



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA



City of Westminster



# Best Start in Life

## STRATEGY

for Westminster City Council  
and the Royal Borough of  
Kensington and Chelsea



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# Introduction:

This strategy sets out how Westminster City Council (WCC) and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) will work together with health, social care, education and community partners to help every child get the best start in life—from pregnancy to age five—so they can begin school happy, healthy and ready to learn. It focuses on providing practical, early support through local Family Hubs and partner services, and bringing together the services families need both in communities and through a new digital platform to give parents easy access to a network of advice, support and guidance to help their children thrive.<sup>1</sup>

This strategy supports and builds on other plans already in place across both boroughs, which includes:

- The Early Help Strategy (WCC & RBKC)
- The Bi-Borough Children and Young People’s Plan
- The Bi-Borough Inclusion Strategy
- Early Year’s Strategy
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- WCC SEND Strategy School Age Child Care plan

In addition, this strategy is aligned with the Department for Education’s School-Age Childcare Guidance for Local Authorities. (see appendix 1 for further details)

## Our Story:

Across both boroughs, families already have access to a wide range of early years services. However, we know that the information and support families receive is not always consistent, and some families are not reached as early as they could be. By looking closely at each Family Hub area and ward, we have been able to understand where services are working well, where fewer families are accessing support, and where children may need earlier help with their development.

We are building on many years of early years provision to give every child an even better start. Since 2018, we have moved from Sure Start Children’s Centres to a Family Hubs model, creating five hubs—three in Westminster and two in Kensington and Chelsea. These hubs bring together support for families from pregnancy through to age five, and they also link with our wider Family Hub and Youth network to support families with older children.

Our Early Help Partnerships across both boroughs are well established, with shared strategies shaping how we work and plan together. While all five hubs share a common approach, each one has the flexibility to respond to the specific needs of its community, reflecting the diverse

neighbourhoods across our boroughs. We have carried out detailed analysis of local need, service use and outcomes at both borough and ward level. This helps us identify children who may not be getting developmental checks or early assessments, spot areas where extra support is needed, and ensure that children do not miss out on the services that will help them thrive. This learning guides a more targeted, responsive approach in each Family Hub, so every child has the chance to start school with confidence.

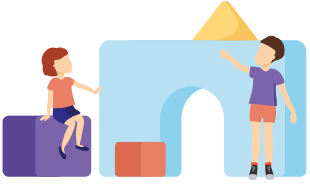
Our Best Start in Life programme is linked to the work that is taking place across London through the Opportunity Mission coordinated by the Greater London Authority and London Councils. This will enable us to ensure that there will be more consistency in the offer available to families and children across London.

(1). Department for Education (2025), Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, pp. 2–3, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life)



# Our Vision:

Our vision for 2028 has been co-produced with families and key partners across all services:



Our Best Start Family Hubs are a trusted, welcoming network of local and digital “onestop” spaces where every family can quickly find the right help at the right time. Support is easy to access, nonjudgemental and clearly signposted (including multiple languages and simple online routes). Health, education and community partners work seamlessly together so no child or family slips through the net.



Our Vision involves families feeling heard, understood, and empowered saying “I feel supported. I can do this.” Hubs are trusted and inclusive places where children thrive (including strong SEND inclusive environments) and parents build skills, friendships and resilience. Staff feel valued and proud because the early help they provide works: progress is visible, escalation reduces, and more children arrive at school safe, healthy and ready to learn.



# Targets:

We have different targets for each borough. These targets are set by the Department for Education and are informed by previous levels of development that children were assessed as having at the end of their time in Reception class.

## For Westminster

Our target is that by 2028

at least **77.1%** of children

(at least **68.3%** of children accessing Free School Meals (FSM))

reach a Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of their reception year.



In 2024/25

**71.3%** of Westminster's Reception age children reached GLD

**64.4%** of those accessing FSM

Based on existing child population, to achieve the 2028 target, this equates to **61** more children (or **12** who access FSM) having a GLD compared with today.

