Best Start in Life Local Plan

Spring 2026

Early Years, Family Hubs & Lifelong Learning

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Local Plan - Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Our Vision for 2028
3. National Context – (DfE Best Start in Life & Good Level of Development)
4. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile – National & Cheshire East
5. Importance of Early Years (1001 Critical Days)
6. Family Hubs – A Core Component of Best Start in Life
7. Locality Needs Assessment
8. Corporate Plan Alignment (Cheshire East Plan 2025–2029)
9. Best Start in Life – Governance and Monitoring Arrangements
10. Best Start in Life – Delivery Model/Workforce Capacity/Evidence Based Interventions
11. Best Start in Life – Core Service Areas
12. Co-production & Sector Engagement
13. Local Plan Summary

Executive Summary



By 2028, Cheshire East aims to be a borough where every child has the best possible start in life, is healthy and safe, and is fully ready to learn. Through strong early years provision, inclusive Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support, resilient communities and joined-up family services, we will ensure that every child can thrive and achieve their potential, laying secure foundations for lifelong wellbeing and opportunity.



This Local Plan sets out the current picture of early years need, progress against local and national outcomes, and a clear programme of investment through Best Start in Life (BSIL) and Family Hub development.

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Our vision for 2028

Our 2028 vision is built on the borough's wider ambitions to strengthen health, wellbeing and opportunity for all residents. It reflects our commitment to creating strong, resilient communities; excellent education and early years provision; and inclusive support for children with SEND.

Our vision commits us to:

- **Giving every child the best possible start in life**, reducing inequalities and promoting lifelong health and wellbeing. This is central to Cheshire East's Public Health ambitions for early years and starting well.
- **Ensuring every child and young person has access to excellent education and training**, beginning with high-quality early childhood experiences that support cognitive, emotional and social development.
- **Providing integrated, joined-up support for families**, strengthening early help and ensuring seamless access to services that nurture health, learning, communication and family wellbeing.
- **Making Cheshire East a great place to be young**, embedding the principles of the 2025–2028 SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy so that all children and young people with SEND receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.
- **Empowering communities and families**, building resilience, reducing disadvantage and tackling the factors that create gaps in school readiness, health outcomes and life chances.
- **Creating safe, nurturing environments**, ensuring children are protected from harm and supported through effective safeguarding, early intervention and care services.
- **Promoting healthy development from conception**, with a focus on maternal health, breastfeeding, emotional wellbeing and reducing early years health inequalities.

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National Context

Best Start in Life and Good Level of Development

In the summer of 2025, all local authorities received a national announcement from the Prime Minister, alongside a letter issued directly to parents and carers. The communication reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving early years outcomes and ensuring every child receives the best possible start in life.

A central feature of this commitment is a renewed national focus on school readiness and early development. This aligns with the national ambition that, by 2028, 75% of all five-year-olds will achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). For Cheshire East, a more ambitious local target has been set for us by the Department for Education: 78.2% of five-year-olds achieving GLD by 2028.

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 September 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

Across England, millions of children and families are beginning a new school year.

As a father of two, I know well the pride and joy of watching your children grow up. But I also understand how juggling parenthood, work and other responsibilities can sometimes be difficult especially when the cost-of-living is still tough, childcare is expensive, and your time is tight.

Supporting families is at the heart of our Plan for Change. Over the past year we have started to deliver the change promised – new help designed to make your life easier and give your children the best possible start.

We are making high quality childcare more affordable by introducing 30 hours of government-funded childcare during term time, from the end of parental leave to the start of primary school, saving an average working parent up to £7,500 per year – money that stays in your pocket for your family's needs.

We are making family life easier too, with hundreds of school-based nursery places opening this September, and thousands more to come. This means more families can access government-funded childcare and perhaps manage with just one school run in the morning. This comes alongside expanding wraparound childcare available to you outside of school hours, including a free Best Start Breakfast Club which we will be rolling out in every primary school.

We are proud to build on the legacy of Sure Start through our Best Start Family Hubs, a growing network of welcoming spaces. Families can access a wide range of support and services to make the journey of being a parent a little easier – from expert advice on feeding your baby to how to support your toddler's learning and development at home.

Of course, this is just the beginning. This government will keep building support for you and your family to help make parenting easier and ensure no child's background dictates what they go on to achieve. I know that this is also a priority for local MPs and councils, who can provide more information about what is available in your area. I encourage you to get in touch with them directly.

To find out more about the support available to you and your family, including free breakfast clubs, eligibility for childcare offers, Best Start Family Hubs in your area and support with your child's early health and learning, visit our new site that brings this all together in one place: www.BestStartinLife.gov.uk.

I also wanted to thank you, the parents and carers, and the grandparents, as well as the childminders, early educators, teachers and health workers, for all you do to give children the best start in life.

Nothing will stop me in my mission to back families like yours through our Plan for Change, to build a better future for you, for your children, and for Britain.

All best wishes,

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National Context

Best Start in Life and Good Level of Development

The **Best Start in Life** initiative by the UK government aims to ensure that every child has a strong start in life, particularly in the early years. Key components include:

- Family Hubs: These hubs provide integrated support for families, offering services from conception through early education and childcare.
- Early Education Access: The government plans to expand funded childcare to 30 hours per week from 9 months old, especially for working families.
- Quality Improvement: There are incentives for early years teachers in disadvantaged areas, and stronger oversight is being focused on early language and maths development.
- School Readiness Targets: Local authorities are expected to improve the percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development by age 5, with a target of 75% by 2028.

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to address inequalities and developmental gaps that emerge before children start school.

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National Context

Best Start in Life and Good Level of Development

The Good Level of Development (GLD) measure reflects children's attainment across key areas of learning, representing a significant indicator of early school readiness. Data for the past four academic years shows a consistent upward trend in GLD outcomes for Cheshire East. Cheshire East has seen sustained improvement since the 2021/2022 academic year (AY), through to the 2024/2025 AY. For the 2024/2025 AY, Cheshire East had 69.9% of the cohort which achieved GLD.

In 2024/25, Cheshire East's outcomes compare favourably with the Northwest average (65%) and the England average (68.3%). Cheshire East sits above both regional and national benchmarks and broadly aligns with its statistical neighbours. To provide meaningful benchmarking, Cheshire East's performance is compared with a designated group of statistical neighbours. These are local authorities with similar characteristics and demographic profiles and include; Cheshire West & Chester (CWAC), Stockport, North Somerset, Solihull and others.

Overall GLD performance in Cheshire East is strong and improving. However, targeted support remains essential to ensure equitable progress for all groups of children. Cheshire East has demonstrated sustained progress in early years outcomes, outperforming national and regional averages. Continued focus on early intervention, strong partnerships, and high-quality early education will be essential to achieving the 78.2% GLD target by 2028.

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National Context

Best Start in Life and Good Level of Development

Table 1 – GLD in Cheshire East, compared to Northwest, Statistical Neighbours and National

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Cheshire East	66.1%	69.0%	69.2%	69.9%
Northwest	61.7%	64.3%	64.4%	65.0%
Statistical Neighbours	67.6%	69.2%	69.1%	69.8%
England	65.2%	67.2%	67.7%	68.3%

Table 2 – GLD in Cheshire East for our FSM cohort, compared to Northwest, Statistical Neighbours and National

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Cheshire East	44.0%	46.2%	47.2%	42.6%
Northwest	46.2%	49.7%	48.9%	49.1%
Statistical Neighbours	46.4%	48.7%	46.9%	56..1%
England	49.1%	51.6%	51.5%	51.3%

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Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
(National & Cheshire East Data)

The latest Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results highlight both the progress made in Cheshire East and the scale of the challenge ahead to ensure more children are ready for school by 2028. For the whole Cheshire East cohort (2024/2025), 69.9% of children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). This means 1,203 children were not school-ready. To meet the 2028 target of 78.2%, a further 330 children will need to reach GLD.

The picture is more challenging for our Free School Meals (FSM) cohort. Currently, only 42.2% of children eligible for FSM achieve GLD, leaving 185 children not school-ready. The 2028 target is for 56.2% of FSM children to meet GLD. Achieving this will require supporting an additional 45 children to become school-ready. Overall, the data highlights a clear need for targeted support, particularly for disadvantaged children, in order to support the closure of the development gap and ensure more young children across Cheshire East have the best possible start to their education.

Cheshire East (Whole cohort)
Based on 2025 EYFSP results

Current	Target
69.9% met GLD	**78.2%** to meet GLD
1,203 children not school ready	**330** more children school ready

Cheshire East (FSM cohort)
Based on 2025 EYFSP results

Current	Target
42.2% met GLD	**56.2%** to meet GLD
185 children not school ready	**45** more children school ready

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Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
(National & Cheshire East Data)

One key element of our work completed towards our Best Start in Life Local Plan was to complete an extensive and comprehensive analysis of Early Years outcomes across our local area, with a particular focus on the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The analysis forms a critical evidence base for our Best Start in Life local plan, ensuring that our priorities and interventions are grounded in a clear understanding of need, inequity, and opportunity.

