



# Early Years Strategy

2021-24



# Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

## Early Years Strategy

### 2021-24

## Introduction

There is a strong evidence base to show that experiences in the first 1,000 days (270 days of pregnancy and the first two years of life) have a profound effect on outcomes for that child during their entire life.

This strategy has been co-produced by partners who work across the Wakefield District, taking account of the voice and needs of “parents to be”, children, young people and their families, through the Early Years Strategic Board. The strategy, which will be in place from 2021-24, will evolve over time. It will be subject to regular review by the Early Years Strategic Board.

### Key partners involved in the delivery of this strategy include:-

- Wakefield Council schools
- Wakefield Clinical Commissioning Group
- 0-19 Partnership
- Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Schools, Early Years Settings and Childminders
- The Voluntary and Community Sector
- Maternity Services
- Wakefield Public Health
- Wakefield Libraries



# Vision

Ensuring that every child in Wakefield gets the best start in life, from the early days of pregnancy through to the time they join Year 1 of primary school, is the ambition that lies at the heart of this strategy.

Wakefield serves a richly diverse community. To be successful this strategy must reach and improve the life chances of every baby and child in the district, especially those who are vulnerable or have additional educational or health needs.

In Wakefield we have the same aspirations and expectations for every baby, child and young person. We want Wakefield to be a place where young children:-

- Are happy, healthy and safe
- Are ready and eager to learn
- Are thriving in their communities
- Receive mental enrichment from everyone around them
- Are physically active throughout early childhood for at least 3 hours each day
- Are eager to play to experience the awe and wonder of the world around them
- Experience nurturing relationships and environments and develop positive bonds with their care giver
- Are supported to discover the pleasure of reading by sharing stories with the significant adults in their lives
- Have rich and diverse opportunities and life chances
- Develop resilience and a positive self-image
- Are able to communicate their views and know they will be listened to
- Are free from poverty and never go hungry
- Achieve the best possible healthy start in life, promoting a desire to learn and be ready for school.



All “parents to be”, those transitioning to parenthood, babies and children should benefit from the Wakefield Families Together approach. This will provide integrated multi-agency support from the early stages of pregnancy through to early years and childcare provision and services, to share best practice and get the best possible support for young children when they need it. Parents need to know what support is available including self-help, know what to expect from universal services and understand the key milestones of children’s development so that they can access the right support at the right time so that they are able to make the best choices for their children.

Every child has the right to access the best support for their learning and achievement. This includes the right to attend a good or outstanding Early Years childcare setting and school. No child should be disadvantaged by not being able to do so.

For this strategy to succeed it recognises that engagement with families and community and voluntary partners across the sector is vital. It will evolve through wide engagement and consultation to ensure that all voices are heard and that contributions are reflected in the work that we do together.



## Mandation of Children's Services

The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) is central to the delivery of the universal offer of prevention and early intervention services for children and families in England. Healthy Child Programme: Pregnancy and the First 5 Years of Life - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

A large part of the delivery includes health reviews, beginning pre-birth, and the delivery of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) all of which are required by law.

### **This strategy aligns with**

- Children and Young People's Plan -2019-22
- Early Help Strategy - 2018
- SEND Strategy – 2020-24
- Active Wakefield Strategy - 2015
- Local Maternity Strategy (currently being revised alongside the Public Health prevention recommendations and subsequent implementation plan to be delivered over the next 3 years from June 2021-2024)

### **Governance and Accountability**

The Early Years Strategic Board will keep the strategy under review to evaluate progress against the headline performance indicators.

The Children and Young People's Partnership Board which includes representation of key partners, will in turn regularly review the impact of this strategy.



