, language skills remain a strong predictor of their academic success. Children's vocabulary skills are linked to their economic backgrounds. Children living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage are at much higher risk, with around 50% of children starting school with delayed language or other speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Evidence shows that difficulties in early language development can lead to:

- educational disadvantage
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- risky behaviours
- involvement in offending
- economic disadvantage
- emotional disadvantage

## We will:

- Address speech, language and communication needs and improve skills amongst preschool children through the commissioning and delivery of the Home Talk programme for 2 year olds, Little Talkers Groups and specialist Speech and Language Therapy
- Jointly commission SLCN services to provide one service which includes early help approaches and specialist speech and language therapy
- Develop a partnership SLCN Action Plan for children under the age of 5 focusing on universal to specialist services
- Intervene early, reducing the need for specialist speech and language interventions
- Improve the knowledge of skills of local practitioners to help identify and address SLCN
- Narrow the attainment gap between children who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and their peers by targeting SLCN early help programmes in areas of greatest need
- Develop a partnership SLCN Action Plan
- Work with a wide range of partners to promote the nationally developed resources, Tiny Happy People and Hungry Little Minds, as part of universal and targeted support from pregnancy to 5
- Ensure children have access to communication friendly spaces



# Children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of overall development

School readiness is a strong indicator of how prepared a child is to succeed in school and in later life. Levels of school readiness links to educational attainment, which impacts on life chances. School readiness has been shown to impact on health, mental health, future earnings, involvement in crime, and even death.

Ensuring children get the best from education is vital; education is central to improving life chances for children and young people and yet not enough children are starting school with the range of skills they need to succeed. Educational attainment is one of the main markers for wellbeing through the life course and so it is important that no child is left behind at the beginning of their school life.

## We will:

- Identify children with developmental delay and/or additional needs as early as possible and provide them with early support
- Work in partnership to ensure all children, particularly Looked After Children, children eligible for free school meals, children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), and children for whom English is an additional language achieve a good level of development
- Support the most vulnerable children and families to access the right support at the right time whether it be access to childcare or 1-2-1 family support
- Improve children's development at the Early Years Foundation Stage to be at least on par with statistical neighbours, as well as narrowing the attainment gap
- Ensure 2 year olds from low income families access their early education entitlements
- Ensure practitioners across Nottinghamshire are knowledgeable and effective in identifying and assessing the needs of 0-5's through a comprehensive workforce development offer and regular support and interventions
- Ensure children and families experience seamless interventions and services
- Review and strengthen the transition arrangements for children particularly with SEND
- Put in place robust pathways to comprehensive support where there are any issues identified at the Healthy Family Team 2-2 ½ year health and development review
- Continue to promote and champion the value of early education
- Have a greater focus on social and emotional development across the early years

# Children have access to high quality early years provision

High quality, accessible early learning experiences together with a positive learning environment at home is a vital combination to ensure that children reach a good level of development at school age. High quality early years practitioners and leaders are essential for delivering a high standard of care and education to create an effective early learning environment.

Early years education for children below the age of four has a positive impact on the life chances of disadvantaged children, yet disadvantaged children spend significantly less time in pre-school than children from more affluent backgrounds. It is therefore essential to increase the take up of childcare funding entitlements for low income families.

## We will:

- Ensure children and families, particularly those living in areas of disadvantage, have access to high quality, sufficient, sustainable early years education and childcare provision
- Offer support for providers of childcare and early education including providing training and support packages e.g. Ofsted readiness, working with children with SEND etc
- Work in partnership to ensure all children, particularly Looked After Children, children eligible for free school meals, children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), and children for whom English is an additional language achieve a good level of development
- Ensure vulnerable children have access to good or outstanding early years settings
- Continue to recognise the skill and expertise of the early year's workforce: further invest in training around the importance of the 1001 days, and skills to engage and support families collaboratively, building relationships based on trust
- Provide proactive support and assess the sustainability of the Early Years and Childcare Sector during and after the Covid-19 pandemic
- Carry out further analysis of the sufficiency of Early Years provision across all areas of the county considering the numbers of vacant spaces already available
- Deliver target support for Early Years providers working in areas of high levels of disadvantage and where vulnerable children would be adversely affected if there were no provision available
- Support the Early Years Sector to encourage families "Back in to Childcare" and promote the take up of childcare as a choice that benefits the child's development
- Explore how Nottinghamshire County Council can continue to fulfil the duty to provide sufficient childcare places for the most disadvantaged communities
- Carry out detailed consultation with parents on using Childcare and Early Education provision

## Parents/carers are work ready and in secure employment

Growing up in poverty can affect every area of a child's development and future life chances. We know that the most disadvantaged children are less likely to achieve their academic potential, secure employment and gain a sense of future financial security. They are more likely to suffer from poor health, live in poor quality housing and unsafe environments. Growing up in poverty can mean being cold, going hungry, not being able to join in activities with friends, and not being able to afford even one week's holiday.