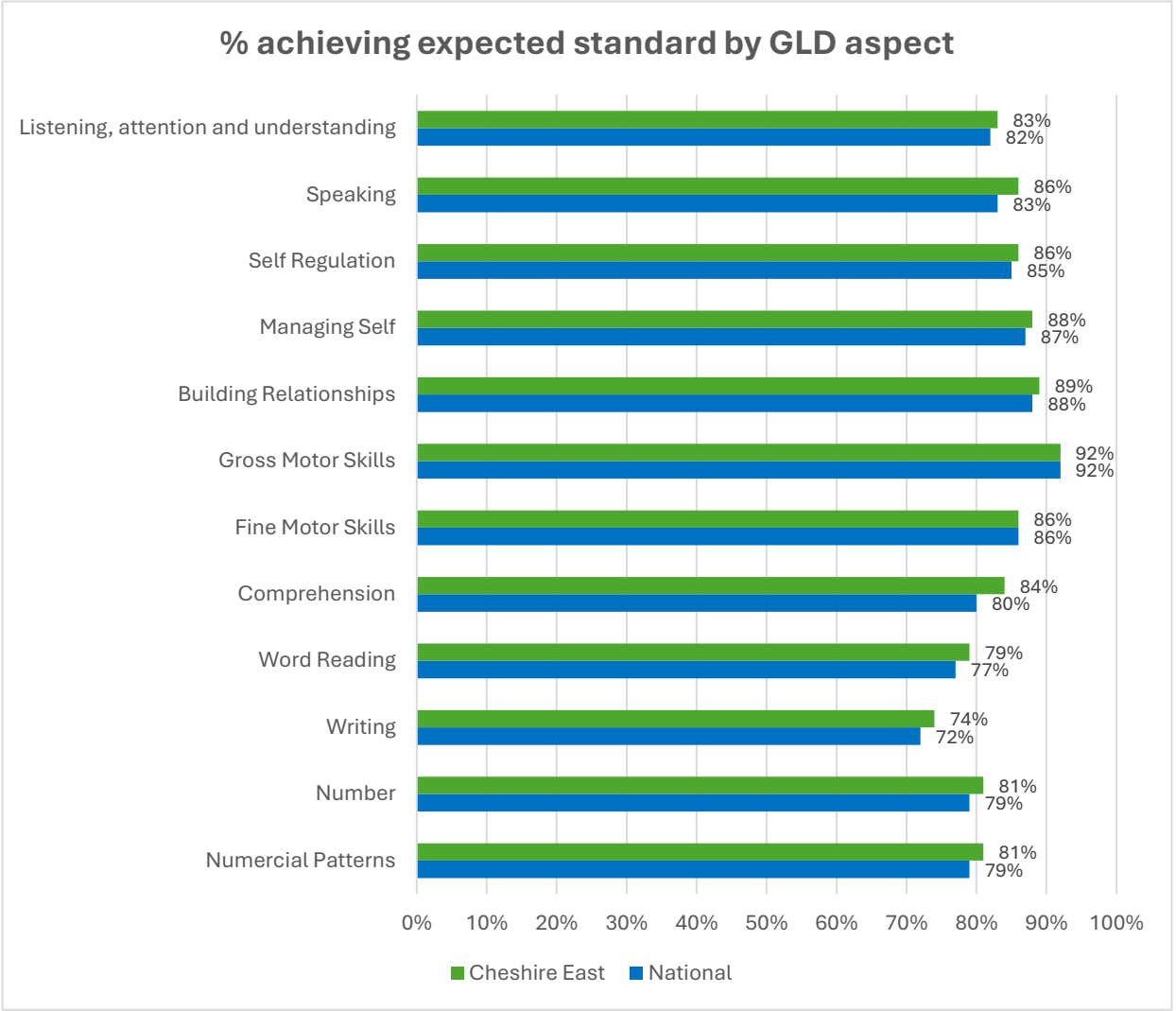
Cheshire East continues to perform strongly across all Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) Good Level of Development (GLD) aspects, with outcomes consistently above the national average for the 2025 cohort. An analysis was also completed over the last three academic years which showed similar themes.

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Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
(National & Cheshire East Data)

Across the 12 areas of learning shown, Cheshire East exceeds national performance in every single measure.

- The largest strengths are seen in Gross Motor Skills (92%), Building Relationships (89%), Managing Self (88%), and Listening, Attention and Understanding (87%), all of which indicate strong early development in physical, social, and communication domains.
- Foundation literacy and numeracy skills are also performing well. Word reading (79%), Comprehension (84%), Numerical patterns (81%), and Number (81%) are all consistently above national results, demonstrating robust early attainment in these strands.
- Speaking (82%) and Listening, Attention and Understanding (87%) show particularly strong outcomes, reflecting effective support for early communication across settings.
- When further analysis was conducted of the areas of learning which were missed (when children were missing between 1 and 4 areas) a key focus needs to be centred on word reading and writing.



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Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
(National & Cheshire East Data)

Overall, the data reflects a positive picture in Cheshire East, with strengths across all GLD aspects. The consistently higher-than-national outcomes suggest effective early years provision and strong progress for children across key developmental areas. Overall, the data shows that while many children in our area are making positive progress, too many are still starting school without the foundational skills they need, particularly in communication, language, and personal/social development. These early inequalities persist and widen as children move through education, reinforcing the importance of targeted action in the early years.

The analysis of our 2024/2025 cohort has highlighted these key themes:

- **Persistent Inequalities Among Disadvantaged Children**

Children eligible for FSM, those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods, and children with SEND continue to achieve GLD at significantly lower rates than their peers. The attainment gap begins early and remains stubborn. Our data shows clear geographical areas where outcomes are consistently lower, indicating where targeted partnership intervention will have the greatest impact.

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Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
(National & Cheshire East Data)

- **Boys**

Across all localities there is further work to be completed with regards to our boys and our Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Boys consistently across all localities are the pupil characteristic where GLD is not met. There was a correlation in the south localities with living in areas of disadvantage; however, in the north, it is clear our cohort of boys are still not meeting the required standard at the end of reception.

- **Summer Born**

Summer-born representation is stable across all localities, ranging from 42–45% where GLD is not met. This is a relatively high proportion and may impact developmental readiness.

Importance of Early Years

In Cheshire East, the earliest years of a child's life are seen as a powerful foundation; one that shapes health, learning, resilience, and wellbeing into adulthood. The local authority recognises that these formative years are not simply a phase, but a critical opportunity to give every child the best possible start. This belief underpins a wide system of early years services, guidance, and partnerships across the borough. Cheshire East Council demonstrates this through ongoing investment, strategy development, and collaboration with families, education settings, and community partners.

One of the strongest expressions of this commitment is the borough's focus on Early Help. Our Early Help Strategy emphasises that early intervention creates the conditions for children to flourish and strengthens long-term outcomes across education, health, and social development. The strategy highlights the shared ambition across partners to deliver support that is timely, inclusive, and shaped by the lived experiences of local families. The importance of early years is also embedded in the council's ongoing operational work. Through its Early Years, Family Hubs and Lifelong Learning Service, Cheshire East provides continuous guidance on safe practice, high-quality early education, regulatory compliance, and professional development.

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Importance of Early Years

Cheshire East's network of Family Hubs reflects the understanding that early years' support extends beyond formal childcare. These hubs offer accessible spaces where families can find guidance on a whole range of support which is available to them (family health and wellbeing, parenting, child development, communication to mention a few). Cheshire East also carefully monitors childcare sufficiency across its planning areas to ensure that every child can access the early education and childcare places they are entitled to. This includes planning for growth, responding to housing developments, and ensuring that families across diverse communities have equitable access to early years provision. Such work underscores the council's recognition that children's opportunities should never be limited by geography.

Across all this activity is a single, shared belief: when we invest in the early years, we invest in the future of Cheshire East itself. By helping children build strong emotional foundations, communication skills, curiosity, and confidence from conception through to age five, the local authority is actively shaping healthier, happier communities for generations to come. The work is ongoing, collaborative, and deeply rooted in listening to families—because Cheshire East understands that it is in these earliest moments of life that the greatest difference can be made.

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Importance of Early Years (1001 Critical Days)

Our Best Start in Life approach places the 1001 Critical Days at its core. This commitment ensures that parents and caregivers are supported from the earliest moment, that babies experience safe and loving relationships, and that structural barriers to positive development are reduced. Through this focus, we aim to build a system where every child in our community has the best possible foundation for lifelong wellbeing and opportunity.





