



Barnsley's Best Start in Life Plan

Our local plan to give every child the best start in life

2026 - 2028

Executive Summary

Every child should have the opportunity to grow, play, learn and thrive.

As part of our Great Childhoods Ambition, Barnsley Council and its partners are committed to ensuring that every child has this opportunity from the very beginning of life. Our plan sets out our collaborative vision for early childhood development working with partners from across the children and young people's partnership, aligned with the UK government's 'Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life' strategy to enable us to achieve our statutory target in relation to children achieving good levels of development in reception. By prioritising early intervention, partnership working, and measurable outcomes for children aged 0-5, underpinned by our local practice model – Stronger Together - Barnsley aims to build a prosperous future for all its children.

This plan is grounded in the statutory duties set out in the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017). It aligns with Barnsley's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (2024–26) and the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026). The plan supports Barnsley's approach to safeguarding by promoting early help, interagency cooperation, and a whole-system commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people and their families.¹



**Barnsley
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This plan has been coproduced with a range of partner agencies across early years services who ensure appropriate provision and smooth transitions; local authority teams who provide targeted support and fulfil statutory duties; health professionals who assess needs and offer specialist advice; community and voluntary sector organisations that provide early help and peer support; service providers who deliver safe, personalised services and parent and carer panels who share lived experience. Their views have been used to shape our local plan, identifying the key priorities that we will work together on jointly to achieve.

Barnsley faces both unique opportunities and ongoing challenges in supporting its youngest residents. Persistent inequalities remain, with a significant proportion of children living below the poverty line and marked variations in health, education, and wellbeing outcomes. Our local approach is shaped by data and evidence, ensuring that targeted support addresses these disparities and promotes fairness for all families.

By building on our existing network of Family Hubs, championing and supporting our early years services and engaging with partners across sectors, we are determined to create an environment where every child can grow, play, learn and thrive, regardless of their background or circumstances.

The ongoing SEND white paper and Families First reforms present a significant opportunity for Barnsley to further enhance support for children with special educational needs and disabilities and those at risk of experiencing harm, as well as their families. By embracing these reforms and embedding them within our Best Start in Life Local offer the local system can ensure more equitable access to tailored services, promote early identification and intervention, and foster a more inclusive environment across education, health, and social care. This collaborative approach aims to remove barriers and improve outcomes.

Introduction

Nationally, the government's Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life strategy calls for coordinated action to support children in their earliest years—recognising that early experiences shape lifelong outcomes.

The early years of a child's life are when their brain develops the fastest. During the first year alone, more than a million new brain connections form every second. What happens during this time – at home, in early education and in the community – has long lasting impacts, setting the foundations for growth, learning, and emotional and physical development. Locally, this approach is underpinned by delivery of the revised Healthy Child Programme, which provides the evidence based universal and targeted framework for prevention, early identification, and support from pregnancy through early childhood. Additionally, the importance of a child's first 1001 days are acknowledged in the Healthy Life Expectancy strategy, and the Health and Wellbeing board Strategy.^{2,3}

Our ambitions within this plan go hand in hand with the Children's Social Care and SEND Reforms and the move to a Neighbourhood Health Service set out in the Government's 10 Year Health Plan, and the three radical shifts - hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention.

Helping families in the early years can make a huge difference, recognising the crucial role parents and carers play as their children's first educators and responsive carers. Parents and carers need information and advice about child development to help their children to thrive. This includes access to pregnancy and early child health services, parenting support and baby and toddler classes, and

good quality early education and childcare. Improving education and health go hand in hand – healthier children are better able to learn and children who achieve well in education go on to live healthier lives.

To enable access to early support The Government's Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life strategy aims to roll out Family Hubs across all local authorities by 2028 and expand early childhood and family services through a coordinated, one-stop shop approach. Family Hubs provide a place-based, integrated model of family support, bringing together health, education, childcare, and wider community services.