By 2030, for both boroughs we aspire to have even fewer children who do not have GLD, than are currently projected. We will also aim to reduce or close the gap between rates of GLD for all children and those accessing FSM. We will continue to work closely with parents, carers and partners to ensure that our Best Start in Life offer meets the needs of all children over the next three years.

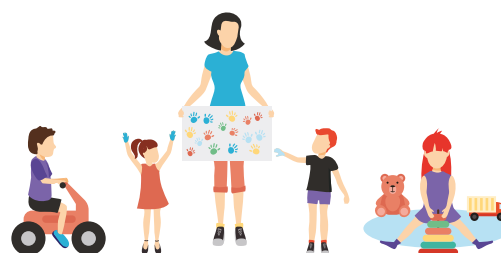
## For Kensington and Chelsea

Our target is that by 2028

at least **78.7%** of children

(and at least **70%** of children accessing Free School Meals (FSM))

reach a Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of their reception year.



In 2024/25

**69.5%** of Kensington and Chelsea's Reception age children reached GLD

**56%** of those accessing FSM

Based on existing child population, to achieve the 2028 target, this equates to **83** more children (or **30** who access FSM) having a GLD compared with today.



## Why this plan is needed:

Across both boroughs, many services are already in place, but the information and support that families receive is not always consistent, and some families are not reached early enough. We have looked closely at local patterns (by Family Hub area and ward) to understand where families use services, where take-up is lower, and where children are more likely to need additional support.

- **Take-up of the 2 to 2½ review varies a lot.** In Westminster, it ranges from about two-thirds of children in the North West area to under half in the North East, and it varies sharply from ward to ward.
- **Communication and language are the biggest area of concern.** In both boroughs, fewer children meet the expected level in communication compared with national figures, even where other areas are stronger.
- **Family Hub use is uneven.** Attendance is usually highest from families living close to a hub, but some wards with low attendance still have families with high need.
- **In Kensington and Chelsea, take-up of the 2 to 2½ review also varies widely,** and lower development outcomes are concentrated in some wards.
- **Families may move between boroughs or services,** which can disrupt support and make it harder to keep help joined up.
- **Information sharing is not always smooth** (for example, when consent is hard to get or when different services record information in different ways), which can lead to gaps.



# What we will do to ensure every child has the Best Start:

## A. Help parents support learning and development at home

- Offer a strong range of parenting support, including proven programmes and targeted workshops, so parents can build routines and confidence.
- Make access easier by improving how partners refer families into support, and by using data to spot who is missing out.
- Develop a digital parenting and home learning offer for parents who cannot easily attend sessions in person (including working parents and those who need support out of normal hours).
- Focus on practical help, including ways to model play, storytelling and everyday conversation that builds children's language.
- Support parents to learn from each other through parent champion and peer approaches, so families feel less isolated.
- Track what is working by improving how we record attendance, progress and whether changes last after programmes finish.

## B. Improve access to good early education and childcare

- Help families navigate childcare choices through clear information and signposting, including a strong Family Information offer shaped with parents.
- Improve how families find and book support by developing simple online registration and booking tools and by using social media more effectively.
- Strengthen local collaboration across groups of schools, nurseries and hubs so families get consistent advice and earlier help to secure places.
- Improve clarity on childcare funding so families understand what they are entitled to and how to access it.
- Keep a focus on inclusion, including listening to families where children have SEND about barriers to using full childcare entitlements and about the need for affordable holiday childcare and informal play options.



## C. Make the move into Reception smoother for children and families

- **Build on existing transition tools** (for example, visits and transition programmes) and improve how key information is shared, especially for children who may need extra support.
- **Improve shared understanding of “school readiness”** so it includes everyday life skills (such as listening, turn-taking, toileting, independence and managing feelings), not just early reading and writing.
- **Target extra help earlier** by prioritising children where the 2 to 2½ review shows concerns, and by widening school readiness support in areas with higher need.
- **Test new roles and approaches**, including a pilot “Community Inclusion Teacher” role to design and deliver practical interventions and workshops for parents and children.
- **Use trusted locations**, including schools, as places to offer Family Hub activities where families find it hard to reach hub sites or feel more comfortable in school settings.
- **Improve early support for emotional wellbeing** so needs are noticed and addressed before children start school.