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Family Hubs - A Core Component of Best Start in Life

In 2022, Cheshire East secured £1 million from the Government's Family Hubs Transformation Fund, enabling us to accelerate our ambition for a cohesive, accessible, and family-centred early help system. Family Hubs form a central pillar of our *Best Start in Life* approach, ensuring that families can access the right support at the right time, through a model that is integrated, responsive and sustainable.
Family Hubs represent a system-wide transformation, supporting families across all stages of childhood—from pregnancy through to early adulthood.



In 2022, Cheshire East set out our vision that Family Hubs in the borough would;

- Provide universal access to support for all families with children aged 0–19, and up to 25 for young people with SEND (and Care Leavers).
- Bring together council services, NHS partners, voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations into a single, connected support network.
- Deliver high-quality, joined-up early help, reducing duplication and improving the experience of families moving between services.
- Offer a flexible menu of support including physical hubs, digital pathways and outreach, ensuring accessibility for all communities.
- Act as a one-stop shop so families can navigate early help easily, confidently and without stigma.

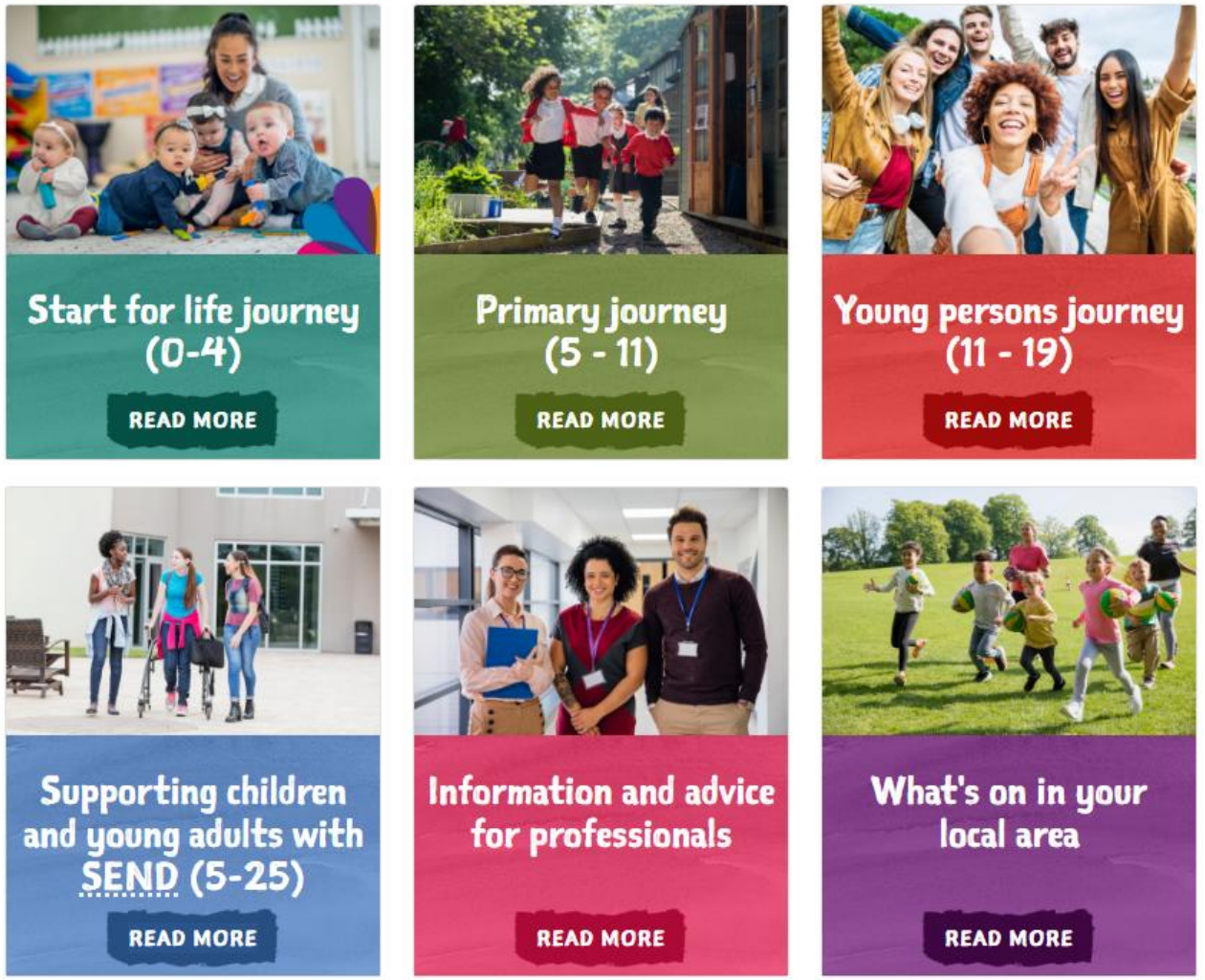
Family Hubs – A Core Component of Best Start in Life

To ensure families can access support beyond physical buildings, Cheshire East launched its Digital Family Hub in the spring of 2024. This evolving platform provides:

- Local events and activities
- Information on SEND services
- Age-specific support pathways
- Advice, signposting and self-service tools

The digital offer ensures equity of access for families in rural areas, those unable to travel, or those preferring online support.

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Locality Needs Assessment

An in-depth needs assessment was undertaken in 2022/2023 to support all work being carried out as part of our Family Hubs Transformation Programme. This continues to be monitored through our internally established quality assurance and performance management process. The initial purpose of this was to identify priority areas for early help, targeted intervention and service planning.

2022	398,800 – Population estimate (2021 census)	3rd largest unitary authority in the Northwest	7,500 children living in poverty (estimate)
2025	421,300 – Population estimate (mid 2024 ONS estimate)	3rd largest Unitary Authority in the Northwest and the 16th largest in the country	7,500 children living in poverty (estimate)

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Locality Needs Assessment



In 2022, Cheshire East was the third largest unitary authority in the Northwest, with an estimated population of 398,800 (2021 Census). The area was predominantly White British (96.7%) and generally affluent, but with clear pockets of disadvantage.

Key demographic insights at the time included:

- An estimated 7,500 children living in poverty, driven by unemployment, low educational attainment, housing issues and health-related factors.
- A projected overall population growth of 3%, with a 1% increase in the 0–15 age group expected over the following decade.
- 4.1% of the school population had an EHCP, and 9.4% were on SEN Support.
- There were 244 LSOAs in Cheshire East, with several ranking among the most deprived 10–30% in England.
- The most influential deprivation factors across the borough were health, education and employment.



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Locality Needs Assessment

In 2022, a comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken to better understand the strengths, challenges, and emerging priorities for children, young people, and families across Cheshire East. This analysis brought together a wide range of data sources, including demographic patterns, levels of deprivation, early years development outcomes, service usage, travel patterns, and feedback from families and practitioners. By examining these indicators collectively, we were able to build a detailed picture of where need was most concentrated and where families would benefit most from improved access to integrated support.

A key purpose of the needs analysis was to ensure our Family Hub model would be shaped by evidence rather than geography alone. The analysis highlighted not only which communities had higher levels of vulnerability or poorer outcomes, but also where families were already travelling for services, where gaps existed between supply and demand, and where there were opportunities to strengthen existing provision. This allowed us to consider reach, equity, and accessibility together when selecting hub locations. As a result, the final locations for our Family Hubs were chosen to maximise impact and ensure the greatest possible benefit to families. Areas with higher concentrations of children aged 0–19, greater socioeconomic need, or reduced access to early help and community support were prioritised.

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Locality Needs Assessment

Similarly, the placement of Family Hub Connect sites was informed by recognising the importance of a wider neighbourhood presence. The needs analysis helped to identify smaller pockets of need and rural or semi-rural areas where families faced barriers linked to transport, digital access, or social isolation. Overall, the 2022 needs analysis provided a strong evidence base for decision making and helped ensure that our Family Hubs and Connect sites collectively formed a coherent, equitable, and well-distributed Family Hub network in Cheshire East. By grounding the model in data, insight, and local voice, we are better positioned to deliver our Best Start in Life ambition and make sure support is accessible where families need it most.







Locality Needs Assessment

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process provides an evidence-based overview of local health and social care needs to support strategic decision making. This process can support with guiding commissioning and partnership activity by offering borough-wide insights alongside locality specific intelligence. There are a variety of key challenges experienced at the start of life in Cheshire East;

1. There are rising numbers of children with special educational needs and disability.
2. There is evidence of increased rates of hospital admissions due to substance misuse in our young people across Cheshire East. Cheshire East also has higher rates of hospital admissions due to alcohol than the England average. Data suggests that many people struggling with these issues don't come forward for support in Cheshire East.
3. Vaping in children and young people is becoming a concern across the country and locally.
4. Concerns around digital media use as outlined in our latest Director of Public Health Annual Report.
5. According to our most recent data, only around 1 in 2 children are active according to Chief Medical Officer physical activity recommendations.

