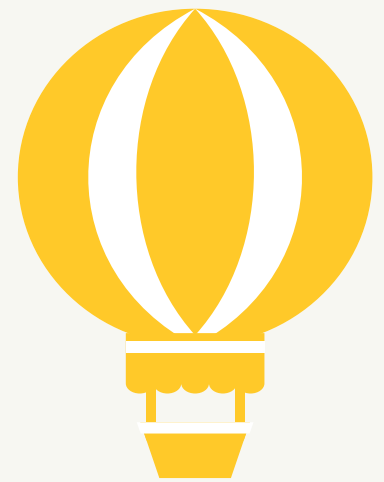
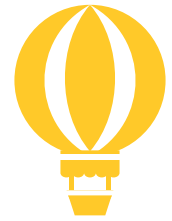


Leicestershire Maternity and Early Childhood Strategy





Foreword

I'm really pleased to share this document with you, this demonstrates our firm partnership commitment to ensuring every child in Leicestershire has the best start in life. The strategy has been produced by professionals working across the voluntary sector, midwifery, Family Help, Healthy Together and public health. It follows 6 years of work on our original priorities within the Children & Families partnership plan where we focused on 1001 critical days and school readiness.

All partners are committed to the work and promotion of the 1001 Critical Days and believe this is fundamental in all we do when working with Children and their families. We want to ensure all parents and carers understand the important role they play in enhancing their child's brain development in that specific window of opportunity.

We believe that every child deserves to have the best possible start to school life, families, early years providers, 0 to 5 services and schools all have a shared responsibility to ensure that the first steps of a child's journey through school are successful.

At the heart of our communities in Leicestershire our Family Hubs have been established to support families, children and young people. Working with partner organisations we are committed to provide information, support and resources for the family unit. Within Family Hubs there is also the Start for Life initiative, in April 2024 we held our first ever 'Baby Fortnight'; delivering sessions for parents, their babies and young children. These were held in our Family Hubs and out in the community. We also delivered various workshops for the workforce. These events will continue through the year and Baby Fortnight will also happen each year moving forward.



Jane Moore

Director of Children and Family Service
Leicestershire County Council



Mission

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

Purpose of this strategy

There is a strong evidence base to show that experiences in the first 1,001 days from conception to age two is a period of rapid growth and what happens during this time could affect the rest of the child's future outcomes. Positive experience and good quality parent-infant relationships during this time support secure attachments which contribute to good physical and mental health, speech and language development, emotional self-regulation, resilience, and wider social and economic advantages throughout the life course. Every child deserves the best possible start in life, and support to fulfil their potential.

This strategy document aims to set out guiding principles for the delivery of 0-5 services in the county and has been developed as part of the Leicestershire Children and Family Partnership Plan. The Children and Family Partnership plan Priority 1 - Best Start for Life (Early Years) task group, chaired by the Director of Children and Family Services, will keep the strategy under review and evaluate progress against headline performance indicators. A Best Start for Life Partnership is in place to help deliver this strategy.