## D. Support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) earlier

- **Spot needs earlier**, so support can start before children reach school age, and families do not have to wait until problems become bigger.
- **Make routes into help clearer**, including clearer information on waiting times and what support is available after an assessment.
- **Link specialist expertise into Family Hubs**, to a named specialist SEND practitioner, to connect hubs with the wider SEND support system.
- **Work closely with early years settings** to strengthen confidence in early identification and in when and how to get specialist advice.
- **Support families’ wellbeing**, including recognising that receiving a diagnosis can be stressful and that parents may need trauma-informed support.
- **Strengthen transitions for children with SEND** from nursery into Reception, with better planning and more consistent information sharing.



# How we will work: the 'system' changes that make the plan deliverable

## A. Joined-up Family Hubs and clear communication

- **Local planning through Integrated Leadership Teams** in each hub area, using local data and local insight to decide what to prioritise.
- **A shared communications plan** so parents and professionals hear consistent messages about child development (including practical topics such as screen time) and know where to go for help.
- **Use clear, everyday language** that focuses on "life skills" rather than technical terms.
- **Work with trusted partners** (including community groups and SEND parent groups) to widen reach and build trust.
- **Make it easier to navigate support** through clearer pathways, warm handovers and, where helpful, Family Hub panel discussions to coordinate help around a family.
- **Improve shared data and information sharing** so partners can spot gaps, target outreach, and reduce duplication.

## B. A confident, skilled workforce

- **Build on existing training** so staff across services have the skills they need to support families early and consistently.
- **Create a more joined-up training offer** across the two boroughs, so staff know what is available and can learn together.
- **Strengthen skills in key areas** such as supporting parent–child relationships, early language development, SEND pathways, and traumainformed approaches.
- **Support staff to coach parents** (for example, how to play, talk and read with children in everyday routines).
- **Share expertise from special schools** through outreach, joint training and practical modelling for mainstream early years and school staff.



## C. Families shaping services

- **Listen to families and involve them in decisions** through Parent Carer Panels and wider community roles.
- **Reach families who are not using hubs** by working with trusted community partners and by improving the way information is shared.
- **Design messages and support that work for different communities**, including language and cultural needs.
- **Make it easier to engage digitally**, including simple signups, notifications, and clear “what’s on” information.
- **Encourage peer support** so parents can learn from each other (for example, parentled activities such as shared reading sessions).

## D. Learning what works (and adjusting quickly)

- **Use shared data** to track whether families are registering, attending and benefitting from support.
- **Improve dashboards and local reporting** so we can see what is happening in real time and respond where engagement is low.
- **Track outcomes, not just activity**, including whether parenting support leads to changes that last.
- **Improve how information is shared at key points** (for example, when families move, when children start nursery, and when children move into Reception).
- **Make it easier for families to sign up** through selfregistration and simple booking for activities.

## E. Clear leadership, accountability and sustainable funding

- **Strengthen shared leadership** through partnership boards and Integrated Leadership Teams, with more consistent involvement from schools, early years settings and parents.
- **Connect with health system leadership** so priorities and responsibilities are clear and support is coordinated.
- **Use resources where they make the biggest difference**, linking funding decisions to the outcomes we want to improve in specific neighbourhoods.
- **Explore joint commissioning and shared budgets** across the two boroughs where this improves services and avoids duplication.
- **Plan early for long-term sustainability**, including potential changes to national funding after 2028.




