

1st November 2021

Agenda Item: 10

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

BEST START STRATEGY 2021 – 2025 PROGRESS UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. The report invites the Committee to review progress so far of the delivery of the Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy 2021 – 2025 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 Strategy was launched in February 2021 and began on 1st April 2021. This is the first six monthly report to Children and Young People's Committee, the frequency of which was agreed by Committee in November 2020.
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 adolescence¹.
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.

¹ 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 three times since April 2021.

Progress of the Best Start Strategy

8. 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 are in secure employment.
9. Each ambition has (or will soon have) an action plan focussing on how the Best Start Partnership will achieve its goals. Each action plan is then delivered by the relevant Best Start Partnership sub-group or partnerships that are already in existence.
10. The following table provides an update on the progress so far for each of the 10 ambitions.

	Ambition	Summary of Progress
1.	Prospective parents are well prepared for parenthood	An action plan has yet to agreed. This ambition is due to be progressed at the next Best Start Partnership meeting on 23 rd November 2021.
2.	Mothers and babies have positive pregnancy outcomes	An action plan has yet to agreed however the following work is progressing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local maternity and neonatal system data dashboard is in development and key 'Best Start' indicators will be included. • Sherwood Forest Hospital Foundation Trust (SFHFT) are an early implementor for NHS England's new tobacco dependence maternity model, delivering an evidence-based pathway of care based on learning from Greater Manchester. The focus of the pathway is in-house, hospital-led treatment for tobacco dependence and the service will go live in Quarter 3 of 2021-22. • There has been a multi-agency approach to increasing uptake of Covid-19 vaccination in pregnancy, supported by a comprehensive communications campaign widely promoted across partners.

3.	Babies and parents/carers have good early relationships	<p>An action plan has yet to agreed however the following work is progressing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health visitors are accessing Brazelton New-born Observation training in order to be able to assess the parent/infant relationship as part of the universal Healthy Child Programme offer. • A targeted offer to improve parent/infant relationships will be developed within the Healthy Families Programme during this financial year. Funding for this was approved by Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee on 20th September 2021.
4.	Parents are engaged and participate in home learning from birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft action plan has been developed and was updated at the Best Start Partnership meeting in September 2021. • Home Learning opportunities have been promoted to families across Nottinghamshire through the Notts Help Yourself website, Children’s Centre Service, Families Information Service, and Inspire Facebook pages. • The additional resources created through lockdown restrictions have been shared with parents including ‘story time’ and activities to do at home. • The Bookstart programme delivered by Inspire has been successful in disseminating resources to families through Healthy Family Teams, Early Years providers and Children’s Centre Service teams. • The Home Talk speech, language and communication needs early help programme is being delivered in family homes to support home learning.
5.	Parents experiencing emotional, mental health and wellbeing challenges are identified early and supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-agency group has been working 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. • Additional training has been delivered to midwives and health visitors and referral pathways to mental health support strengthened.
6.	Children and parents have good health outcomes	<p>The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) is an evidence based, staged accreditation programme supporting maternity, neonatal, health visiting and Children’s Centre Services to transform their care.</p> <p>The following organisations have recently achieved the BFI Gold Sustainability Award:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHT) • Nottinghamshire County Council Children’s Centre Service (May 2021) <p>The award is a recognition that these services are not only implementing the standards, but that they also have the</p>

