WAKEFIELD FAMILIES TOGETHER
happy, healthy, safe

Wakefield Best Start in Life Plan 2026–2029

BEST START IN LIFE | FAMILY HUBS

Our Vision

Our Wakefield Families Together Best Start in Life ambitions focus on ensuring families can find the support, information and advice they need, when they need it. We want parents to learn more about their child's development and milestones so they feel confident to support high quality play and learning, so every child can grow, thrive and be ready for their next steps.

This work is part of a wider, joined up approach across Wakefield, brought together through our Early Help, Best Start Early Years, Education & Inclusion and SEND strategies. Together, these plans ensure that families receive the right help, at the right time, in the right place.

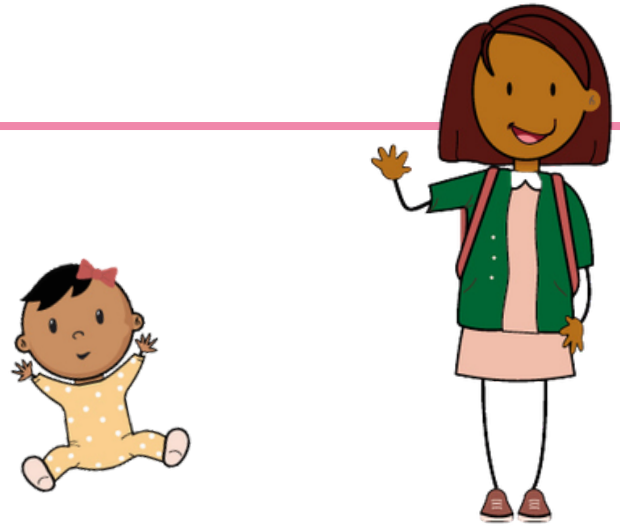
Why This Matters – Our Local Context

Wakefield has many strengths to build on and some challenges we want to improve together. Our annual Wakefield JSNA needs assessment provides a summary of our children's population Annual reports – Wakefield JSNA. A summary of the key early years metrics for Wakefield is data found below.

59th out of 296 LAs Most deprived LAs Out of 296 LAs (2025)	**24,251** 0-5 year old population (2024)	**3507** Babies born (2023)	**787.1 per 1000 (2022)** Premature births +1.1 per 1000 vs England
76.2% New birth visits - 14 days -8.9 per vs England (24/25)	**38.5%** Breastfeeding rate 6-8 weeks -17.1% per 1000 vs England (24/25)	**94%** MMR vaccination at age 2 +5.1% per 1000 vs England (24/25)	**94.5%** Completed 2 - 2.5 yr review +13.6% vs England (24/25)
89.4% Expected development levels - 2 - 2.5 yr review +8.1% vs England	**53.2%** Eligible 2 yr olds benefiting from funded early education -12% vs England	**93.5%** 3&4 yr olds taking up some free education +0.4% vs England	**73.6%** Healthy weight - 4-5 yrs -1.3% vs England (24/25)
97.7% Early Years settings rated good or outstanding +23.7 vs England (23/24)	**126.9 per 10k** Hospital admissions - injury - 0-4 yrs +23.7 vs England (23/24)	**69.6%** Children achieving Good Levels of Development -1.3% vs England (23/24)	**53.2%** Free school meals GLD +1.9% vs England (24/25)

How We Work Together with our Partners, Families, Children & Young People

- Professionals work together through Wakefield Families Together to offer support and services for families. Our partnership includes the NHS (Midwifery, Health Visiting, GPs and Pediatrics), Nurseries, Schools, Voluntary and Community groups, Housing and Benefit services, as well as local Libraries and Museums.
- When families need extra support, we bring professionals together for regular Team Around conversations, so we can understand what is needed and agree the best support package together
- Across our Best Start Family Hubs Family Voice panels help shape services using the “you said, we did” approach. Our Voice and Influence Team works with children and young people making sure their views are captured in developments with direct reporting to the Children & Young People’s Board.
- To make sure families have joined up support, this work links closely with Neighbourhood Health Plans, other local health initiatives, and our NHS partners.