# How we will know it is working:

- **More children are ready for school**, shown by improved Reception outcomes and a smaller gap for children receiving free school meals.
- **More families use the support available**, including higher registration and attendance at Family Hubs and better takeup of funded childcare offers.
- **More children get early checks and early help**, including improved takeup of the 2 to 2½ development review, especially where take-up is currently low.
- **Parents report better access and clearer information**, including clearer routes to support and simpler, more consistent messages.
- **Services work together more smoothly**, with better information sharing and fewer families falling between services.
- **Staff feel confident and supported**, with good access to training and shared ways of working.



# Appendix:

## 1. Department for Education's School-Age Childcare Guidance for Local Authorities:

 [www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-age-childcare-guidance-for-local-authorities](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-age-childcare-guidance-for-local-authorities)

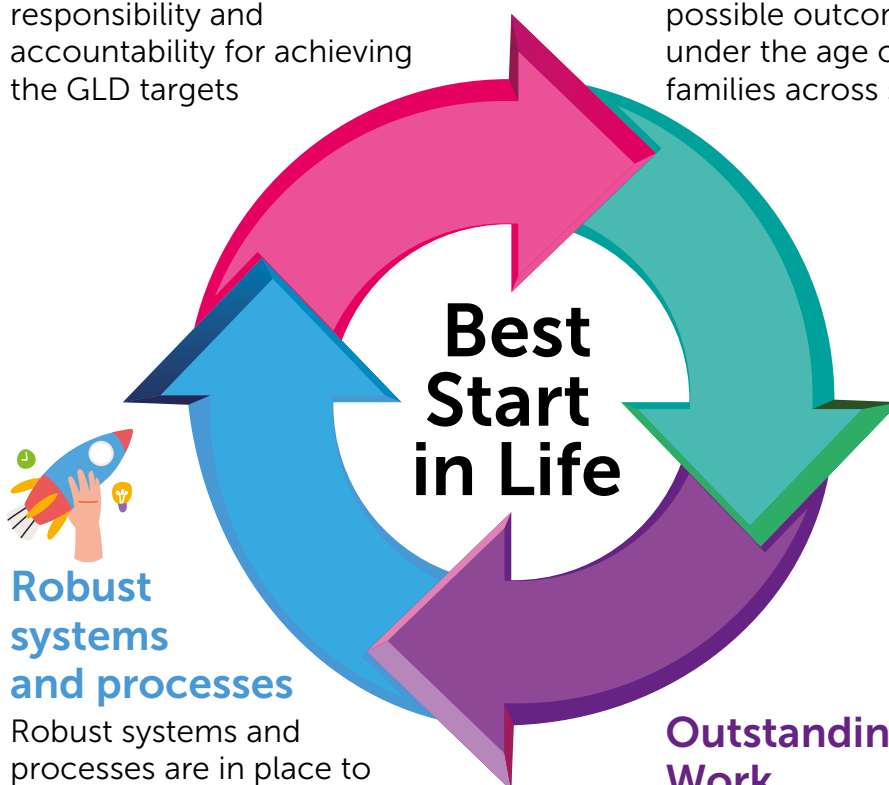
## 2. Strategic Approach to Achieving the Best Start in Life:

### **Collective Accountability**

All agencies share the BSIL vision and have collective responsibility and accountability for achieving the GLD targets

### **Collaborative Working**

Leading the way in working with others to deliver the best possible outcomes for children under the age of five and their families across sectors



### **Robust systems and processes**

Robust systems and processes are in place to support effective working, problem solving and decision making

### **Outstanding Work**

High quality services are in place for children under the age of five and their families and access to services is seamless

# Collective Accountability



## WHAT?

- All agencies share the same vision
- There is a clarity regarding roles and responsibilities
- Agencies realise their potential
- There is collective responsibility and accountability for all targets in relation to BSIL
- People feel proud to work here as part of the wider system

## HOW?

- Embed **regular meetings** for all agencies to monitor impact
- Introduce **CPD opportunities** for all staff
- Clarify **team structures** to allow specialisation
- Enable staff who are part of the wider system to **work cohesively** and understand how they all complement each other's roles and the wider system
- Introduce an **evaluation process** whereby agencies will be able to celebrate successes and identify areas for improvement