Work will be commencing on an Early Years JSNA and central to this work will be aligning our Best Start in Life Local Plan to any work which is completed in line with the JSNA process. Our Family Hubs data has also been key to the recent work completed with regards to our Families First locality profiles.

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Locality Needs Assessment



Family Hubs have been and will continue to be central to our focus to ensure every child in Cheshire East has the best start in life, with families empowered, supported and connected. Since 2023, Cheshire East has successfully opened six Family Hubs, forming the backbone of our borough-wide early help infrastructure:

- Oakenclough Family Hub – opened July 2023
- Oaktree Family Hub – opened July 2023
- Monks Coppenhall Family Hub – opened October 2023
- Ash Grove Family Hub – opened November 2023
- Congleton Family Hub – opened November 2023
- Crewe Lifestyle Centre Family Hub – opened April 2025

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Corporate Plan Alignment
Cheshire East Plan (2025-2029)

The Cheshire East Plan 2025–2029 sets out the council's strategic direction for the next four years. Its overarching vision is "Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East." The plan responds to financial pressures, organisational challenges, and community needs, and is aligned with the council's Transformation Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.



Vision

A borough where prosperity, wellbeing and opportunities are accessible to all, focused on three core commitments:

1. **Unlocking prosperity for all**
2. **Improving health and wellbeing**
3. **Being an effective and enabling council**

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Corporate Plan Alignment
Cheshire East Plan (2025-2029)



Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East

An effective and enabling council, committed to building strong partnerships, unlocking the health and wealth potential of Cheshire East and ensuring wellbeing for all adults, families and children.

Vision and Commitments

Commitment 1
Unlocking prosperity for all

- 1.1 Opportunities created for all communities across the borough working with our world-leading industries and local businesses
- 1.2 Child, family and adult poverty is reduced through a coordinated approach with partners
- 1.3 Education, skills and life-long learning leads to employment and roles in the community
- 1.4 Shared vision for Crewe delivers a masterplan for jobs, affordable homes and regeneration for the benefit of the whole borough
- 1.5 Communities connected through an improved, accessible rural and urban transport network including active travel
- 1.6 Carbon neutral council with minimum offset by 2030, influencing carbon reduction and green energy production across the borough by 2045

Commitment 2
Improving health and wellbeing

- 2.1 Health outcomes are improved across our diverse borough through a targeted approach that reduces health inequalities
- 2.2 Improved independence, quality of life, health and wellbeing through early intervention and prevention
- 2.3 Everyone feels safe and secure, difference is celebrated and abuse and exploitation not tolerated
- 2.4 Children and young people thrive and reach their potential with targeted support when and where they need it
- 2.5 Communities build their capacity, with support to access information, guidance and funding
- 2.6 Lasting solutions are delivered through strong and committed partnerships

Commitment 3
An effective and enabling council

- 3.1 Financially sustainable council, enabled by council-wide service transformation and improvement
- 3.2 Effective and responsive governance, compliance and evidence based decision-making
- 3.3 Innovative solutions are developed through a culture of collaboration across the council and with residents, businesses and partners
- 3.4 Service delivery and new ideas are shaped by effective communication, consultation and active engagement with all our communities
- 3.5 Contact with the council and access to services is consistent and easy
- 3.6 Service delivery, communication and ways of working are improved through a digital first approach, while supporting residents who need it

Our Best Start in Life Local Plan directly supports the council's commitments to:

1. Unlocking Prosperity for All

Reducing child poverty, improving education, and supporting regeneration.

2. Improving Health and Wellbeing

Addressing health inequalities, mental health pressures, and obesity.

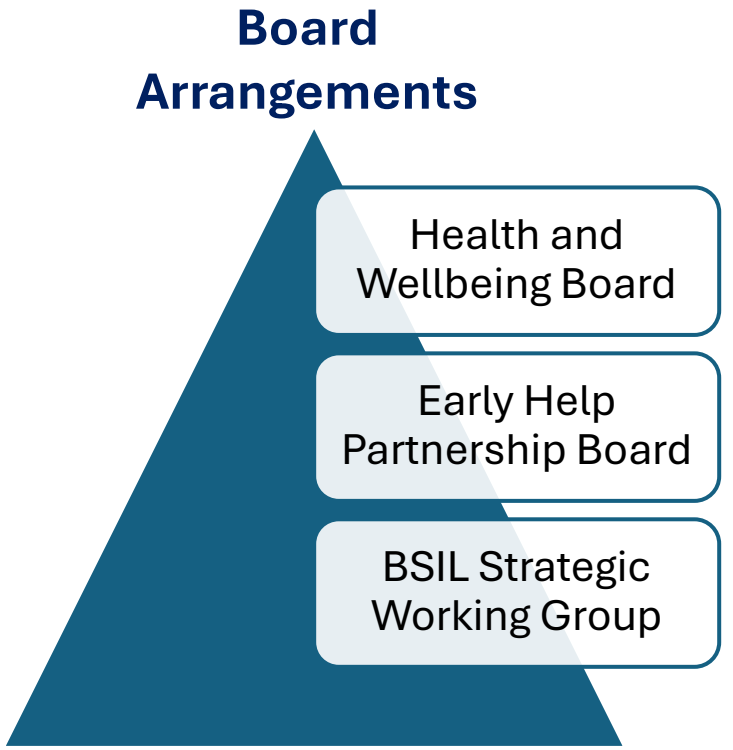
3. An Effective & Enabling Council

A digital, financially sustainable, transparent organisation focused on prevention and early support.

Best Start in Life
Governance & Monitoring Arrangements

Our Family Hubs/Best Start in Life governance model brings together a coordinated set of boards, strategies, and plans to ensure that services for children, young people, and families are delivered effectively and consistently across the area. The structure is designed to provide clear accountability, strategic alignment, and strong partnership working.

Our Board Arrangements illustrate how oversight is layered. At the top, the Health and Wellbeing Board sets the overall direction for improving outcomes for families and communities. Sitting beneath this, the Early Help Partnership Board brings together partners to drive early intervention approaches and ensure that support is timely and accessible. Supporting both, the BSIL Strategic Working Group focuses specifically on the Best Start in Life programme, ensuring that operational activity aligns with the wider strategic vision.



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Best Start in Life
Governance & Monitoring Arrangements

Our Strategy and Plan pyramid shows how key strategic documents interconnect to shape delivery. The foundation is the Best Start in Life plan, which provides the core principles and commitments for supporting families from conception through early childhood. Building on this, the Early Help Strategy sets out how partners work collectively to intervene early and prevent escalation.

Above this, the Children & Young People's Plan brings together ambitions for children of all ages, ensuring Family Hubs contribute to broader outcomes. At the top of the pyramid sits the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, setting the overarching priorities for population health and wellbeing and ensuring every element of the system is working toward shared goals. Together, the governance arrangements and strategic framework create a coherent, connected system that provides robust oversight, ensures alignment across partners, and drives improved outcomes for families.



Best Start in Life

Delivery Model/Workforce Capacity/Evidence Based Interventions

Work has been undertaken to evidence how Family Hubs in Cheshire East will expand and adapt their delivery model from 2026 to 2029 in line with the Best Start in Life (BSIL) and Family Hubs funding requirements. The structure largely remains the same but grows to meet new evidence-based intervention (EBI) expectations and GLD (Good Level of Development) improvement targets.

The delivery model will continue to operate within the existing locality structure, maintaining the North/South split and the four locality areas/eight collaborative areas, with no major redesign required. New BSIL funding will enable targeted expansion of services, including support for Early Years Reception in primary schools for children up to age five, increased outreach within communities that face barriers to accessing traditional hubs, and additional capacity to deliver EBIs for three- and four-year-olds. All proposed service enhancements will be fully funded through BSIL, with no additional contribution required from Families First or base budgets.

Best Start in Life

Delivery Model/Workforce Capacity/Evidence Based Interventions



people supporting parents and children to learn together

Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy)

Between 2026 and 2029, the annual BSIL revenue allocation will range from £857,000 to £932,000, with funding distributed across programme delivery (approximately 45%), capital (10%), parenting support (around 18%), and the home learning environment (about 27%). Baseline planning is based on the 2027/28 allocation, which is the lowest funding year, while the additional funding available in Years 1 and 3 will be used to enhance training and resources aimed at improving GLD outcomes.