Worklessness is still a key reason why many children in Nottinghamshire are living in poverty; however, understanding and tackling in-work poverty remains a priority.

### We will:

- Provide opportunities for parents/carers to be work ready, by working in partnership to improve skills, confidence and aspirations for their families e.g. Job Clubs, Work Coaches
- Increase families' money management skills and build financial resilience for children and families in poverty
- Provide parents/carers with access to volunteering opportunities that support them to move closer to the labour market
- Gain a greater understanding and reduce the negative impact of Covid19 on child and family income
- Target families from low income households to deliver a range of interventions to give children the best start
- Successfully deliver the Troubled Families programme which supports parents into sustained employment and increases the number of young people in training, education or employment
- Support families' income and improve outcomes through tackling food insecurity
- Increase uptake of funded childcare provision and Tax Credits to remove barriers to employment for many parents
- Support teenage parents into employment by promoting and increasing take up of the Care to Learn grant for young parents in education or training
- Actively promote schemes to support parents with mental health problems into work
- Support families reliant on welfare to navigate the system
- Narrow the health inequalities gap for low income groups and their peers by commissioning and delivering services and interventions which target localities and groups with poorer health and wellbeing outcomes

# Best Start Partnership Steering Group

The purpose of the Best Start Partnership Steering Group is to assess local needs and subsequently develop and co-ordinate the effective delivery of the Best Start Strategy which will focus on pre-conception to statutory school age concentrating on the first 1,001 days.

## Responsibilities

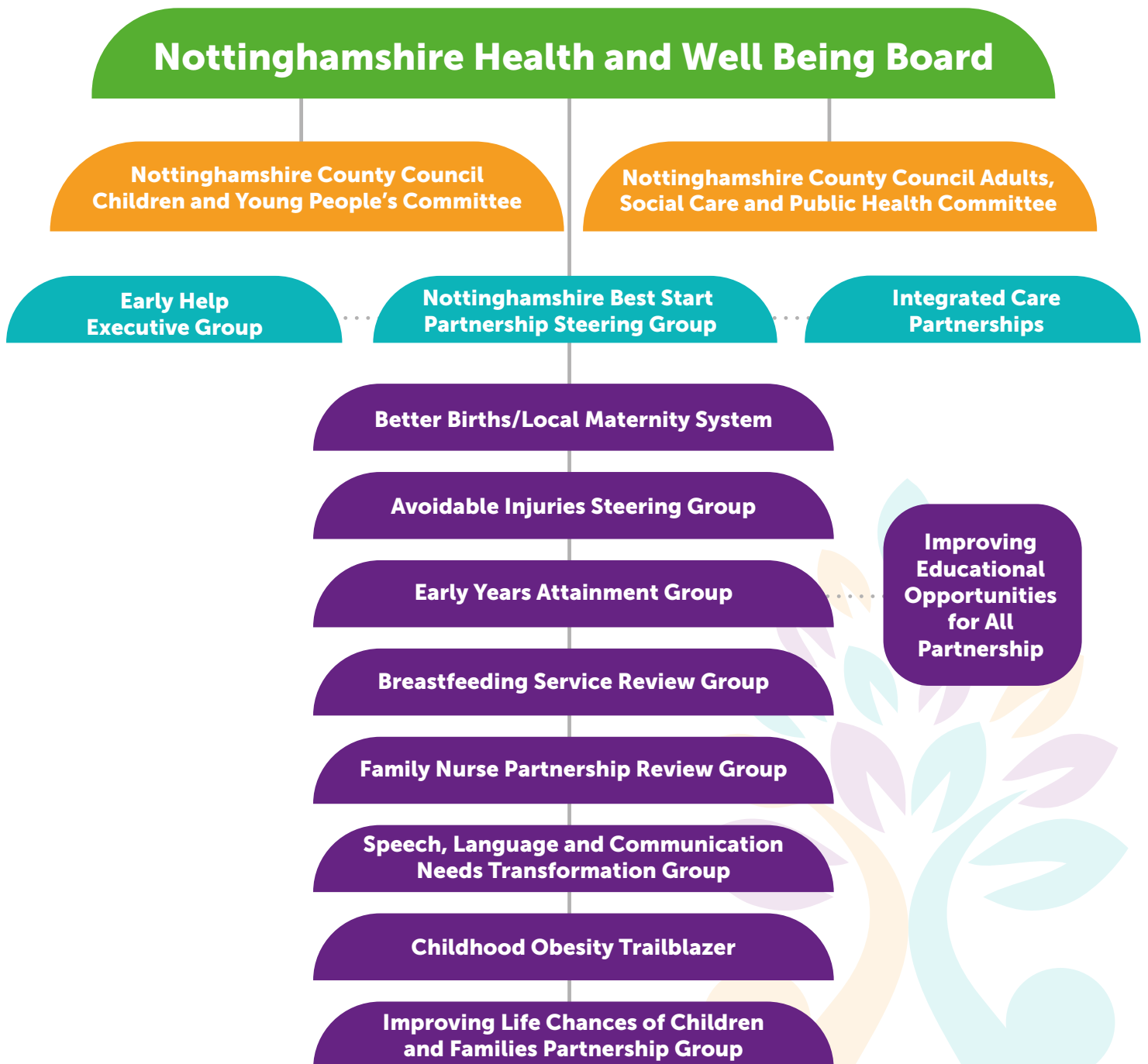
- Facilitate a partnership approach to ensuring children have the best start in life.
- To consider and implement the recommendations of the relevant Nottinghamshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapters relating to pre conception, antenatal and postnatal support, school readiness and public health outcomes for children under the age of 5.
- Development, implementation and monitoring of the Best Start Strategy and Action Plan.
- To identify and progress new joint strategic needs assessment chapters, mapping exercises and reviews that may be required to better inform planning and delivery.
- To identify and refer to the evidence base for ensuring children get the best start in life.
- To actively target interventions to communities where outcomes are worse for children and families.
- To consider and respond to the effects of Covid-19 on outcomes for families with children under the age of 5.
- To agree reports on progress of the Action Plan for Local Authorities and key stakeholders
- To ensure any resources available are appropriately deployed in order to support activities in the Action Plan.

