

**5 July 2023****Agenda Item 6****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE CORPORATE  
DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES****BEST START STRATEGY ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2022-23****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report invites the Health and Wellbeing Board to review the annual progress of the delivery of the Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy between 2022 – 2023 and approve next steps for successful implementation.

**Information**

2. The Best Start Strategy 2021-25 was agreed by Policy Committee in February 2021 following previous endorsement by Children and Young People's Committee in November 2020 and the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2021. The Strategy is available at [Giving Children the Best Start in Life | Nottinghamshire County Council](#).
3. The Best Start Strategy began on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This is the second progress report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
4. The Strategy uses an early help approach and prioritises early childhood to improve outcomes for young children and their families. 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.
5. Investing in early childhood services has been shown to have a greater return on investment than many other economic development options. For example, for every £1 invested in quality early care and education, taxpayers save up to £13 in future costs; in addition, for every £1 spent on early years education, £7 would need to be spent to have the same impact in adolescence<sup>1</sup>.
6. 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> Early Intervention Foundation (2018a) Realising the Potential of Early Intervention [realising-the-potential-of-early-intervention.pdf](#)

7. On behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Best Start Partnership acts as the responsible body for the development, delivery, and performance management of the Strategy. The Partnership has met 6 times since April 2022.
8. The Best Start Partnership works with existing partnership groups to agree actions, develop and deliver successful initiatives and review progress. In some cases, sub-groups have been created to help lead on one or more of the ambitions of the strategy.
9. Since the strategy was launched, ensuring children have the best start in life is a key priority within the [Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026](#), the [Integrated Care Strategy 2023-2027](#), and across the Place Based Partnerships. There has also been increased engagement from a range of partners including Primary Care Networks and District Councils.

## Progress of the Best Start Strategy

10. The Best Start Strategy focuses on the achievement of the following 10 ambitions:
  - i. prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood
  - ii. mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes
  - iii. babies and parents/carers have good early relationships
  - iv. parents are engaged and participate in home learning from birth
  - v. parents experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported
  - vi. children and parents have good health outcomes
  - vii. children and parents are supported with early language, speech, and communication
  - viii. children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of overall development
  - ix. children have access to high quality early years provision
  - x. parents/carers are financially resilient and can access secure employment (slightly amended wording as of 31.10.22)
11. Many of the ambitions have an action plan focussing on how the Best Start Partnership can achieve its goals. Each action plan is then delivered by the relevant Best Start Partnership sub-group or partnerships that are already in existence.
12. The following table provides some key progress highlights relating to each of the 10 ambitions. You can find a more detailed progress summary and next steps in **Appendix 1**.

Ambition	Key Progress Highlights
1. Prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commencement of a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) led review to identify opportunities to strengthen the antenatal education offer. Partners from across the Partnership are getting involved in this and includes working with Bassetlaw.</li> <li>• The Children's Centre Service developed new Antenatal BABES groups (virtual and face to face) during the pandemic to ensure expectant parents could access support virtually and face to face. This work is now embedded in the service and enhances</li> </ul>

	<p>key messages re: supporting parents to know their baby, encouraging reflective function relationships and promotion of secure attachment. The service has delivered 35 different groups from April 2022 to the end of February 2023.</p>
<p>2. Mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes</p>	<p><u>Substance Misuse:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A task and finish group has been established to explore the substance use pathway of support in pregnancy (drugs and alcohol). The substance misuse service, Change Grow Live (CGL), are currently recruiting two female support workers who will work closely with pregnant women and the specialist midwives.</li> </ul> <p><u>Healthy Weight and nutrition:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'top tips' resource is in development to support professionals to discuss healthy weight and nutrition with families across pregnancy and early years.</li> </ul> <p><u>Smoking:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sherwood Forest Hospital's (SFH) in-house Phoenix Team have delivered a successful incentive scheme pilot which is currently being evaluated by the university.</li> <li>• At Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital (DBH), a part-time smoking cessation midwife now supports pregnant women to stop smoking, working closely with a support worker from Your Health Your Way, the integrated wellbeing service.</li> </ul> <p><u>Vaccination:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A multi-agency children, adolescent and maternity immunisation and vaccination group has been established across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. One of their aims is to deliver a targeted promotional campaign to increase the uptake of vaccination in pregnancy and early years focusing on disadvantaged groups, supported by LMNS funding.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Babies and parents/carers have good early relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A targeted parent-infant relationship intervention has been introduced in the Healthy Families Programme, and 109 parents were referred to the parent-infant relationship practitioners in 2022/23. An evaluation of this service offer will be completed in 2023/24, with support from the public health arm of National Institute for Health and Care Research in order to inform future commissioning intentions.</li> <li>• New Parents Groups were established by the Children's Centre Service and rolled out in 2022. These were developed in response to feedback during the covid period from parents who felt isolated. The groups focus on building positive relationships between parents/carers and their new baby. The Children's</li> </ul>