The programme's Evidence-Based Interventions include continued delivery of Portage, Togetherness, HENRY and SPACE, alongside new additions from the December 2025 DfE list such as PEEP and REAL to strengthen the Home Learning Environment offer. An All Together Fairer funded WellComm pilot is underway in Crewe to strengthen early identification of speech and language needs, and an exemption has been submitted to retain Togetherness due to strong engagement and UK-based evidence of impact. The programme is also exploring the potential introduction of Child Parent Psychotherapy for targeted cohorts.

Best Start in Life

Delivery Model/Workforce Capacity/Evidence Based Interventions

The workforce will continue to operate within the established locality structure, with teams organised across the North Locality (N1 and N2), the South Locality (S1 and S2), and a borough-wide central services team. Several workforce changes are planned, including the introduction of additional BSIL-funded roles such as Assistant Practitioners and new Portage posts, alongside the recruitment of Locality Engagement Assistants from 2026/27. At the same time, there are a number of ongoing vacancies across Portage, Family Advisor and Assistant Practitioner roles that will require focused recruitment efforts. Service delivery will continue to be supported through a network of buildings and hubs, including Oakenclough, Ash Grove, Congleton, Macclesfield Town Hall (from 2026), Monks, Oaktree, the Crewe Lifestyle Centre and the Early Years Centres.

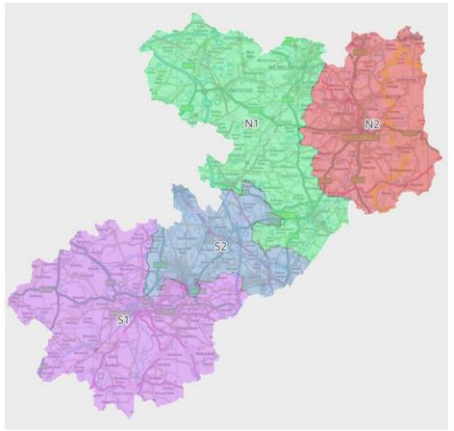
Children and families will benefit from a strengthened and more consistent service offer delivered through six Family Hubs, complemented by enhanced digital access. The model includes expanded outreach into communities that have traditionally experienced barriers to accessing support, ensuring a more equitable offer across the borough. These changes will enable families to receive more timely and targeted help, with fewer hand-offs between services, improving continuity of support. Overall, the increased capacity funded through BSIL is expected to contribute to improved GLD outcomes by 2028.

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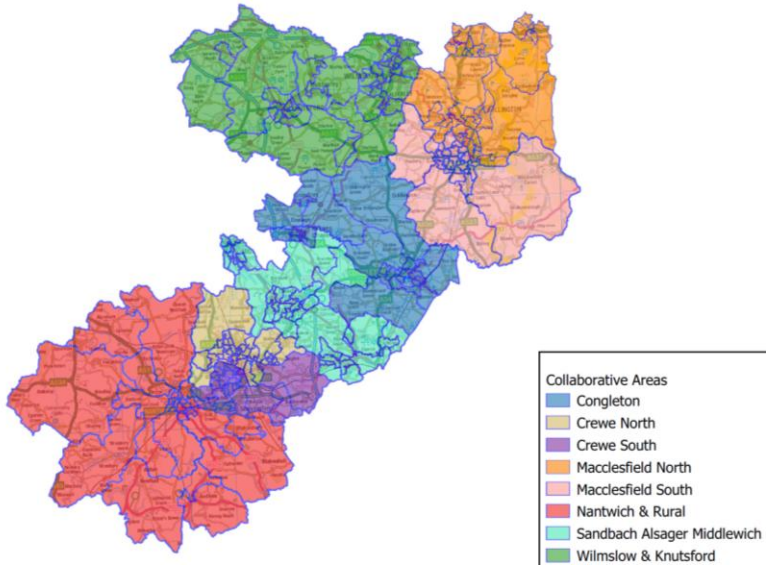
Best Start in Life

Delivery Model/Workforce Capacity/Evidence Based Interventions

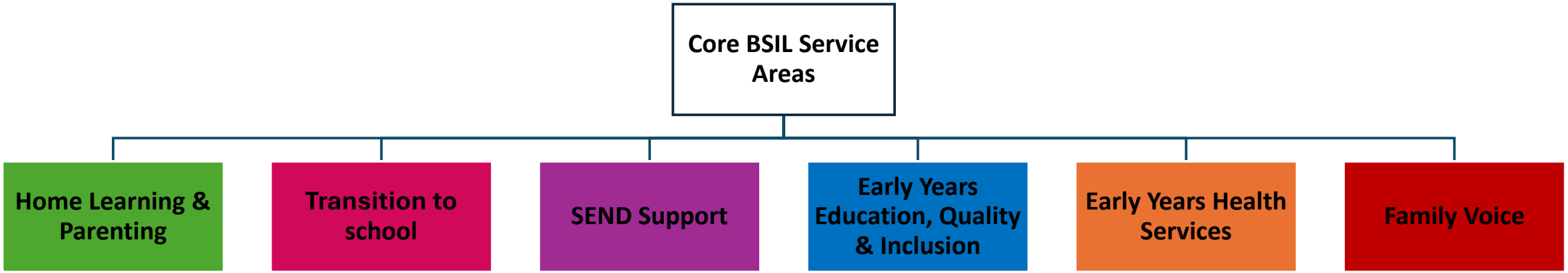
Services will work together in a more integrated and coordinated way; with early years teams increasingly embedded within Families First locality teams to align support around local needs. Portage (Start for Life) and Inclusion teams will be co-located within Family Hubs to enable closer collaboration and easier access for families. Borough-wide services, including sufficiency, data and business support, will continue to operate centrally while maintaining strong links with locality teams. In addition, early years settings and schools will have named Early Years Support Workers, creating clearer points of contact and improving consistency across the system.



For staff and partners, these developments will result in greater locality-based consistency and a deeper understanding of community needs. All practice will continue to be underpinned by restorative principles, supporting relational, strengths-based ways of working. The changes will also bring clearer pathways, improved integration across teams, and more effective sharing of intelligence, helping practitioners collaborate more efficiently and confidently across the wider service landscape.



Best Start in Life - Core Service Areas



Workforce Development

Data and Intelligence

Workforce Development/Data and Intelligence will be key to supporting the Core Service Areas of our Best Start in Life Local Plan.

Core Service Areas

Home Learning & Parenting Interventions

Narrative and current delivery

We hold a multi-user licence with Togetherness, enabling families to access a range of digital parenting courses at a time that suits them. Once registered, families receive lifetime access, supporting ongoing learning at their own pace. In addition, several members of staff have recently been trained to deliver face-to-face parenting programmes designed for parents and carers of children aged 0–5 years.

Our Home Learning Programme is an eight-week, evidence-informed intervention delivered in the home environment. It focuses on areas where a child may be experiencing developmental delay, such as communication. Children are screened using WellComm, and staff model targeted activities with families to help them support their child's progress.

We also offer Portage, a structured home-visiting service for children with complex needs. Practitioners work closely with parents to identify small, achievable developmental steps and co-produce a Portage plan, which is reviewed regularly with families and wider professionals to ensure progress is recognised and celebrated.

Across all universal Family Hub groups, we promote the Home Learning Environment (HLE) through themed activity tables. These provide parents with practical ideas and explanations about why specific play experiences matter—for example, demonstrating how playdough supports fine-motor development, which is essential for early writing skills. Early reading is embedded in delivery from birth to 5 through the distribution of Bookstart resources which are coordinated via Family Hubs. Throughout 2025/2026 we are committed to raising the profile of early reading by joining the National Year of Reading Go All In campaign.

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Core Service Areas

Home Learning & Parenting Interventions

Home Learning (0-4 Years)

- Our Home Learning offer provides targeted early support for families with children aged 0–4. Support is currently delivered where:

1. A child has been identified as having emerging or additional learning needs.
2. Parents request support to build confidence in understanding and supporting their child's development.
3. Families would benefit from role-modelling of developmentally appropriate play, routines, and interaction strategies.
4. Home Learning practitioners visit families in their homes, offering personalised guidance around early communication, play, physical development, and social–emotional skills. Plans are co-created with parents and reviewed regularly.

cheshireeast.gov.uk/familyhubs

Portage

- Portage is delivered to children aged 0–4 with significant or complex additional needs, including complex medical conditions or developmental disabilities. This structured, evidence-based home-visiting programme:

1. Provides specialist developmental assessments.
2. Creates targeted, small-step developmental goals.
3. Works closely with health professionals, SEND services, and early years settings.
4. Portage is prioritised for children with the most complex needs, or those requiring a highly structured intervention alongside multi-agency support.