What We Want to Deliver

Ambition	We will achieve this by...	We will know we have made a difference by...
1. Babies and children who need extra support with their development are **identified at the earliest point**.	• Continuing to offer specialist antenatal care to support pregnant women who may need extra help including stopping smoking • Using birth data to deliver a new Best Start Family Hub outreach offer to new parents • Introducing the WellComm tool to help spot children's communication needs early • Sustaining the high number of children who take part in their 2-2.5-year old health and development check • Improving the use of early notifications between Health and Wakefield Council to identify 0-5 year-olds who may have emerging SEND or need extra support at home or in their early years setting • Building on the use of the Team Around the Early Years model to identify the best support for a child and their family • Using local data to plan activities in our Best Start Family Hubs so they meet the needs of the families in each area. • Working together to ensure that services are connected to families experience with seamless transitions between maternity, health visiting, GP and universal health services • Helping more families to know about wider support in their area such as food support, housing and cost of living support.	• Improved outcomes delivered by specialist antenatal care • High percentage of new parents visited by Best Start Family Hubs • High percentage of children attend 2 – 2.5-year-old health check • Quality assuring 0-5-year old early notifications • More children discussed at Team Around the Early Years meetings • Increase in range of services delivered through Best Start Family Hubs.

Ambition	We will achieve this by...	We will know we have made a difference by...
2. Support for families with **Infant Feeding** is easily available, promoting breastfeeding, weaning and healthy eating.	• Ensuring there is strong on-ward support to promote infant feeding with transitions to community-based services • Continuing to promote the support available through Growing Healthy Specialist Infant Feeding Service • Identifying opportunities to increase access to infant feeding peer support delivered by Families and Babies • Increasing delivery of infant feeding, weaning and healthy eating support delivered through Best Start Family Hubs • Promoting understanding of nutrition, active play and healthy weight from infancy • Continuing the work to become a UNICEF breastfeeding friendly District by building on our commitment to expand venues across Wakefield who are breastfeeding friendly.	• Our breastfeeding rate increases in line with comparators • More parents access infant feeding peer support • More parents attending relevant Best Start in Life activities • More venues become breast feeding friendly
3. Support for parents' **emotional wellbeing in pregnancy and early parenthood** is available and meets different levels of need	• Increasing the online resources available through the Growing Healthy 0-19 Service app • Expanding emotional wellbeing support for parents delivered through Best Start Family Hubs • Continuing to signpost parents to support available in Wakefield such as Turning Point Talking Therapies.	• Increase in number of parents accessing Growing Health online resources • Increase in emotional wellbeing support delivered in Best Start Family Hubs • More parents attend emotional wellbeing programmes in the Best Start Family Hubs.

Ambition	We will achieve this by...	We will know we have made a difference by...
4. Support to help families develop positive **parent-infant relationships** is available and it is responsive to different levels of need.	• Promoting the range of programmes which are available for expectant and new parents through our Best Start Family Hubs and Maternity Services • Providing access to enhanced support through our PIR (Parent and Infant Relationships) Team • Providing wider support to develop positive parent infant relationships with a support offer responsive to different levels of need. • Creating and putting into practice a healthy sleep approach based on our safer sleep guidance.	• Increase in attendance at ante-natal programmes • Increase in attendance at Baby & me, Baby Massage & Baby Group • Number of families worked with by PAIR team • Healthy sleep pathway and support launched.
5. Support with **being a parent** is evidence-based and available in person, online and through outreach.	• Promoting the evidence-based programmes for parents offered through our Best Start Family Hubs • Making parents aware of the online programmes we offer • Identifying ways to increase the support and take up of our programmes designed specifically for fathers and ensuring our wider offer is inclusive so fathers feel actively involved in their child's early development • Providing training for a wider range of staff across the system to deliver evidence-based programmes	• More parents attend our programmes for parents (both in person and on line) • Better outcome scores are achieved through programmes for parents • Increase in the number of fathers participating in our programmes • Number of staff trained.