	Centre Service has delivered 30 different groups from April 22 – end of Feb 23. With 126 children attending from April 22 – end of Feb 23.
4. Parents are engaged and participate in home learning from birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's Centre Services introduced PEEP<sup>2</sup> interventions for parents/carers from pregnancy across the early years. They focus on the role of parents as early educators, building positive, sensitive relationships, enhancing home learning environments, and helping babies and children to become confident communicators and learners. Early reporting indicates that parents/carers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge and confidence in how to play and interact with their child / children has increased</li> <li>have made changes at home to provide a better learning and play environment for their child/children.</li> <li>have improved their understanding of their child/children's development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5. Parents experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional training has been delivered to midwives and health visitors and referral pathways to mental health support strengthened.</li> <li>A new guide to emotions leaflet covering pregnancy and the postnatal period and all levels of emotional and mental health need has been developed. A copy is given to all women at their antenatal booking appointment, and is used by Healthy Family Teams.</li> <li>In 2022/23, 32% of all referrals to the Children's Centre Service focused on emotional health and wellbeing. The Service provides support to parents/carers with low level to moderate emotional health and wellbeing needs via PHEW (Parents Health and Emotional Wellbeing Groups). In 2022/23, there have been 649 referrals, with 566 (87%) taking up the intervention. 93% of those who took part in evaluation (115/124) reported feeling closer to their child and having stronger relationships. 94% reported improvements in their emotional and mental health.</li> </ul>
6. Children and parents have good health outcomes	<p><u>Safer Sleep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2022 The East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) added safer sleep advice to the handheld devices used by all ambulance crews.</li> </ul> <p><u>Breastfeeding:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a shared data dashboard that is aligned with the LMNS Maternal Public Health Workstream delivery plan</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> [peep learning together programme training | www.peeple.org.uk](http://www.peeple.org.uk)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nottinghamshire County Council Children's Centre's have achieved and sustained the UNICEF Baby Friendly Gold Standard Award for the third year.</li> </ul> <p><u>Healthy Start Scheme:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current uptake of the scheme (March 2023 data) in Nottinghamshire is 67%, above the national uptake of 65%. Uptake across districts varies from the highest in Broxtowe (73%), closely followed by Ashfield (71%), and the lowest in Rushcliffe (61%).</li> <li>In December 2022, funding was agreed from the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LMNS to fund vitamins (folic acid, vitamin C and vitamin D) universally throughout pregnancy. This has now been implemented (from April 2023) for people accessing maternity care from NUH and SFH. Plans for this to be replicated in Bassetlaw have been agreed and processes to implement are underway. Public Health in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham city continue to fund the first 'starter pack of vitamins across the ICS footprint and have dedicated funding to do so until the end of March 2026.</li> </ul>
7. Children and parents are supported with early language, speech, and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training for 32 early years practitioners and 28 Children's Centre staff has been commissioned and delivered focusing on recognising and supporting children with emerging speech, language, and communication needs.</li> <li>The Wellcomm Speech and Language screening toolkit has been piloted in 20 nursery/childminder settings, to determine if this has a positive effect on identifying and supporting children's speech, language and communication needs.</li> <li>Public Health and Early Childhood Services (Notts CC), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust have secured Contain Outbreak Management (COMF) funding to address the decline in 2022 of 2-2 ½ year olds meeting the expected level of development and the increased demand on Home Talk. Addressing this was a recommendation within the Pregnancy, Birth and Early Years Nottinghamshire Covid Impact Assessment (CIA). The proposal is for all children aged 2 years four months and upwards on the waiting list for Home Talk and awaiting assessments and treatment from the specialist autism team to receive a face-to-face assessment from a speech and language therapist to determine the best way of meeting their needs. A parents/carers group will also be established.</li> </ul>
8. Children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The take up rate for vulnerable 2-year-olds continues to increase. At the end of the Spring Term 2023 81% of eligible children were accessing a place compared to 72% nationally.</li> </ul>