Current Reach

- Referrals mainly come from health visitors, SEND services, paediatricians, and Family Hub teams.
- There is steady demand; however, children living in disadvantaged areas appear to be under-represented in referrals, potentially due to lower engagement, later identification of needs, or reduced access to early assessment pathways.
- Families can also walk into any of our hubs and be signposted to any of our services.

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Core Service Areas

Home Learning & Parenting Interventions

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Strengthening the Parenting and Home Learning Environment Offer • Embed high-quality, evidence-based parenting and home learning programmes across Family Hubs and the wider early years system. • Commission Making it REAL and PEEP to ensure a consistent, evidence-informed approach across delivery. • Integrate PEEP strategies into universal groups, targeted sessions, home visits, work alongside early years providers. • Provide Making it REAL training to all early year's providers so literacy-rich practice is embedded in settings and reinforced at home. • Extend training and resources to VCFSE partners to support reach into communities that may not access Family Hubs. • Expand the digital offer with videos, demonstrations and practical tips modelling high-quality home learning interactions. **Earlier Identification in Disadvantaged Areas** • Strengthen partnership working with midwifery, health visiting, early years settings and Start for Life teams to flag concerns earlier. • Increase presence at community groups, baby groups, Stay & Plays and targeted outreach sessions in priority wards. • Introduce a simple, consistent early-identification tool (e.g., a developmental red-flag checklist).	• Service delivery and impact will be monitored through a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, including: • Enrolment and completion rates across all parenting programmes, including participation from early years providers and VCFSE partners. • Family engagement levels, tracked through attendance data, follow-up contact, and use of digital resources. • Parent confidence questionnaires (pre- and post-intervention) to understand changes in knowledge, confidence, and home-learning behaviours. • Family feedback gathered following every intervention to assess accessibility, quality, and perceived impact. • Three-month follow-up checks to assess longer-term impact on home learning practices and child development. • Engagement with the digital offer, including registrations, usage patterns, and feedback on accessibility and content.

Core Service Areas

Home Learning & Parenting Interventions

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Expand Capacity and Access to Home Learning • Develop more flexible delivery models, including mixed home-visiting, Family Hub-based sessions and group interventions. • Create a light-touch pathway for families needing confidence-building support rather than more complex developmental intervention. • Increase the frequency of visits for children showing delay or where parents require more intensive modelling. **Strengthen Use of Data to Identify Families Earlier** • Use local population and deprivation data to map gaps in referral patterns. • Introduce quarterly reviews of: referral sources, waiting times, uptake by ward or postcode **Enhance Parent Confidence and Skills** • Embed modelling of interaction, play and communication in all home visits. • Develop take-home activity packs for families with limited resources. • Offer parent workshops covering: Speech, language and communication, early play, behaviour routines, child development.	**Early Identification** • Increase in referrals from disadvantaged areas (tracked quarterly). • Increase in self-referrals following community outreach. • Reduction in age at first referral, particularly for children under 2. **Impact on Child Development** • Developmental assessments at entry and exit (Portage small steps, EYFS developmental checkpoints, WellComm). • Percentage of children making expected progress in communication, play, social interaction, and physical development. • Case studies demonstrating improved outcomes. **Parent Outcomes** • Collected through surveys and practitioner observation: • Increased parental confidence to support their child's development. • Improved parental knowledge of play, communication strategies, and routines. • Reduction in parental concerns about child development.

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Core Service Areas

Home Learning & Parenting Interventions

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Strengthen Integration Between Home Learning, Portage and Wider Services • Establish clear pathways between Home Learning and Portage for children whose needs change. • Conduct joint visits with SEND, SALT, paediatric services and early years settings when goals overlap. • Develop shared developmental planning across Early Help, Start for Life and SEND services.	**Service Reach and Equity** • Number of families receiving support, broken down by ward, deprivation quintile and referral pathway. • Improved representation from priority/disadvantaged communities. • Reduced waiting times for Home Learning and Portage. **Multi-Agency Working** • Evidence of joint assessments and shared plans. • Increase in referrals from health, Early Years settings, and Start for Life partners. • Positive feedback from partner agencies.

Core Service Areas

Transition to school

Narrative and current delivery

- Delivery is dependent on the child's current setting and the setting in which they will attend.
- Live Well has a 'Ready Steady go……to reception' page which has key information and resources for parents/carers.
- In addition, there is a dedicated page for professionals including a section specifically for Early Years Transitions.
- Ready Steady School sessions are delivered annually from the Family Hubs as a universal offer led by Start for Life Portage Practitioners.

The SEND Transition Team also provides;

1. Attendance at SENCO cluster meetings to discuss transition support.
2. Additional SEND events to offer transition support e.g. SEND Local Offer Live, The SEND Health drop In.
3. Professional links with childcare settings/primary schools to deliver sessions on transitions.
4. A pilot with a group of primary schools and pre-schools/nurseries in the Crewe area to support transition communication.
5. Case specific work.
6. Data analysis for EHCP transitions to non-mainstream settings.
7. Continued support to all settings with regards to their offer of a universal transition package.

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Core Service Areas

Transition to school

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
1. Establish shared 'early years passports', standardising how information about a child's strengths and needs is shared between feeder settings and schools. 2. With regional improvement teams, help bolster underperforming schools (identified through the View Your Education Data platform). 3. Use data to inform sufficiency. 4. Consistency of information and language for parents and professionals through the LiveWell and Family Hub website. 5. Refresh and review the current resources on offer/link to pilot outcomes. 6. Review the face-to-face events. With regards to attendance, timeliness, marketing at SEND drop in's. As far as aware, this is not currently recorded. 7. Have specific timetable for transitions and how they can feed into these events. 8. Use data to target locality transition. 9. Review previous projects linking to transition to see if it is still appropriate/useful. 10. Create an avenue to share good practice and celebrate successes between settings. 11. Establish surveys to assess transition success. 12. Schools to improve signposting pupil premium eligible families to Family Hub services (e.g., infant feeding, SEND support, early language programmes). 13. Joint workshops with parents to increase understanding of pupil premium and its benefits.	• Child and parent feedback (particularly from priority families), setting and school feedback. • Data analysis on change of placements for our EHCP cohort. • Analysis and evaluation of event attendance and website usage.

Core Service Areas

SEND Support

Narrative and current delivery

In Cheshire East, our early years settings will implement the graduated approach and follow the local Inclusion Strategy when a child is not making expected progress in their development. Our Portage, Quality and Inclusion service provides settings with practical support, including completing paperwork, modelling the graduated approach, and guiding providers through evidence-based interventions.

Clear processes are in place to ensure that families can access high-quality, joined-up care when special educational needs and disabilities are identified. Support focuses on ensuring that children identified through early detection routes are connected to the right education, health and wellbeing services. This approach promotes early identification, timely access to specialist advice, and coordinated support for families at the earliest opportunity. When children are identified with a SEND need, work is being initiated to ensure a SEND support plan will be coordinated and commenced at the earliest opportunity.

We also facilitate the Early Years Forum Panel, a structured multi-agency meeting that reviews children with emerging or identified additional needs. The panel offers professional guidance to Early Years providers, reviews current strategies, agrees next steps, and ensures referrals to the most appropriate services. This helps to reduce delays, strengthen early identification, and provide consistent pathways across the locality.

In addition, we operate a SENIF Panel, which reviews requests for support that exceed ordinarily available inclusion provision. This ensures that resources are allocated fairly, transparently and in response to the level of need.

Core Service Areas

SEND Support

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Strengthen Specialist SEND Capacity in Family Hubs • Recruit specialist SEND practitioners for every Best Start Family Hub to increase capacity and ensure families receive timely, high-quality support. **Improve Referral Pathways and Early Access to Support** • Establish clear and consistent referral routes into wider community health, education and wellbeing services for children identified through early detection screenings. • Ensure that children identified through early detection routes are connected with the right education, health, and wellbeing services without delay. **Ensure Joined-Up, High-Quality Support for Families** • Maintain processes that promote coordinated, seamless support following the identification of SEND needs. • Strengthen alignment between early years settings, Portage, Family Hubs, health colleagues and wider SEND services to deliver a consistent experience for families.	**Family Experience and Access to Support** • Family feedback on their ability to access high-quality SEND advice and support. • Evidence that families experience joined-up, coordinated care following the identification of SEND needs, reflecting the processes described. **Effectiveness of Referral Pathways** • Evidence that children identified through early detection routes are connected to the right education, health and wellbeing services without delay. • Improvements in the timeliness and clarity of referral pathways into community health, education and wellbeing support. **Implementation of the Graduated Approach** • Increased use of the graduated approach within early years settings, supported by Portage, Quality and Inclusion practitioners (PQUIP). • Evidence that settings are implementing agreed strategies, completing required paperwork, and using intervention guidance appropriately.