## Context

- Wakefield is the 64th most deprived district out of 317 in England with over a quarter children living in poverty.
- There are around 21,000 children under the age of 5 in the district. Of these around 24% are classified as disadvantaged, around 1% higher than the national average.
- 15% of the population in the district are from black and minority ethnic communities.
- Although life expectancy has been rising across the district, Wakefield ranks poorly compared to national averages. A baby born in Wakefield district today would live on average 78.0 years (male) or 82.0 years (female). For males this is 1.5 years less and 1.1 years less for females than the national average values (in the lowest 20% nationally).
- There is a large inequality gap (9.1 years) between the most and least deprived areas of the district.
- Being overweight can lead to serious long term health complications and illnesses. Over 70% of the adult population in Wakefield have excess weight. In 2019, one in every five children aged 4-5 is carrying excess weight, and one in every 10 are obese. At the age of 10-11, one in five children are obese.
- Smoking in pregnancy is the single biggest risk factor for poor birth outcomes for both mother and baby. Wakefield has made significant progress in reducing the rate of smoking in pregnancy (measured at the time of delivery) in recent years. However, the rate remains much higher than the national average.
- Smoking in the home heightens the risk of a range of health conditions and babies and children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke. Children are also three times more likely to smoke if they grow up in an environment where those around them smoke.
- Breastfeeding saves lives, protecting the health of babies and mums immediately and over time. Breastfeeding rates in Wakefield District are low, they are amongst the lowest rates in the country. Less than a third of mums under 20 start breastfeeding.



- Children growing up around domestic abuse are more likely to suffer health problems, struggle at school, be involved in crime, use drugs and have abusive relationships themselves. There has been an increase in domestic abuse related incidents and crimes recorded by the police and the rate in Wakefield is higher than the national and regional averages.
- Levels of alcohol related harm in the adult population are increasing.
- The number of children living in Wakefield admitted to hospital because of an injury is very high.
- Rates of self-harm in children are increasing, this is a national trend but the increase is higher in Wakefield
- Oral health in Wakefield is poor compared to national averages. Over time things have become worse in the district with children's dental health deteriorating and causing more hospital admissions for extraction of teeth. Each year around 340 children (0-5 years) in Wakefield are admitted to hospital because of tooth decay. This is well above both regional and national averages.
- In 2018 there were 3,327 children who were assessed by children's social care to be in need of services in Wakefield. The rate is higher than the national average. The rate of Children in Care is increasing and is also higher than the national average.
- In 2017/18 there was an increase in family homelessness; 159 households with children or pregnant women were eligible for assistance. The number is relatively small but is on the rise. Evidence shows children experiencing homelessness are more likely to have poor mental health, and have poorer social and language skills.
- More young children in Wakefield have access to good or better Early Years provision than is the case nationally. In Sept 2020 98% of Private, Voluntary or Independent EY settings and EY childminders were rated good or better by Ofsted.



- Of the 110 schools that have Nursery/Reception pupils in the district 91% are good or better for their EYFS.
- A key indicator of how well we are supporting children in the early years of life is the proportion of children who have a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) on entering school at age 5. These children are more likely to achieve at school, stay in school and have better outcomes. In 2019 70.8% of pupils in reception classes achieved GLD. Whilst this was a 2% improvement on the previous year, this is still 1% lower than the national figure
- However, only 55% of disadvantaged children achieved GLD. While this was a 6% improvement from 2018, this group underachieved by 20% compared to all other children nationally (74.4% GLD in 2019) and by 1.3% compared to disadvantaged children nationally.
- A two year old progress check is carried out for all children to review their development in three prime areas. In 2019 in Wakefield 63% boys and 70% girls were judged to be at the expected level or above in all 3 areas of Communication, Language and Literacy. However, the proportion of children accessing funded 2 year old placements achieving these outcomes was much lower (54%) suggesting that the gap for disadvantaged children is already beginning to open up with their non-disadvantaged peers by this age.
- In autumn 2019 83% of families took up their funded 2 year old placement which was above the national average. In September 2020 this fell to 68% (compared to 69% nationally), undoubtedly affected by the pandemic. 99% of 3 and 4 year olds are accessing a universal place compared with 93% nationally.
- In January 2020, 6.95% of Education Care Healthcare plans in Wakefield were for children under 5, which is above the regional figure for Yorkshire and the Humber (4.14%) indicating that in Wakefield children's SEN are identified early enabling appropriate support to be provided.