overall development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 66.9% of children achieved a Good Level of Development at the end of the Foundation Stage (compared to national levels of 65.2%).</li> <li>• District early attainment meetings were established in Autumn 2022. They focus on local challenges and priorities around 2 year take up and narrowing the attainment gap.</li> </ul>
9. Children have access to high quality early years provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for 2022 has been completed and highlights that there is currently sufficient high-quality early years provision across Nottinghamshire, in some areas there are surplus places. There are however some localities where childcare provision is reducing, namely through the reduction of childminders.</li> <li>• In Nottinghamshire, 86% of Inspected providers have been rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.</li> </ul>
10. Parents/carers are financially resilient and can access secure employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the Best Start Partnership meeting in October 2022, this ambition has been renamed to include the need for families to also be financially resilient.</li> <li>• Various campaigns and Cost of Living events have taken place, to raise awareness of financial support available to families through childcare funding, Healthy Start, the Household Support Fund etc</li> <li>• Recruitment and training of parents with preschool children as volunteers to help deliver services through the Children's Centre Service. In 2022/23, there were 105 active volunteers (nearly 40 volunteers provide breastfeeding peer support).</li> <li>• Delivery of work readiness courses for 99 parents in 2022/23 through the Children's Centre Service.</li> </ul>

### **Best Start Partnership approaches to inequalities**

13. The Best Start Partnership Group acknowledges and recognises that throughout the implementation of the Best Start Strategy, there will always be the need to understand and address inequalities across all of the strategic ambitions. Therefore, work on addressing inequalities should act as a golden thread in all activity. A few examples of this include exploring vaccination uptake in disadvantaged groups, breastfeeding rates varying across the county, children achieving a good level of development (notably this being lower in those receiving free school meals) and post Covid-19, services taking a blended approach to service delivery. Additionally, as a key component of achieving the best start in life, the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's LMNS delivery plan (2023-26) has also described a priority area, aligned to the ICS Integrated Care Strategy commitments, of "equity as the lens through which we view all areas of the LMNS" thus ensuring equity across our services and local population, with a focus on experience as well as outcomes, and looking at localised data.

### **Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Years Covid Impact Assessment**

14. The Best Start Partnership has overseen the development of the Nottinghamshire Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Years Covid Impact Assessment and endorsed the recommendations ahead of Health and Wellbeing Board approval. This impact assessment focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on three key areas: parents and carers wellbeing, children's early development and early years health outcomes. The recommendations align very closely to the Ambitions within the Best Start Strategy and delivery of these will support delivery of the Best Start strategy ambitions.