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Core Service Areas

SEND Support

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Strengthen Multi-Agency Decision-Making Through Panels • Use the Early Years Forum Panel to provide structured, multi-agency discussion, review strategies, and agree next steps for children with emerging or identified needs. • Early Years Forum Panel to be extended to the end of reception. • Continue to operate the SENIF Panel to ensure children who require support above ordinarily available provision receive the right resources at the right time. **Support Early Years Settings to Implement the Graduated Approach** • Provide guidance, practical support and quality assurance to help settings follow the graduated approach and local Inclusion Strategy. • Deliver Universal support to settings to enhance understanding of child development and early identification of need. • Use Portage, Quality and Inclusion practitioners to assist settings with paperwork, evidence gathering and implementation of targeted strategies. • Extend support throughout YR to ensure continuity of provision and robust transitions for children supported through the graduated approach.	**Impact of Multi-Agency Panels (EY Forum Panel & SENIF Panel)** • Evidence of professional guidance, shared decision-making and coordinated next steps recorded through the Early Years Forum Panel. • Reduction in delays in support as a result of panel decisions leading to timely referral to the right services. • SENIF Panel decisions resulting in appropriate allocation of resources above ordinarily available provision. **Early Identification** • Evidence that children with emerging or additional needs are being identified earlier through screening, practitioner observations and panel processes. • Increased alignment between settings, Family Hubs, SEND services and health professionals to support early identification. **Quality and Consistency of SEND Support** • Evidence that families receive consistent pathways across the locality. • Demonstrated improvements in the quality, timeliness and alignment of SEND support provided by Early Years settings, Family Hubs and Portage, Quality & Inclusion services.

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Core Service Areas

Early Years, Quality & Inclusion

Narrative and current delivery

The Portage, Quality & Inclusion practitioners offer support to early years providers to deliver high quality, evidence-based practice across PVI early years settings and Childminders. Support includes visits around Safeguarding and Welfare, Quality and Inclusion, SEND and Vulnerable Children. The team provides specialist inclusion support to settings, helping to identify children with emerging needs early and ensuring appropriate intervention pathways are in place.

Practitioners work closely with settings to strengthen teaching and learning, inclusive practice, and approaches that promote communication, early language, physical development and social–emotional wellbeing. Collaboration with early years settings, SEND services, health professionals and Family Hubs ensures a joined-up approach to supporting children who require early help or targeted intervention. Training, network meetings and professional development programmes are delivered to build workforce skills and confidence, ensuring consistency of practice across the locality.

Core Service Areas

Early Years, Quality & Inclusion

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Strengthen Quality of Early Years Education Across All Settings • Provide consistent support and challenge through quality improvement visits and targeted action plans. • Embed evidence-based pedagogy that promotes communication, language, early literacy, physical development and emotional wellbeing. • Strengthen leadership and management within settings through coaching, training and audit tools. • Ensure the learning environment meets the unique needs of boys and engage with the Stronger Practice Hub to offer more support and training for schools and settings around meeting these specific needs. **Enhance Inclusive Practice and Early Identification** • Work with settings to identify children with emerging needs earlier and ensure appropriate intervention pathways. • Provide modelling and guidance on adapting provision, routines and environments to support children with SEND. • Promote the use of developmental checkpoints, WellComm and other screening tools consistently across settings. • Support settings to use Early Years Pupil Premium for evidence-based early language development programmes aligned with the Hub offer. • The Virtual School are recruiting to a new position (Portage, Quality and Inclusion Practitioner) for Early Years Cared for Practitioner. This staff member will work across the Virtual School and Early Years Team to support early years children who are cared for, to ensure they have tailored support to meet their needs.	**Quality and Practice Improvement** • Increase in the number of settings demonstrating improved quality through audits, observations and self-evaluation. • Evidence of improved teaching, learning and curriculum implementation within settings. • Increased consistency in the use of high-quality, evidence-informed pedagogy. **Inclusion and Early Identification** • Earlier identification of children with emerging needs, tracked through referrals and screening tools. • Increased use of WellComm, developmental checkpoints and SEND support plans across settings. • Improved practitioner confidence in adapting provision for children with additional needs. • We will be able to report on the number of early years pre-school children who have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place. • We will be able to monitor and report on the number of cared for children who are achieving GLD.

Core Service Areas

Early Years, Quality & Inclusion

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Build Workforce Capacity and Confidence • Deliver high-quality training on inclusive practice, curriculum design, behaviour regulation, and child development and roll this support out to our reception classes (that equally meet the needs of our boys and girls). • Facilitate Early Years Networks to share best practice, strengthen peer support and promote consistency across the sector. • Develop resources and toolkits to support practitioners in implementing evidence-informed approaches. • Extend our support to children within reception. **Strengthen Multi-Agency Working** • Improve information-sharing between early years providers, health, SEND and Family Hubs to support earlier intervention. • Create joint plans and coordinated support for children with additional or complex needs. • Align early years activity with Start for Life, Early Help and locality priorities.	**Workforce Development** • Uptake and completion rates for training, workshops and network sessions. • Practitioner feedback evidencing increased confidence and understanding. • Demonstrable changes in practice following CPD. **Service Reach and Equity** • Number of settings supported, broken down by locality and level of need. • Improved reach into disadvantaged areas and settings with higher levels of vulnerability. • Reduction in variability of quality across the sector. **Multi-Agency Collaboration** • Evidence of joint assessments, shared plans and collaborative support. • Feedback from partner agencies on effectiveness of communication and coordination. • Increase in referrals and information-sharing from early years settings, health and Family Hub teams.

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Core Service Areas

Early Years Health Services

Narrative and current delivery

The Cheshire East 0–19+ Health and Wellbeing Service is delivered by Wirral Community Health & Care NHS Foundation Trust (WCHC). It follows the national Healthy Child Programme and supports children, young people and families from pregnancy through age 19 (or 25 for young people with complex needs).

Key Components of the 0–19 Service

Health Visiting (0–5 years) - Delivered by specialist community public health nurses and community nursery nurses. Support includes:

- Antenatal contact and postnatal visits (including a New Birth Visit and 6-week review)
- Developmental reviews (including 9-month and 2-year checks)
- Child health clinics and home visits
- Parenting support (sleep, behaviour, wellbeing, domestic abuse signposting)
- Collaborative work with family hubs, GPs, midwives, early years settings and children's services

School Nursing (5–19+ years) - School nurses deliver health and wellbeing support throughout school years, including:

- Vision and hearing screening
- National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)
- Advice on toileting, emotional wellbeing, sleep, healthy eating and behaviour
- Support for children not in formal education
- Collaboration with schools, GPs, midwives, family hubs and community services

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Core Service Areas

Early Years Health Services

Narrative and current delivery

Infant Feeding Support (Cherubs)

- Breastfeeding and infant feeding support integrated across the 0–19+ service
- Includes home visits, peer support groups (Cherubs) across Cheshire East and Lactation Clinics
- Access via the Contact Hub

Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)

- Specialist Intensive support programme provided for young parents and their babies up until their baby reaches the age of 2, included as part of the 0–19+ service.

Enhancing Families Programme

- The Enhancing Families Programme is for families requiring additional support. It is based around the Incredible Years Programme, and the team will support you from the antenatal period until the child reaches the age of 2.

Contact Hub – Single Point Access

- The 0-19 Contact Hub supports local parents, carers, young people and families in providing easier access to information, advice and guidance. It is a one stop shop for all things relating to Infant Feeding, Health Visiting and School Nursing.

Support for SEND

- Targeted support for children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Support includes “Understanding your child’s development” courses offered by specially trained staff to parents/carers and professionals.

Core Service Areas

Early Years Health Services

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
The Cheshire East 0–19+ service focuses on: • **Health promotion** • **Health protection** • **Illness and accident prevention** • **Early intervention** The aim is to ensure children and young people can access the right support **quickly**, promoting healthy development and helping them reach their full potential. Over the next 18 months we will conduct a robust recommissioning exercise of the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme (HCP) service. Recommissioning provides an opportunity to review current delivery, strengthen outcomes, and align the service with emerging local needs, national guidance, and wider public health priorities.	• This will be monitored via our commissioning and contracting procedures. • The 0-19 Service feeds into National Data reporting (Office for Health, Improvement and Disparities (OHID)).

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Core Service Areas

Family Voice

Narrative and current delivery

Family involvement is a core component of our Start for Life and Family Hubs approach. We are committed to embedding parents and carers' voices across all levels of service planning, delivery and governance. At present, family feedback is gathered through a range of approaches, including informal conversations within Family Hubs, direct practitioner feedback, session evaluations, and our existing parent satisfaction surveys.

While these methods provide useful insights, they do not yet fully capture the diversity of family experience across all communities, particularly those who are seldom heard or experience multiple barriers to engagement. There is also an opportunity to strengthen how feedback is systematically recorded, analysed, shared across partners, and translated into visible service improvements.