Barnsley has a strong platform to build upon with an existing network of six family hubs operating across the local authority area offering support for families from conception through to 19 or 25 years with (SEND). Our local family hubs provide a wealth of evidenced based information, advice and support including in relation to infant feeding, perinatal mental health, parent infant relationships, early language development, home learning environment and parent support programmes in line with The Department for Education's Family Hub and Start for Life programme Guidance 2025/2026.⁴



In addition to improving access and coordination of early childhood and family services, the national strategy articulates a clear vision for raising the quality of early years education across the country. This is an ambition that is strongly matched here in Barnsley. We fully recognise the importance of supporting the development and retention of a highly skilled early years workforce, promoting evidence-based curriculum frameworks, and ensuring that all children—regardless of background—benefit from stimulating, safe, and inclusive learning environments. By prioritizing continuous improvement, professional development, and robust standards, our local plan aims to give every child the best foundation for future learning, social development, and lifelong success.

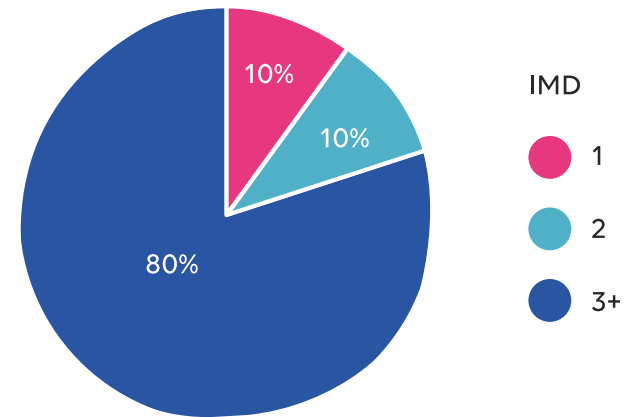
Despite strong practice across many settings, we recognise not all children and young people in Barnsley—including those with SEND—are currently reaching their full potential. Some continue to face barriers to learning, participation and progress, and require earlier, more coordinated support. Through the BSIL plan, Barnsley will strengthen targeted and outreach provision by identifying need sooner, deploying specialist expertise directly into schools and early years settings, and offering tailored intervention to prevent needs from escalating. Enhanced BSIL outreach and in reach support will help build confidence and capacity across the system, ensuring children with emerging or identified SEND receive timely, effective help. This aligned offer aims to reduce inequalities, improve inclusion and ensure every child in Barnsley can engage, learn and thrive.

Barnsley has unique opportunities and challenges in supporting its youngest residents. Local data reveals persistent inequalities, with some families experiencing barriers to health, education, and wellbeing.

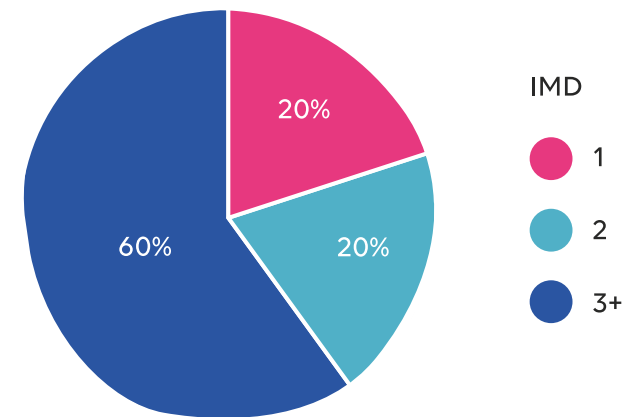
5.8% of Barnsley residents are children aged under 5 years old. This equates to 12,679 children under 5 out of a total population of 251,770.