## WHEN?

- Meetings will be fully embedded and in place by **April 2026**
- Evaluation of BSIL approach by **March 2027**
- Strategic plan with metrics and targets will continue to be implemented and evaluated - **Ongoing**

# Collaborative Working



## WHAT?

- Links with key services/agencies is established
- Duplication of work is avoided and communication between agencies and across the system is effective
- Families and service users have a greater understanding of the services available and influence the design of services
- People feel proud to work here as part of the wider system

## HOW?

- Continue to use a comprehensive **Theory of Change** document to engage with key partners
- Review and reintroduce the **early years clusters** led by Best Start Family Hubs
- Introduce **opportunities to consult** with families and the wider system to ensure that their views are informing the design of services
- Continue to have **regular meetings** with key partners and agencies to ensure that collaborative working is effective

## WHEN?

- Theory of Change will continue to be used with all key partners - **Ongoing**
- Early years clusters will be reintroduced with a specific focus on critical transition points by **September 2026**
- Regular consultation events, focus groups and surveys would have been introduced and established by **September 2026**
- Continue to have the BSIL Partnership meetings to ensure they support the system positively - **Ongoing**

# Outstanding Work



- WHAT?**
- All staff have access to robust data that underpin the key areas of BSIL
  - Service users are well informed regarding services and updates
  - Families and professionals are clear regarding where information can be found and which steps they need to follow with regard to a variety of services
  - All partners have access to a comprehensive CPD programme
- HOW?**
- **The FIH websites** will cover the key aspects of BSIL
  - **Comms campaigns** will be used as a means to promote key aspects of BSIL
  - **Data sets** will be in place supporting different functions of the wider system
  - **CPD programme** will continue to be reviewed and extended to ensure that key aspects are sufficiently covered, duplication of courses is avoided and that all key agencies' needs are met sufficiently
- WHEN?**
- FIH websites updates by **March 2026**
  - Comms campaigns in place by **September 2026**
  - Data sets by **September 2026**
  - CPD programme by **September 2026**

# Robust systems and processes



- WHAT?**
- Strategic approach regarding the promotion of Free Early education Entitlements (FEEE) is in place
  - Strategic approach regarding GLD is in place (including metrics for all services)
  - Information sharing systems and protocols are in place
  - Robust use of data is in place
  - Standardised FIH websites focussing on BSIL are in place
- HOW?**
- Introduce **revised systems** for the promotion of FEEE
  - Introduce a new way of using **data** as part of BSIL
  - Complete and publish **BSIL vision**
  - Evaluate revised **GLD** processes
  - Introduce a new **information sharing protocol**
- WHEN?**
- Completed BSIL Vision **March 2026**
  - Data dashboard by **April 2026**
  - Revised strategy for the promotion of FEEE by **September 2026**
  - Introduction of new information sharing protocol by **September 2026**
  - Evaluation of GLD processes by **August 2027**