Ambition	We will achieve this by...	We will know we have made a difference by...
6. Families have the support they need to create a positive **Home Learning Environment (HLE)**, helping their babies and children through each stage of their development.	• Offering a book gifting programme that targets families most in need of home learning support • Offering an expanded range of evidence-based programmes that families can access in person, online or through outreach to support learning at home • Delivering support in the right location to best meet community needs • Providing home learning packs to help families build on what they have learned in our evidence based programmes • Introducing a step by step approach identifying speech, language and communication (SLC) needs early with staff across all areas using the same tools. By working more closely and sharing information, we can make sure referrals to specialist services for children under 5 only happen when needed and are based on a clear picture of the child's needs • Further developing the provision of Bookstart and Imagination Library programmes to promote the principles of home learning • Signposting parents to Family Learning and wider adult education support. • Implementing the new Play Strategy led by Arts, Culture & Leisure.	• Number of books provided for eligible families • More families attend HLE programmes • More staff trained to deliver HLE evidence-based programmes • Wider range of HLE programmes offered • Number of HLE packs provided. • Fewer referrals to specialist SLC services due to effective universal and targeted support

Ambition	We will achieve this by…	We will know we have made a difference by…
7. More families are accessing affordable, inclusive and good quality **early years places.**	• Working with Childminders and Nurseries across Wakefield to create more childcare places including for children with additional needs • Delivering training and development to help Childminders and Nurseries better support children with additional needs. • Providing targeted communication to provide more families with up-to-date information about childcare options in Wakefield • Developing campaigns to increase the take-up of free childcare within specific groups of eligible families • Supporting childcare providers across Wakefield to strengthen quality where improvements are needed	• More families are benefiting from universal free childcare through increase in places • Rate of 2-year-old children benefiting from free childcare increases in line with comparator rates • Rate 3-&-4-year-olds benefiting from free childcare increases in line with comparator rates.
8. More children are achieving **Good Levels of Development (GLD)**	• Monitoring good levels of development rates across neighbourhoods in Wakefield and where rates are lower than the average, target support where it is needed. This will include an outreach offer to parents and a support offer to settings.This is where we will be **testing and scaling** our partnership approach • Offering key child-development activities like PEEP Talk in Stay and Play, and Bookstart across Best Start Family Hubs, Libraries and community spaces to enhance language development • Supporting Childcare Providers to identify childrens' needs as early as possible • Promoting timely access to the SEND graduated pathway when this is needed • Work alongside Stronger Practice Hubs, RISE advisers, English and Maths Hubs and setting leads (including Schools and Child Minders) to target support where it is most needed.	• Rate of children achieving GLD increases steadily, working towards the target of 77.7% by March 2028 • Rate of children with free school meals achieving GLD increases steadily, working towards the target of 58.9% by March 2028.

Ambition	We will achieve this by...	We will know we have made a difference by...
9. An **enhanced outreach and digital Best Start offer** helps families to access information at a time and place that suits them best	• Offering more outreach sessions in schools and community spaces so it is easier for families to join in • Increasing the number of parents who complete our online Best Start Family Hub programmes • Continuing to further develop our Wakefield Families Together website which showcases our Best Start Family Hub activity • Using social media to promote what is available for families in Wakefield with targeted campaigns to reach groups of families and communities • Using simple technology, like text reminders and QR codes on leaflets and posters, to help families stay informed and connected	• Increase in number of outreach sessions delivered • Higher numbers of parents complete online programmes • More families access Best Start in Life content via social media.

How We Will Measure Success

- **Experience**: gathering the views of family and children via panels and surveys.Collecting feedback from professionals through reviews and evaluations.
- **Workforce**: monitor attendance at training, staff retention and how well our health and education teams work together.
- **Delivery and Data Performance:** quarterly performance and improvement cycles monitored with reporting to the Best Start Oversight Group, Children & Young People's Directorate Management Team and the Department of Education.

This plan is our shared commitment to action and change. Together, we will create a Wakefield where all babies, children and families can thrive.