Barnsley is ranked 40/153 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (more deprived) and around a third of children live below the poverty line; significant FSM eligibility.⁵

IMD decile deprivation (United Kingdom)



IMD decile distribution (Barnsley)



Local Authority Ranking out of 296, where 1 is most deprived	Barnsley
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Rank	40
Income Rank	48
Employment Rank	23
Education, skills and training Rank	36
Health deprivation and disability Rank	8
Crime Rank	32
Barriers to Housing and Services	240
Living Environment Rank	201
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index	48
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People	58

Barnsley recorded 2,449 births in 2024 with a birth rate of 9.8 per 1,000 people. This places Barnsley 119th out of 374 UK municipalities. Despite overall population growth, the natural balance was negative, with 2,739 deaths exceeding births.⁶

Perinatal Mortality Rate 2023

According to this latest available data, based on mothers' postcode of residence at the time of birth, Barnsley's perinatal mortality rate is 5.81 per 1,000 births. This is higher than the UK average of 5.04.

The average Healthy Life Expectancy for women in Barnsley is 52.6 years, and for men it is 52.8 years. These are nearly 10 years lower than the UK average. In Barnsley, total life expectancy is 80.5 years for women and 76.5 years for men. Therefore, people in Barnsley live for shorter than average and get sicker earlier.

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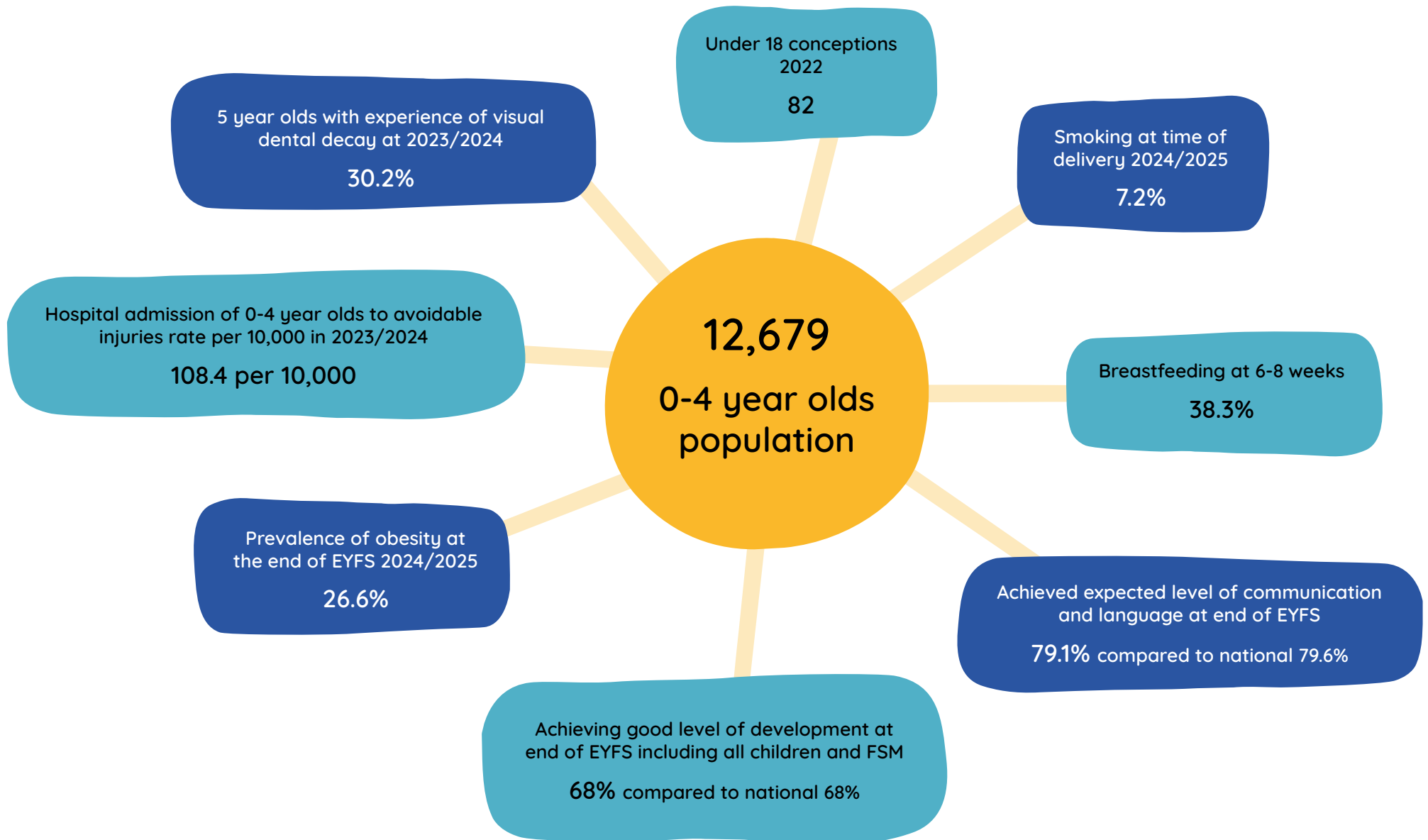