## 2. Theory of Change:

Activities	Assumptions	Intermediate outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Aim
<p>Local programmes and offers will be introduced where families will be accessing services which meet their needs in a timely manner (tackling key issues – e.g. speech and language delay, special educational needs, EY education, childcare, healthy eating, tooth decay, vaccinations, maternity and HV)</p>	<p>Families will access BSFHs consistently and will take a keen interest in the wider offer</p>	<p>Access to unified and improved services for families and children. Improved services for all families and children regardless of where they live in the boroughs</p>	<p>Establishing Best Start Family Hubs for families and their children across the Bi-Borough</p>	
<p>Outcomes based Intervention and support programmes for families and children will be promoted consistently and families will know where to find key information</p> <p>The Family Information Hub will promote the BSFH offer and ensure that all professionals and families access the support and information they need in one place. Other digital tools will provide self-serve interactive advice and activities for families.</p>	<p>Professionals from different agencies will be supportive of the BSFHs approach and will be keen to be part of the whole system approach</p>	<p>Improved programmes across all services that are directly linked to BSFHs Increased number of children and families accessing services Improved local plans for promoting BSFHs in a more holistic way with strategies and key messages being promoted by all agencies</p>	<p>Improved and accessible early years education and childcare across the system</p>	
<p>Workshops and workforce development with key partner/agencies will take place to ensure that all key partners are committed and have the skills to delivering a joined-up BSFH offer consistently</p> <p>A Communications Strategy to promote the BSFH offer and ensure that families and professionals understand the importance of early years development what BSFHs entail.</p> <p>Support to early years providers focussing on quality and inclusion will be enhanced to ensure that the offer to children and families is consistently strong.</p>	<p>Professionals will work collaboratively and share data consistently</p>	<p>Improved accessibility to early years education and childcare in high quality and inclusive provision promoted by the wider system and agencies consistently and systematically</p>	<p>Improved quality in early years including reception, which will lead to better GLD outcomes</p>	<p>To establish a consistent whole system approach to ensure that every child starts life with equal opportunity, regardless of background, which will lead to better outcomes for all children of all ages and their families.</p>
<p>Joined up thinking and working to co-produce and co-design local BSFH services (i.e. effective use of data, aligning policies, data sharing protocols and boards to ensure that key objectives are met – key agencies working together – holistic approach). Interface with other initiatives will be a key priority (e.g. Neighbourhood Health Services, Health and Wellbeing Hubs etc.).</p>	<p>All agencies and services will be fully engaged in delivering a whole system approach where the offer will be joined up and systems will be seamless</p>	<p>Enhanced support to families and children that need additional and more targeted interventions Enhanced and improved health services for children (pre-birth to five) to ensure families access the right support at the right time in the right place</p>	<p>Embedding high-quality inclusive practice to enable every child to thrive</p>	
<p>Evidence Based Programmes will be carefully planned consistently to ensure they are effective and impactful (HLE, SEND and parenting will be key areas of focus).</p>	<p>Families will know where to go to seek advice and support and will be clear regarding the wider offer. The BSFH offer will be available in settings beyond the 5 Hub locations.</p>	<p>Improved joined up systems to ensure that priorities are shared between services and agencies and that there is collective responsibility and accountability</p>	<p>Improved links between health, education, social care and VCS organisations to develop a comprehensive and meaningful Best Start Family Hub offer (whole system approach), which will support children starting reception</p>	
<p>New roles will be introduced (Community Inclusion Teachers and HLE Inclusion Officers) to embed the offer.</p>	<p>Professionals will be able to access information at the right time seamlessly</p>	<p>Joined up approach (whole system approach) between different services to offer a comprehensive offer to families and children (e.g. SEND, Education, Early Help, Family Hubs, CAMHS, social care, Health, Public Health, VCS etc.). In return, families and children will be supported more effectively and more consistently by all agencies</p>	<p>Improved links between health, education, social care and VCS organisations to develop a comprehensive and meaningful Best Start Family Hub offer (whole system approach), which will support children starting reception</p>	
<p>Key partners will have close links with local services and key partners (including VCS organisations, health, libraries, education and social care)</p> <p>BSFH Clusters will be instrumental in embedding a joined-up approach that will make the wider system more effective. Systems for Information sharing at key transition points will be embedded across the system, with strategies to identify and where necessary intervene with children who miss out on support and services available.</p>	<p>Professionals will be able to access information at the right time seamlessly</p>	<p>Improved joined up systems to ensure that priorities are shared between services and agencies and that there is collective responsibility and accountability</p>	<p>Improved links between health, education, social care and VCS organisations to develop a comprehensive and meaningful Best Start Family Hub offer (whole system approach), which will support children starting reception</p>	

What we need to do

The barriers to success we need to consider

What we want to achieve

Our ultimate goal