## **Best Start for Life and Family Hubs**

15. Family Hubs offer support from pregnancy, through the child's early years, later childhood and into young adulthood, up to the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). A key aim of Family Hub Networks are to provide a 'front door' to families, offering a 'one-stop shop' of family support services across their social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive [Start for Life](#) offer for parents and babies at its core, with the underpinning view that families should only need to tell their story once.
16. Each Family Hub will be unique and bespoke to the local community it serves and aims to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children by providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can easily access non-judgmental support for the challenges they may be facing. The types of support provided will include universal and targeted services. Family Hub Networks will be rolled out across Nottinghamshire over the next few years.
17. It is proposed that at least one Family Hub Network will be created in each district with all partners fully engaged. These Networks will include at least one main physical Family Hub with several spokes across a locality. These spokes will provide access to a range of services and interventions which could be age specific, including libraries, Young People's Service, Citizens Advice, Job Centre Plus, Leisure Centres and schools. Spokes will be a mixture of virtual and physical access points including the existing arrangements for telephone advice and referral, local websites, and online resources. Partner agencies will also be able to use the main physical Family Hub for appointments and drop-in sessions, space permitting.
18. In 2022, the Department for Education pre-selected 75 Local Authorities to take part in the [Family Hubs and Start for Life programme](#). Nottinghamshire was not selected however is using the guidance to help shape local plans and developments. The Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme helps meet commitments in the [Best Start for Life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days](#). The objective of the programme is to join up and enhance services delivered through Family Hubs, ensuring parents and carers can access the support they need when they need it.
19. The programme will:
  - provide support to parents and carers so they are able to nurture their babies and children, improving health and education outcomes for all
  - contribute to a reduction in inequalities in health and education outcomes for babies, children and families across England by ensuring that support provided is communicated

to all parents and carers, including those who are hardest to reach and/or most in need of it

- build the evidence base for what works when it comes to improving health and education outcomes for babies, children and families in different delivery contexts

20. In Nottinghamshire, the first Family Hub Network officially opened at an event in April 2023 in Retford, Bassetlaw with at least 100 parents plus their children attending. Co-production activities have been taking place with local stakeholders including families. A summary of work is available to view at [Retford and the story so far | Nottinghamshire County Council](#). In relation to Best Start for Life, families have asked for information, advice and guidance on a range of topics focusing on pregnancy, maternity and early childhood.

*Induction of labour - What are my options? | What are the risks and benefits? | What support can I expect? | I'm a new parent' | 'Mental Health during and after pregnancy (Knowing the difference between the 'baby blues' and postnatal depression...)' | 'My pregnancy notes' | Don't use the term 'patient', instead use 'service user' | Use 'parent' rather than 'mum' | Sleep | Immunisations | Diet and Nutrition | Breastfeeding | Weaning | Child development | Behaviour | Ready for school | Toilet training | Dads and partners | Health and Wellbeing | Exercise | Housing | Money | Debt and Benefits Advice | Sleep | Safer Sleep | Immunisations | Smoking | Diet and Nutrition | Feeding | Healthy Start | Speech, language and communication | Alcohol & Drugs | Domestic abuse*

21. The Department for Education published the Family Hubs Model Framework in August 2022<sup>3</sup> which contains a wide range of ambitions including requirements focusing on access, information, and communications. The Family Hubs Partnership and Best Start Partnership will be developing a Virtual Family Hub which will include the Best Start for Life Offer. Plans are in place to work with neighbouring Local Authorities to ensure information is linked to all Maternity Services across three Acute Trusts.

## Next Steps

22. Family Hub Networks will be created in Nottinghamshire with best start at their core. The Best Start Partnership will have a role to play to ensure that local Family Hub developments do not lose the focus on antenatal support and the first 1,001 days of a baby's life.
23. Further development and refinement of the Best Start for Life Local Offer which will be published online and in print.
24. To develop and enhance our data and reporting structures which, as well as enabling the Best Start Partnership to highlight progress, would support in identifying the areas where further work needs to be prioritised across the ambitions.
25. To fully engage all partners and increase ownership of the Best Start Strategy by Integrated Care Partnerships, Acute Trusts and Community Health providers. To also include working more collaboratively with Place Based Partnerships in prioritising and delivering the Best Start Ambitions.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Annex E - Family Hub Model Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)



26. Information Sharing Agreements are being progressed to enable the successful implementation of Family Hub Networks and the Best Start for Life Local Offer. This work will enable services to provide integrated support and care, whilst identifying and addressing needs early.
27. The Best Start Partnership will work collaboratively to drive forward the recommendations within the Nottinghamshire Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Years Covid Impact Assessment alongside the Best Start Strategy.