Our Best Start in Life System

Our Best Start in Life system brings together parents, carers and all those who have a role in supporting families in Barnsley, including Health, Early Education, Family Services, Schools, voluntary, community and faith organisations, civil society and business.



Where are we now?



% of 2-2.5 year olds showing typical development

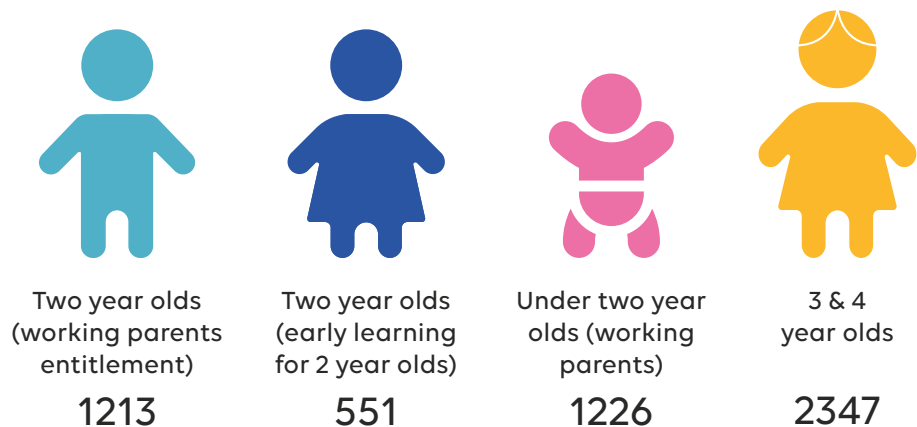
Development	Expected Level	Additional Support required
Speaking	76%	24%
Listening Attention	85%	15%
Understanding	87%	13%
Emotions	86%	14%
Sense of self	88%	12%
Relationships	87%	13%
Gross Motor Skills	93%	7%
Fine Motor Skills	93%	7%

In Barnsley, ensuring all children have the Best Start in Life (BSIL) is central to our ambition to reduce inequalities and improve lifelong outcomes. By supporting children to achieve good levels of development by the end of reception year we create a strong foundation upon which to build and achieve lifelong positive outcomes. The 12 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that make up the Good Level of Development (GLD) benchmark provide a clear and nationally recognised measure of children's readiness for school.

These goals sit at the heart of Barnsley's BSIL plan, and help guide how we design, target, and deliver support for children and families across the borough.

Children are assessed as achieving a Good Level of Development when they meet the expected standards across the prime areas of learning—Communication and Language, Personal, Social & Emotional Development, and Physical Development—and the specific areas of Literacy and Mathematics.

Number of children benefitting from funded early years education Autumn term 2025:



12 Development Goals for Children

Children's development is assessed at the end of reception year by their teacher through the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile assessment. To meet a Good Level of Development children must meet all 12 development goals.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development



Self-Regulation

Children understand their own and others' feelings, regulate behaviour, and stay focused on tasks.

Managing Self

Children show independence in personal needs such as dressing and hygiene, and show confidence when trying new activities.

Building Relationships

Children form positive relationships, work cooperatively, and show sensitivity to others' needs.