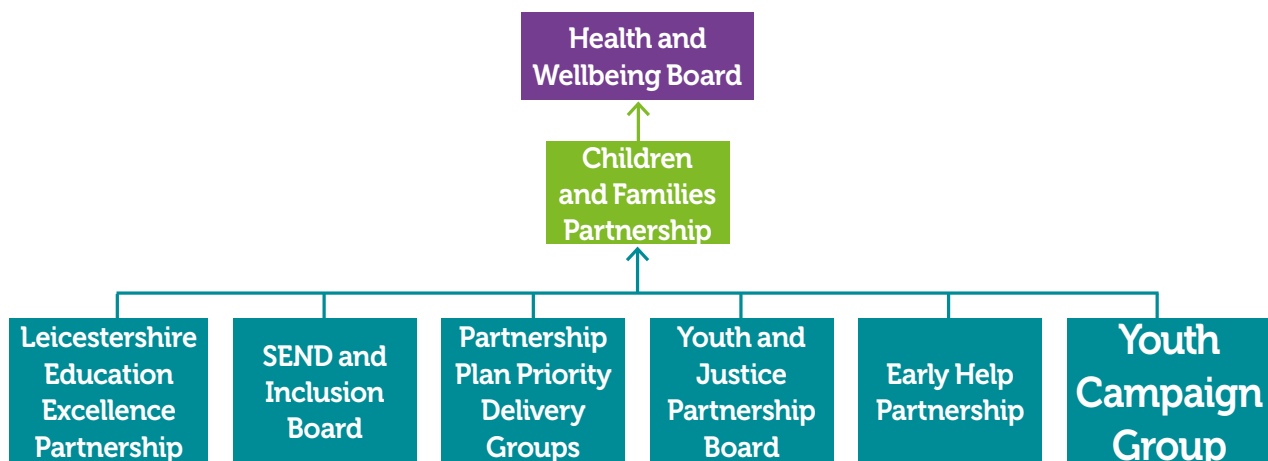


Leicestershire Children and Families Partnership

The purpose of the Children and Families Partnership is to champion effective partnership working on shared outcomes and priorities that make a real difference to the lives of children and young people. By working together, the Partnership can also maximise resources and expertise, be more co-ordinated in the services provided and avoid duplication of effort.

It will achieve this purpose by providing leadership, direction, and assurance on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board to a Children and Families Partnership Plan that relate to delivering “The Best Start for Life” commitments of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy delivery plan.

Each priority of the Children and Families Partnership Plan has a named lead who will work with a task group of key stakeholders to develop and deliver against action plans with clear milestones to help monitor progress. Priority task groups will provide regular updates on performance against their action plan for the Children and Families Partnership which will be presented by the Priority Lead. Additionally, six-monthly progress reports on performance against the Children and Families Partnership Plan will be provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board and annual reports will be provided to Leicestershire County Council’s Cabinet and Children’s Scrutiny Committee.



Aims

What we hope to achieve from this strategy and action plan:

- Consistent and shared messages across all the providers working in the 0-5 arena: It is important that our workforce is informed, has a shared evidence base, a good understanding of services available, and how to access them
- An ability to prioritise services according to need: This requires us to develop shared data systems so that, as a partnership, we can take collective responsibility for the delivery of high-quality services and work together to target areas or populations with the highest needs and agree our shared outcomes
- Meaningful engagement with Leicestershire communities: For example, maternal voice is heard and responded to in the delivery of this strategy. This will support our collective response to commissioning and quality assurance.



Principles

The above aims will be supported by the following principles:

1. Partnership working

The Best Start for Life Partnership arrangements and governance are well established through the Children and Families Partnership Priority 1 - Best Start for Life (Early Years) task group (see above diagram).

- To be effective, the Best Start for Life Partnership recognise that we must have a shared belief and ambition for children and families. All partners need to be well informed both in terms of needs and provision. This is so that there is a good awareness of the range of provision, any service gaps, etc by all members.
- The Best Start for Life Partnership will have clear roles and responsibilities within the delivery of the action plan. The Priority 1 - Best Start for Life (Early Years) task group will be responsible for monitoring the performance and impact of the Maternity and Early Years Strategy and will address areas of underperformance.
- The Best Start for Life Partnership has an effective working relationship and will hold each other to account through active engagement in discussions and activities and constructive challenge, with a focus on impact for children and families.
- The Best Start for Life Partnership is willing to share responsibility, design solutions and take action.

2. Community Engagement

The Best Start for Life Partnership are committed to ensuring that family voices are heard both operationally and strategically, building on individual organisation commitment and practice in community engagement.

- We will work in coproduction with the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership.
- We will consult with families, focusing on maternity and early years issues to inform our strategy.
- We want to map and develop the capacity of communities and of voluntary organisations to contribute to local maternity and early years goals.
- We are dedicated to using the customer journey experience to inform service and workforce development.
- We want to actively engage families in the work that we do so that peer support, community development and community involvement in delivery are part of the overall maternity and early years strategy.