To build on our current delivery, we will expand structured opportunities for parents to shape services, improve our collaboration with voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners, and develop new participatory mechanisms that allow families to influence decisions in a meaningful and sustained way.

Our ambition is to create a culture where parent voice is routinely gathered, valued, and acted upon—and where families can clearly see how their input has influenced change.

Core Service Areas

Family Voice

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Expand Parent Voice with a Focus on Underserved Communities We will grow the reach and diversity of our parents, ensuring they include parents from communities traditionally underrepresented in feedback processes. This includes parents from minority ethnic backgrounds, lone parents, young parents, fathers, parents of children with SEND, and families experiencing financial hardship. Our areas of focus will be; • Reach out to parents through Family Hubs, community groups, and trusted local partners. • Ensure parents voices influence decision-making through representation at operational and strategic forums. • Provide flexible engagement options (daytime/evening, virtual/in person). • Offer practical support to increase participation (childcare, transport reimbursement, digital access).	Service delivery will be monitored through a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators aligned with Start for Life outcomes. Measures include: **Engagement and Representation** • Number of parent champions recruited, with tracking of ongoing involvement. • Retention rates over a 12-month period for both panels and champions. • Diversity of parent representatives, benchmarked against local demographic profiles. **Impact and Influence** • Evidence of service changes directly linked to parental feedback. • Case studies demonstrating influence of parent voice on practice and decision-making. • Feedback from parents on whether they feel heard, valued, and able to influence services.

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Core Service Areas

Family Voice

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Establish a Parent Champions Programme We will introduce a Parent Champions model to support peer to peer engagement and strengthen trust between families and services. Champions will be locally recruited volunteers who share information, encourage participation, and bring lived experience into service development. Our areas of focus will be; • Develop a clear role profile and recruitment process. • Ensure champions reflect the demographics of the community. • Provide training, supervision, and development opportunities. • Recruit, train and support Champions to build confidence to attend and contribute to meetings that shape our services by identifying local unmet need. • Build pathways for parent champions to progress into wider volunteering, community roles or employment. **Strengthen Partnership Feedback Loops with Voluntary, Community, Faith Sector Organisations** VCFSE providers often have trusted relationships with families who may not engage directly with the local authority. To benefit from this, we will establish regular structured meetings or feedback sessions with VCFSE partners to gather insights into family needs, experiences and priorities. Our areas of focus will be; • Quarterly VCFSE feedback forums or listening events. • Shared principles for collecting and reporting family voice. • Coordination of themes and learning across services. • Ensuring feedback from partners contributes to Family Hub outcomes and service redesign.	**Reach and Awareness** • Parental engagement with services, including uptake of Start for Life and Family Hub offers. • Increased parental awareness of available services and support, captured through surveys, champion reports, and digital analytics. • VCFSE partner involvement, including attendance at feedback sessions and shared insights provided. **Quality and Experience** • Parent satisfaction with opportunities to participate. • Perceived inclusivity and accessibility of involvement mechanisms. • Practitioner and partner feedback on how well family voice is embedded in service processes.

Core Service Areas

Family Voice

Priorities and areas of focus	How will this service delivery be measured?
Engagement with Cheshire East Parent Carer Forum **Co-production of priorities, design and delivery** • Participate in co-production workshops to shape service priorities, pathways, and outcome measures. • Help to influence the design of Family Hub services, ensuring they meet the needs of children with SEND and those with emerging additional needs. • Support development of communications, making sure information is parent-friendly, accessible, and inclusive. **Providing insight through regular parent engagement** • Sharing themes and trends from parent feedback, surveys, online forums, and focus groups. • Assisting us to host targeted events for families of children with SEND, under-5s, or vulnerable groups to explore barriers and what would improve access. • Assisting us reach families who may not engage through traditional council consultation routes. **Evaluation and monitoring of lived experience** • Co-designing measures of family experience, such as satisfaction, confidence, or accessibility. • Supporting the collection of family feedback for specific pathways (e.g., infant feeding, early language development, SEND support). • Reviewing findings with the council to identify gaps, inequalities, or areas where families need more support.	**Engagement with Cheshire East Parent Carer Forum** **Co-production of priorities, design and delivery** • Number of co-production sessions held with the Parent Carer Forum per year. • Attendance rates of Parent Carer Forum members at co-design workshops. • Percentage of new or revised pathways where the Forum has contributed to development. • Number of changes made to services as a result of Forum input (captured via a “You Said, We Did” log). **Providing insight through regular parent engagement** • Number of surveys, listening events or focus groups delivered collaboratively with the Forum. • Demographic reach / diversity of parents engaged, e.g., proportion of families of children with SEND, under-5s,. • Themes and trends summarised and reported quarterly to Best Start governance groups. • Percentage of Family Hubs and Connect sites that receive regular insight reports. • Completion rate of parents providing feedback via Forum channels. **Evaluation and monitoring of lived experience** • Family experience data collected, such as: confidence levels/ accessibility/understanding of support pathways/perceived quality of support. • Year-on-year comparison of family satisfaction with Family Hubs and SEND pathways. • Number of service improvements directly linked to lived experience feedback.

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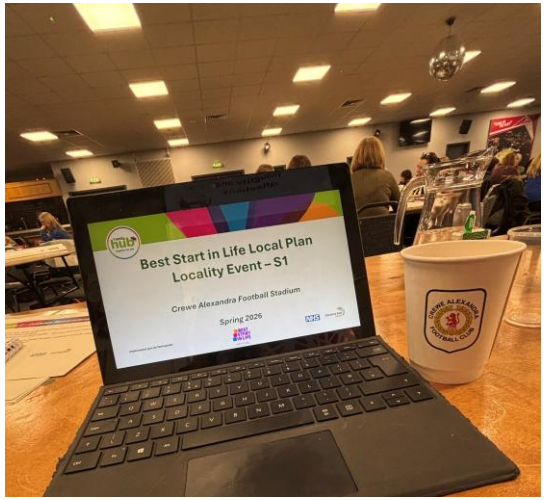
Co-production & Sector Engagement

The government has set an ambitious Early Years Good Level of Development (GLD) target for Cheshire East by 2028. Achieving this will require a genuinely collaborative approach across early years and primary education. Over recent months, we have already begun this work through a series of co-production activities with schools, early years settings, multi-agency partners, and frontline practitioners. These events have helped shape our early thinking and ensure that local insight is embedded from the beginning.

To date, our co-production work has included:

- **Engagement workshops with early years providers and childminders**, focusing on identifying key barriers to GLD and exploring priorities for targeted and universal support.
- **Gathering insight** into transition challenges, cohort needs, and evidence-based approaches that are working well in schools.
- **Consultation sessions with family hub teams, SALT, and SEND specialists**, ensuring alignment between early intervention, HLE support, and targeted pathways.
- **Feedback exercises with leadership networks**, including Headteachers, Early Years Leads, and locality-based forums, to validate findings and refine proposed approaches.
- **Co-production sessions on Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs)**, gathering practitioner feedback that informed decisions around priorities such as PEEP, REAL, Togetherness, and WellComm.

Co-production & Sector Engagement





These sessions have provided a strong foundation for developing our shared local plan.

- The recent events provided a valuable opportunity to further strengthen our co-produced approach. With attendance from primary schools, early years settings, and Reception teachers, the sessions enabled practitioners to come together, share insights, and shape the next phase of our collective work. We are grateful for the strong representation from schools across the area; the leadership and expertise of Headteachers/EYFS Leads were instrumental in ensuring that the developing plan reflects real practice, responds to the needs of professionals, and supports positive outcomes for children from their earliest experiences through to the end of Reception.

- To meet the 2028 GLD target, we must work collectively across the sector, sharing expertise, identifying challenges, and agreeing on actions that will make the greatest difference.

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Best Start in Life Local Plan Summary

To achieve the ambition of reaching a 78.2% Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028, Cheshire East will prioritise strengthening their Family Hubs network and approach, so they function as fully integrated community anchors offering consistent, accessible support. Targeted evidence-based interventions will be expanded across all localities, with a particular focus on improving early identification of speech, language and communication needs to ensure children receive help at the earliest opportunity. Outreach will be increased in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation to reduce disparities in access and outcomes, while transitions from early years settings into Reception will be strengthened to provide children with a stable and supportive start to school.

Central to this work is a commitment to co-production with schools, early years providers and families, ensuring that services are shaped by local experience and insight. Delivering the Best Start in Life will rely on the shared commitment of schools, early years settings, health partners and community organisations; by working collectively, Cheshire East can ensure every child is supported to thrive from their earliest years.

cheshireeast.gov.uk/familyhubs

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