Communication and Language



Listening, Attention and Understanding

Children listen attentively, respond appropriately to what they hear, ask questions to clarify understanding, and hold conversations in groups or individually.

Speaking

Children participate in discussions, express ideas clearly, use newly introduced vocabulary, and communicate in full sentences.

Physical Development



Gross Motor Skills

Children move confidently in various ways, demonstrating strength, balance, and coordination.

Fine Motor Skills

Children handle small tools with precision, hold a pencil with a tripod grip, and show accuracy in drawing and writing.



Literacy

Comprehension

Children understand stories, anticipate events, and express understanding through play and discussion.

Word Reading

Children blend sounds into words, read simple sentences, and recognise common exception words.

Writing

Children write simple sentences that can be read by others, using phonics to spell words accurately.



Mathematics

Number

Children work with numbers to 10, understand composition of numbers, and solve simple addition and subtraction problems.

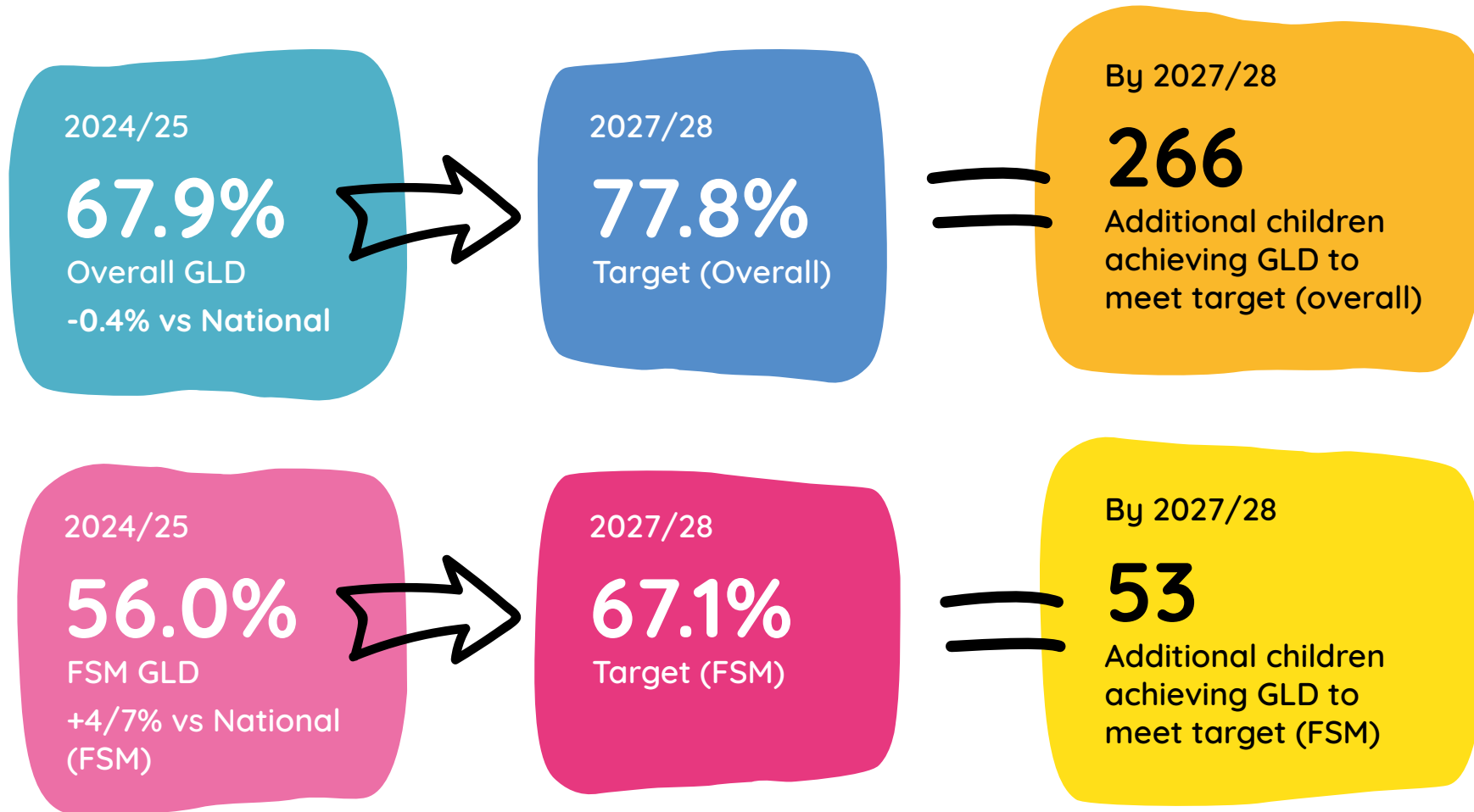
Numerical Patterns

Children recognise and create patterns, compare quantities, and verbally count beyond 20.

These goals ensure that children in Barnsley develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to thrive at school and beyond.



The government has set an ambitious statutory target for each local authority in relation to children achieving Good Levels of Development in reception. For Barnsley this means:



This plan responds to that call, aligning local ambitions with national policy and tailoring interventions to Barnsley's distinctive context.⁷

Vision and Ambitions for Barnsley

Our vision is for Barnsley to be a place where every child has the opportunity to grow, play, learn and thrive, regardless of background or circumstance.

By 2028, we aim for:

- ✓ All children to be ready to learn and thrive at school entry
- ✓ Reduction in early childhood health and development inequalities.
- ✓ Babies and young children to have a strong bond with a caring adult, supporting their progress in reaching development milestones
- ✓ Empowered families and communities who actively support children's growth
- ✓ All children achieve good levels of development in reception



Six Pillars Shaping Local Delivery



1. Access

We will ensure that every family—regardless of background, circumstance, or level of need, can easily access the support they require at the earliest opportunity.