		<p>leadership, culture, and systems in place to maintain this over the long term.</p> <p>From August 2021 the Best Start in Life Breastfeeding Partnership was established as a sub-group to the Nottinghamshire Best Start Partnership Steering Group of the Health and Wellbeing Board and improving breastfeeding rates is outlined as a priority in the Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy and Local Maternity and Neonatal System.</p> <p>A multi-agency project team is in place supporting delivery of the Nottinghamshire Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme. The three-year programme is now in its final year. Achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding secured to increase the number of Food on our Doorstep 'FOOD' Clubs in Nottinghamshire from the current 10 to 30 by summer 2022. The clubs will provide access to healthier, affordable food for up to 1,500 families on a weekly basis. • Increase in uptake of Healthy Start in all Trailblazer areas. Healthy Start vitamins are also now widely distributed at the beginning of pregnancy and at the birth visit. <p>A multi-agency Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Safer Sleep Steering Group is in place. A project plan has been developed following benchmarking in relation to the 'Out of Routine' national report. Actions over the last few months include: mapping of key points when Safer Sleep messages are given by practitioners to families; review of training; review of a risk assessment tool; and coordination of Safer Sleep messages to the public.</p>
7.	Children and parents are supported with early language, speech, and communication	<p>A multi-agency Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Best Start sub-group has been established to lead on this ambition and an action plan is in development. Actions so far include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the Early Intervention Foundation SLCN self-assessment. • Creation of an integrated SLCN pathway for children under the age of 5 across Nottinghamshire (Bassetlaw not yet included). • The Home Talk speech, language and communication needs programme takes place in the home and continues to be commissioned by the Council, but is now part of a pooled budget arrangement with Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group who also commission specialist Speech and Language Therapy from the same provider. • SLCN tile on the Notts Help Yourself website is currently in development.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further developments will focus on improving the knowledge and skills of local practitioners to help identify and address SLCN and empowering parents to develop and support their children’s speech, language, and communication.
8.	Children are ready for nursery and school and demonstrate a good level of overall development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Years Attainment group oversees this priority, is well established, and has reviewed its terms of reference, including membership, to reflect the Best Start developments. • Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) data is unavailable this year as assessments were not carried out in autumn 2020. However, tracking data obtained via the Better Start module on Capita has been refined to reflect changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage, such data will provide the baseline for vulnerable groups of children which is tracked each term and used to inform service(s)/practice development. • A new Early Identification of Need Toolkit has been developed for use by Early Years providers and will be launched following consultation with the sector. • Transition arrangements for children with Special Educational Needs & Disability have been enhanced through the Early Years Inclusion grant and using technology during the pandemic to enable staff to participate more effectively. • A partnership group has been reformed to monitor and take necessary actions to increase take-up of eligible two-year olds for early years entitlement.
9.	Children have access to high quality early years provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This ambition is overseen by the Early Years Attainment Group. • The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for 2020/21 has been completed and highlights that there is currently sufficient high-quality early years provision across Nottinghamshire. • Take up rates for vulnerable 2-year olds is increasing and at now pre-lockdown levels. • In Nottinghamshire, 793 early years settings out of 1,082 have been rated as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted. • 88% of the provision in Nottinghamshire is classed as Good or Outstanding with a further 9% judged as having met all requirements for registration. Under 2% of providers are judged as ‘Requiring Improvement’ with just over 1% Inadequate or ‘Not Met’ requirements. 16% of provision is yet to be inspected. • The Council has published its Early Years Training and Development Opportunities (TADO) offer to the early years sector which now includes both virtual and face to face training following learning from experiences during the pandemic.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new recruitment campaign is underway to encourage people to work in early years following recent recruitment and retention challenges faced by the early years sector.
10.	Parents are in secure employment	<p>The action plan has been agreed with members of the Improving Life Chances for Children and Families partnership group which is already well established.</p> <p>Successful work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The completion of a local survey with families from low income groups to better understand the impact of Covid. • Successful delivery of Covid Local Support Grant Schemes; as well as the Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) programme. • Working with Family Action, the creation of 10 'Food on your Doorstep' (FOOD) Clubs for families in areas of need with plans to extend this to 30 in the next year. • Increase in the take up of Healthy Start Vouchers. • Take up of funded childcare for low income children continues to rise post Covid. • Creation of a 'Work and Volunteering Tile' on Notts Help Yourself website.

11. The Best Start Partnership has also developed a Communications and Engagement plan, a one-page summary is included in **Appendix 1**. Work is currently underway with Communication and Engagement leads across the partnership as well as Healthwatch Nottinghamshire.

Nottinghamshire Best Start Partnership

12. The Strategy is overseen by the new Best Start Partnership which reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board on an annual basis.
13. Membership comprises senior management representatives from organisations working with expectant parents, and families with pre-school children. Membership is increasing as more partners engage and sign up to the Strategy. There are representatives from the following organisations:
- Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group
 - District and Borough Councils
 - Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
 - Healthwatch Nottinghamshire
 - Home Start (Voluntary Community Sector representative)
 - Maternity Voices Partnership
 - Mid Notts Integrated Care Partnership
 - NHS Nottingham and NHS Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group
 - Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust
 - Nottinghamshire County Council
 - Nottinghamshire Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS)
 - Private Voluntary and Independent Childcare Sector

- Sherwood Forest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- South Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Partnership.

Next Steps

14. The Best Start Partnership discusses one of the 10 ambitions in depth at each of their meetings. They have already agreed priorities to address ambitions 4 and 5 and are/ will be carrying out further work on each of the ambitions which do not yet have agreed action plans.
15. Work is underway to secure engagement and buy in from Bassetlaw Integrated Care Partnership and the Bassetlaw and South Yorkshire Local Maternity and Neonatal System partnership following plans to assimilate the Integrated Care System with the remainder of Nottinghamshire.
16. Local authorities are waiting for Government guidance on the development of a new 'Best Start for Life Offer' which is promoted within 'The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days²' report led by Andrea Leadsom MP. The Best Start Partnership will be responsible for the development of a statutory Nottinghamshire Best Start for Life Offer.
17. Parallel work to progress the creation of 2-3 Family Hub pilots will also strive to address the ambitions within the Best Start Strategy. Once 2-3 priority neighbourhoods are confirmed, further work will take place with all partners to identify and progress Best Start activities through the new Family Hubs.

Other Options Considered

18. No other options have been considered.

Reasons for Recommendations

19. Work to enable children to have the best start in life spans a wide range of services and social issues. There has been no co-ordinated partnership strategy which 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.
20. 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 will build links between many different parts of the system to provide joined-up and holistic services.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. 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

² The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days'
[The best start for life a vision for the 1_001 critical days.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

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

22. 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

23. 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

24. 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

25. 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.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee:

- 1) acknowledges the progress made so far to deliver the new Best Start Strategy.
- 2) approves the suggested next steps for the effective delivery of the Best Start Strategy and improvement of outcomes for children and families.

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Constitutional Comments (EKH 21/10/21)

26. This report is appropriate to be considered by Children and Young People's Committee and they have the power to make any resolution resultant upon the recommendation.

Financial Comments (CDS 19/10/21)

27. 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.
28. There are no financial implications arising directly 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.

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

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

C1511