3. Quality

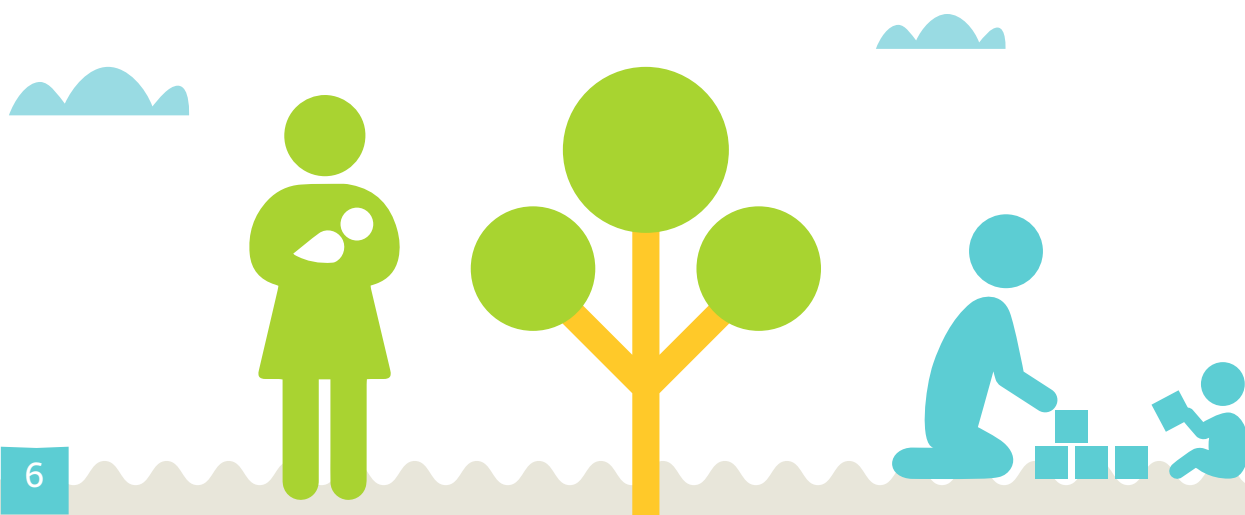
The Best Start for Life Partnership want to offer universal, targeted and specialist support.

- Universal services will use valid and reliable tools to assess whole cohorts of children so that they can target light-touch support or identify needs which require specialist assessment and support.
- We want Specialist practitioners to provide modelling, coaching and support for staff in universal settings to ensure high quality provision for all children.
- As a partnership we want to monitor provision and ensure that there is high take-up of community services by disadvantaged families, including antenatal support, family hubs and early education entitlements, and most children in childcare attend settings rated as good or better.
- We are committed to ensuring that approaches to supporting families prioritise relationships and this influences how services are designed and delivered. We will ensure our practice is inclusive and supports all families and that diverse and under-represented members of the community feel safe and supported in their journey to becoming parents.

4. Workforce

To ensure that the Maternity and Early Years strategy is successful we must ensure that there is capacity and capability of the maternity and early years workforce. The workforce needs must be analysed and understood.

- The The Best Start for Life Partnership recognises the capacity gaps across the sectors and are committed to address these through staff training, service redesign or recruitment, taking account of the wider maternity and early years system rather than just focusing on individual agencies.
- It is important that practitioners from all services understand the offer and how to access each service and that Practitioners across the workforce are supported to develop and maintain a set of core skills. These would include language development, brain development, attachments, child development, infant and parental mental health, and wellbeing.
- To ensure that we understand the needs of our workforce we will regularly send out questionnaires to gauge staff satisfaction, skills audits, and regular supervision to inform workforce development.



5. Information Sharing

The Best Start for Life Partnership are dedicated to ensuring that Strategic and operational information sharing agreements are in place and working well across the partnership. Although some information sharing agreements are in place, these are inconsistent.

- To improve outcomes for all children we want to ensure that sharing information about vulnerable families begins during pregnancy and continues across key life points.
- The strategy will enable information for parents and carers on pregnancy and
- early child development to be accessible, representative, and consistently conveyed to families across the maternity and early years workforce.
- The partnership will facilitate Services to work together to devise innovative ways of reaching families that are identified as priority groups, including those with protected characteristics, disadvantaged families, and those whose first language is not English.

6. Outcomes

Through this strategy a maternity and early years outcomes framework will be developed.

- We are committed to ensuring that families have a smooth journey through maternity and early years services and get timely and consistent support.
- Services are responsive to different community needs, including those with protected characteristics, such as the needs of fathers as well as mothers.
- Services are provided in accessible community settings.
- Partners will be responsible for ensuring that actions are developed for their service in a timely way and that performance is measured against locally defined outcomes.
- The Best Start for Life Partnership will regularly review the available data on key outcome measures to understand the impact of the strategy and the work that we do.



Section Two:

Aims, Understanding and What Needs to Happen

1. Partnership working

What is our aim?

To have shared understanding of:

- The range of strategic and operational groups across LLR (Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland) which are relevant to this agenda.
- To have a thriving and committed Best Start for Life Partnership group working on shared principles and problem solving together

What do we know?

We know that there are a lot of different groups and initiatives across both the county and LLR. We feel that there is potential for overlap, gaps, and shortages, and this requires a greater collective understanding.

We know that our current arrangements do not include our partners from the voluntary and community sector.

What needs to happen?