## Role of group members

- To act as a champion for work to improve the health and well-being of expectant families and those with young children within their own organisation and networks they represent.
- To contribute to the Best Start Action Plan and wider Best Start Strategy.
- To commit resources where possible to support the delivery of the Best Start Strategy.
- To identify ways in which their organisation can contribute to emerging issues and challenges including the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To provide a communication channel between the Steering Group and their own organisation and through involvement at other strategic partnership groups and networks.
- To be aware of and respond in a timely manner to communications outside of Best Start Partnership Steering Group meetings.
- To share relevant reports, information and resources with other members of the group as well as their own organisation and networks which they represent.
- To contribute relevant items for discussion at meetings.

# Governance

The Best Start Partnership Steering Group will report to the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board as well as member's own organisational governance routes. The Steering Group will ultimately report to the Health and Wellbeing Board and will work closely with the Children and Young People's Committee in Nottinghamshire County Council who will contribute to the Strategy development and champion effective service delivery.



# Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Each workstream will be responsible for developing and monitoring a multi-agency action plan to deliver our ten ambitions, reporting to the Best Start Partnership Steering Group.

**There are a range of overarching public health indicators which will be used to assess progress, including:**

- Reducing infant mortality
- Increasing vaccination, immunisation and screening uptake
- More children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception
- More children achieving a good level of development at the 2-2.5 year health and development review
- Fewer low-income families (children under 16 years)
- Reducing family homelessness
- Reducing the numbers of children who need to be Looked After
- Reducing the number of babies born low birth weight

- Reducing childhood obesity (4-5 years)
- Improving oral health
- Reducing teenage pregnancy
- Reducing smoking in pregnancy
- Increasing the rates of breastfeeding
- Reducing avoidable injuries (0-4 years).

The Best Start Partnership Steering Group will review progress against these indicators, as well as comparing performance with Nottinghamshire's closest statistical neighbours.

Workstreams will also identify local indicators to monitor progress towards our ten ambitions.

# References:

1001 Critical Days the importance of the conception to age 2 period" Cross Party Manifesto'. <https://www.1001criticaldays.co.uk/manifesto>

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# Appendix One - Building on previous successes- key achievements

## Prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood

- There are examples of excellent working relationships across the education, early years and health sector.
- A wide range of activities and support are available
- Integrated wellbeing service works to improve health and wellbeing of local population
- Knowledge of the impact of adverse childhood experiences is increasing across all sectors
- Relationships and Sex Education in schools is good and expanding across Nottinghamshire
- Work of the Schools Health Hub is now embedded, supporting schools to plan and deliver effective age appropriate Personal Social Health Education programmes
- Services working with young people such as the Youth Service regularly deliver support and information about healthy relationships

## Mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes

- High quality support and valued services are in place e.g. maternity services, children's centre services, Healthy Family teams, Family Nurse Partnership for young parents.
- Improving antenatal outcomes is a local priority via the Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS).
- Maternity clinics are available in many Children's Centre buildings across Nottinghamshire
- There is a local commitment to tackling smoking in pregnancy
- Maternity care is delivered in line with evidence base
- There are specialist midwives providing additional support for expectant parents affected by drug use and teenagers
- Development of 'Pregnancy Birth and Beyond' programme