## Priority Areas

Wakefield Families Together service transformation provides opportunities for shared outcomes, values, principles and flexible working to support the Early Years Strategy and its priorities which are:

- 1.** Create an ambitious and high quality universal offer which ensures every child in Wakefield gets the best possible start in life. Embedding a holistic approach to prevention to improve women's health before, during and after pregnancy.
- 2.** Deliver highly effective early help and intervention for families at the point of need with consistent service delivery.
- 3.** Ensure universal access to good or outstanding Early Years provision and secure high uptake of free entitlement places in childminders, PVI settings and nursery settings in schools.
- 4.** Develop a highly effective pathway for communication and language which provides timely intervention and support to close gaps in children's development and to mitigate the impact of poverty and disadvantage. This will include a particular focus on the delivery of a partner -wide strategy to support children's speech and language development in the early years.
- 5.** Ensure pathways for Early Years workforce development in respect of local safeguarding systems and practice are established with areas of concern particular to under 5s being widely understood across all services who work with children. Resulting in common understanding across all services, aligning children safeguarding workforce development priorities and work streams, establishing common language where pathways of support and escalation are clear, understood and accessible.

Strategic leaders for each priority area have been identified and action plans are being developed. Progress against these plans will be kept under review by the Early Years Strategic Board.



## Headline Indicators by which the success of this strategy will be measured

- Improving planning and preparation for pregnancy
- Supporting healthy weight before and between pregnancy
- Supporting parent to have a smoke free pregnancy
- Reducing stillbirths, neonatal deaths and brain injuries
- More mums breastfeeding
- Fewer under 5s admitted to hospital for injuries or tooth decay
- Reducing the inequality of outcomes for women from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and their babies
- Reduction in incidence of parental conflict
- Reducing maternal morbidity and mortality as per guidance by 2025
- Better support for parental mental health
- More 2, 3, & 4 year olds benefitting from free early education places
- More children achieving the expected level of development in CLL in the 2YO progress check
- More pupils achieving a good level of development at foundation stage to be at or better than our statistical neighbours and the England average
- More pupils from disadvantaged household achieve GLD
- More Children achieve the expected level of development for communication and language, literacy and numeracy (as above) at the end of Foundation Stage
- More schools and settings judged to good or better to be above statistical neighbours and national average
- More practitioners signing up to become “50 Things Champions” within the district
- More parents downloading of the “50 Things” app and completing activities
- Reducing health inequalities for children living in households with the lowest incomes
- Halting the trend in childhood obesity
- Supporting parental substance and alcohol misuse in both adults and children (hidden harm) to access specialist services
- Supporting children and young people with drug and alcohol misuse to access specialist services
- Reduction in specialist and targeted interventions by children’s services
- More children physically active for 3 hours or more each day
- More children accessing Dolly Parton Imagination Library in the nominated wards

## Glossary of terms

**Early Years Strategic Board** - a partnership comprising representatives of Wakefield Council, Health and the community and voluntary sector

**Clinical Commissioning Group** - clinically-led groups which include all of the GP groups in the Wakefield district

**0-19 Partnership** – provides the Healthy Child Programme, a planned series of public health interventions for children and families from birth to age 19. Services provided within the Integrated 0-19 Team include Health Visiting, School Nursing, Breastfeeding Support, Family Nurse Partnership and Children’s Weight Management.

**Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership** - a partnership of all of the relevant statutory, voluntary and community agencies involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in Wakefield.

**Wakefield Families Together** – A vision for children and young people to tell us they are happy, healthy and safe, thriving in communities where families and services work together to help them to achieve their potential and dreams.

**Good Level of Development** - children who achieve at least the expected level at the end of their reception year within communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; literacy; and mathematics achieve a good level of development

**Early Help** - providing support to a child, young person or their family as soon as a problem emerges, usually coordinated through Children First Hubs

**SEND** – Disabled children, young people, and those with special educational needs, and their families will have:

- Partners at all levels working collectively to provide integrated, high quality family centred support;
- Recognition of identified needs, removal of barriers, support for aspiration and social inclusion.
- A focus on building resilience and improving the lived experience for children and young people with SEND and their families.

**Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board** - brings together a range of agencies, including voluntary and community sector organisations, that aim to improve the lives of children and young people in Wakefield