### **Health and Wellbeing Board Members support to further the strategy ambitions**

28. In order to further progress the Best Start Strategy's ten ambitions, the Best Start Partnership would welcome the Health and Wellbeing Board considering how it may be able to support. Below are some suggestions as to how Health and Wellbeing Board Members could engage, support and develop the work of the Best Start Strategy:
  - Health and Wellbeing Board members to share the Best Start Strategy within their organisation and respective networks and partnerships as a reminder of the strategic ambitions and to consider any further actions they could progress.
  - As the Best Start Partnership Group develops its approach to place based working, Health and Wellbeing Board Members could nominate leads / representatives for their locality to sit on the Best Start Partnership.
  - Health and Wellbeing Board members could volunteer to be a champion for any one of the 10 best start ambitions.
  - As the development of Nottinghamshire's Family Hubs progresses across the County, Health and Wellbeing Board members could consider how their organisation participates in locality planning and delivery groups.

### **Other Options Considered**

29. There was an option to not provide an annual report on the delivery of the Best Start Strategy. This option was discounted as the report provides important information relating to the delivery of the giving children the best start in life ambition of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

30. Work to enable children to have the best start in life spans a wide range of services and social issues. The co-ordinated partnership and strategy brings together all key partners and activities which focus on antenatal and postnatal care, children's development, and support for families with pre-school children.
31. The Best Start Partnership will provide a cross-cutting solution to a complex set of problems and risks which face children and families. For this reason, the Strategy and Partnership builds links between many different parts of the system to provide joined-up and holistic services.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

32. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

33. By using evidence-based practice to target and engage children at risk of poor outcomes, it is anticipated that longer term outcomes for children involved in offending behaviour will reduce.

### **Financial Implications**

34. Partners in the delivery of the Best Start Strategy will use their own resources to help shape and improve services and interventions for pre-school children and their families; no additional funding has been provided to support the delivery of the strategy.

### **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

35. Safeguarding children and families will continue to be a key priority within the Best Start Strategy and for all partners represented at the Best Start Partnership.

### **Implications for Service Users**

36. Successful delivery of the Best Start Strategy will improve a range of outcomes for children and families including emotional health and wellbeing, healthy pregnancy, school readiness, speech, and language to name but a few.
37. Families will have access to information they need, when they need it: through a digital platform, as well as virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family.
38. Local families will have an accessible, single point of reference that families can use to navigate local services specifically for babies from conception to 2 years of age through the Be

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Health and Wellbeing Board is asked:

- 1) To note the progress made in the delivery of the Best Start Strategy.
- 2) To approve the next steps for the effective delivery of the Best Start Strategy set out in the report for the improvement of outcomes for children and families.
- 3) To consider how members of the Board can support the Best Start Partnership in the further implementation of the strategy ambitions as set out in the report.

**Amanda Fletcher**  
**Consultant in Public Health**  
**Nottinghamshire County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Kerrie Adams  
Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
T: 0115 9772198  
E: [Kerrie.adams@nottsccl.gov.uk](mailto:Kerrie.adams@nottsccl.gov.uk)

Irene Kakoullis  
Group Manager Early Childhood Services  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
T: 0115 9774431  
E: [Irene.kakoullis@nottsccl.gov.uk](mailto:Irene.kakoullis@nottsccl.gov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (LPW 13/06/23)**

39. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Health and Wellbeing Board by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (DG 13/06/23)**

40. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Annual Progress Report – Best Start Strategy 2021-2025 Health and Wellbeing Board 4 May 2022](#)

[Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Chapter – 1,001 Days, Conception to Age 2 – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 16th December 2019](#)

[Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Chapter – Early Years and School Readiness – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 16th December 2019](#)

[Giving children the best start: Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy 2021 – 2025 – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 30th November 2020](#)

[Giving children the best start: Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy 2021 – 2025 – report to Health and Wellbeing Board on 6th January 2021](#)

[Giving children the best start: Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy 2021-2025 - report to Policy Committee on 10th February 2021](#)

[Best Start Strategy 6 month progress report – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021](#)

Best Start Strategy 2021-2025 Equality Impact Assessment  
[Completed Equality Impact Assessments \(EqiAs\) | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

All.