## Babies and parents/carers have good early relationships

- We have a well-established Family Nurse Partnership who are experts in attachment, bonding and the early parent-infant relationship
- Maternity and community health providers are accredited in the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative
- Specialist perinatal mental health services support mothers with serious mental illness
- Ages and stages questionnaires help to assess children's social and emotional development
- The Children's Centre Service delivers a range of 1-2-1 and group support during the post-natal stages e.g. targeted baby massage which improves attachment



## Parents are engaged and participate in home learning from birth

- Great expectations programme delivered
- Home learning booklet developed by the Children's Centre Service and Healthy Family teams is routinely distributed
- Parents Home Learning tile is developed on Notts Help Yourself Let's Play and other programmes delivered by the Children's Centre Service

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## Parents/carers experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported.

- Assessment of mental health and wellbeing takes place throughout pregnancy and after birth
- A range of evidence based mental health support is available for parents
- There are some excellent examples of collaborative working (including a hub model in Ashfield)
- The Children's Centre Service delivers successful PHEW peer support groups for parents with low emotional wellbeing
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services are well established in Nottinghamshire
- Perinatal mental health is a local priority for commissioners and providers

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## Children and parents/carers have good health outcomes.

- Good breastfeeding support offer including peer support through Children's Centre Service volunteer led 'Babes' groups
- There is a Breastfeeding friendly places scheme
- Social prescribing, where available
- Healthy Family Teams and the Children's Centre Service promote health and have achieved UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative status
- Healthy Family Team services are available in many Children's Centre buildings across Nottinghamshire
- The Children's Centre Service provides extensive health promotion interventions and campaigns



## Children and parents/carers are supported with early language, speech and communication.

- Little Talkers and Home-Talk programmes support children with emerging or targeted needs and are evidence-based and well-received
- There is now a single point of access for speech, language and communication needs services for all areas except for Bassetlaw
- There is an established Language Leads network for Early Years practitioners, with Language Lead accreditation previously provided
- There is a graduated response to emerging need and an aligned pathway of care
- There are high quality specialist speech and language therapy services in place
- There has been a strong partnership approach to address speech, language and communication needs through the previous Language for Life strategy
- There has been a wealth of training available in Nottinghamshire for those working with families with preschool children
- There is a wealth of information for families to assist them to improve their child's speech and language. These are available on Notts Help Yourself, various Facebook pages, with regular campaigns shared e.g. 'Hungry Little Minds'

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## Children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of overall development

- There is a wealth of voluntary sector support to promote child development and school readiness
- There is a comprehensive Children's Centre Service offer and programmes to support child development and school readiness
- Healthy Family teams support development from pregnancy and beyond and deliver universal ages and stages assessment at key points
- The 2 year childcare entitlement and extended childcare offer is increasing access to high quality local childcare
- There are some examples of good links and partnership working between early years settings, the Children's Centre Service and Healthy Family teams
- Systems and processes are in place to monitor the take up and progress of the most vulnerable children (including the Early Years Better Start tracking tool)
- Transition arrangements are in place to support the most vulnerable children between early years provision and school
- The Schools Families Specialist Service works to support preschool children with SEND
- The Early Years Quality and Attainment team works with all early years settings to help track and support vulnerable children and those most at risk of poor outcomes

## Children have access high quality early years provision.

- 78% of 2 year olds took up a funded childcare place (15 hours per week) in Spring 2020 and 93% of parents who applied took up an extended entitlement place (30 hours per week). These figures were adversely affected by Covid Summer 2020)
- The Book Start programme is offered universally
- 93% of Early Years Providers were rated as Good or Outstanding in the academic year 2019-20
- 44 Practitioners across Nottinghamshire have been supported to achieve a Nationally recognised Level 3 qualification in supporting Children with SEND
- 1,186 practitioners engaged in NCC led early years training in 2019/20
- Nottinghamshire settings have participated in the National Early Years Professional Development Programme which will reach over 45 settings to support Early Language and Numeracy.
- There is a well-established Early Years Quality and Attainment team which provides training, support and advice to all Early Years settings to help raise the quality of provision

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## Parents/carers are in secure employment.

- The number of children living in low income households has remained stable however the impact of Covid19 on employment and income have not been reflected in data
- The Children's Centre Service has over 200 active parent volunteers who are also being supported to be work ready
- The Department of Work and Pensions through Jobcentre Plus works closely with the Children's Centre Service to provide assistance to families
- The Chamber of Commerce and NCC Economic Regeneration are providing a range of services such as work coaches for parents with preschool children funded through D2N2
- Tackling Child Poverty remains a priority in Nottinghamshire through the 'Improving Life Chances for Children and Families Strategic Partnership Group'