It is recognised that there may well be gaps in our partnership arrangements, for example, organisations from the voluntary and community sector. We will ensure the partnership is inclusive going forward.

Mapping of agencies, offer and partnerships at both operational and strategic levels

Re-establish 'breakfast meetings' bringing together health, early years and early help services to network and share information

Recruit colleagues from the voluntary and community sector to ensure representation at the strategic groups.



2. Community Engagement

What is our aim?

We want to ensure that the voices of families and communities are heard at both operational and strategic levels, that families are involved in shaping plans, service delivery, and the quality assurance of services

What do we know?

We know that there is a requirement to establish a parent panel within maternity services Maternity Neonatal Voice Partnership (MNVP). we know that Leicester Mamas is commissioned by the ICB (Integrated Care Board) to deliver this across the county.

We know that Family Hubs have a requirement to ensure sustainable arrangements for community involvement in services

We know that as services we develop language which may act as a barrier to good engagement

What needs to happen?

We need to share the learning from the Leicester Mamas service and other community engagement initiatives

We need to understand community engagement, i.e., how best to support communities to engage with services and then how services work with and respond to communities.

We need to 'humanise' our professional language so that we talk about families, children, etc and not service users, for example.

3. Quality

What is our aim?

We want to provide high quality services using evidence-based approaches that meet needs

We want to support universal providers with early identification of additional need

What do we know?

We know that there is a risk that vulnerable children will be disproportionately affected by the expansion of the childcare market. We know that this may have an impact on how vulnerable children can access provision and this in turn may have an impact on school readiness, and long-term outcomes.

What needs to happen?

There needs to be a good level of understanding of national and local drivers which can have an impact on all children's outcomes but particularly those of the more vulnerable children, now but also in the future. For example, impact on safeguarding, child development, impact on SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) children and school readiness.

4. Workforce

What is our aim?

We want to have a well-trained and well-informed workforce which understands local service provision. We want to identify gaps in skills, services, knowledge, and work collaboratively to address gaps. We want to develop a shared core competency skill set and have a workforce plan to support this, which identifies a range of assessment tools and evidence-based interventions for which there is broad agreement to deliver across the partnership

What do we know?

We know that there are issues across the workforce with recruitment and retention and that this is a long-standing issue. In some sectors there is persistent high turnover of staff. Because of workload demands we know that many staff do not have the capacity to form connections with different services and expand their knowledge of what else might be available which would enhance their practice and enable better support to be provided to families.

We know that families with additional needs value have a keyworker and service coordination, and families do not want to have to repeat their stories to multiple services and practitioners.

What needs to happen?

We want to develop a workforce plan which includes identification of a core skill set as well as some key principles about how we deliver our work. For example, that we are trauma informed and use whole family approaches.

We want to work together on induction plans, bitesize informal training to develop knowledge of all the services available and referral pathways.

We want to make links with colleges and universities and provide input to relevant courses



5. Information Sharing

What is our aim?

We want to have appropriate information sharing in place which enables us to identify vulnerable children and families at the earliest possible opportunity and to provide targeted support.

We want to ensure that information for families is freely accessible and that our entire workforce enables families who are able, to access this. This means that our workforce will also benefit from accessible information. This will include both information about services but also self-help/ knowledge building information that will support both families and practitioners.

What do we know?

We know that families can find it hard to access information that would be useful to them.

We know that many families can access the internet but do not know where to go for reliable information. We also know that some families do not use the internet.

We do not have in place the data sharing agreements that would allow us to work collaboratively to target families with vulnerabilities. We know that there are challenges due to use of different systems across the partnership, which can make data sharing more challenging.

What needs to happen?

We need to review current information sharing agreements to see if they are fit for purpose and ideally combine to have an overarching agreement across the partnership.

We need to work with Family Hubs to improve access to information for families and for professionals. We need to think creatively about how we place information in the hands of families who need it, for example using QR codes on materials such as Bounty Packs, Book start, etc.

We need to ensure that universal services can keep families without internet access informed of what is available to them.

6. Outcomes

What is our aim?

For the Best Start for Life Partnership to have a data set that enables us to collectively track progress/identify areas for development. This could include for example EYFSP (Early Years Foundation Stage Profile) data, ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) scores, mortality rates, breast feeding rates, etc.

What do we know?

We know that we do not share data across the partnership which might enable us to target our collective resources and identify gaps and shared responses more accurately.

What needs to happen?

Identification of a core data set for the partnership and means of collating and sharing on a regular basis.