This includes creating clear, consistent, and welcoming access points across the Family Hub network, supported by effective communication that helps families understand what is available and how to engage. Our approach combines digital information, universal messaging, and targeted outreach so that families who may experience barriers such as poverty, disability, language differences, or social isolation, are proactively reached. Services will be delivered in inclusive, accessible environments that promote belonging and confidence, ensuring that no family feels excluded from the support they need.



2. Connection

We will deliver a highly connected system where multi-agency partners collaborate seamlessly to meet the needs of babies, children, and families.

This includes shared governance, co-location of services, and integrated pathways that ensure smooth transitions and minimise duplication. Through preventative pathways and shared information systems, families will experience timely, coordinated support from the right practitioners at the right moment. Our focus on connection ensures that Health, Early Education, Family Services, Schools, voluntary, community and faith organisations, civil society and business partners work together as one system, aligned around shared outcomes and collective responsibility for early intervention and prevention. Barnsley's BSIL Local Area partnership will expand its collaborative work by strengthening ties with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), recognising the vital role these organisations play in early support, community resilience, and family engagement. We will actively support VCS partners through co-delivery opportunities, shared training, and integrated pathways that make it easier for families to access joined-up services across all our priorities.



3. Relationships

Strong, trusting, compassionate relationships sit at the heart of our Best Start in Life offer.

Practitioners will work in relational, strengths-based ways that recognise the importance of family dynamics, culture, lived experience, and whole-family needs underpinned by our local relational practice model -Stronger Together. We will prioritise continuity of support so families can build meaningful, consistent relationships with key practitioners. These relationships focus on understanding family strengths, aspirations, and goals, enabling personalised support that promotes resilience, emotional wellbeing, and confident parenting. Our approach ensures that families feel heard, respected, and supported throughout their journey, reducing the need to retell their story and building trust in the local system.



4. Co-production

Families will be recognised as experts in their own lives and involved as equal partners in shaping services, strategies, and delivery.

We will use co-production to design pathways, programmes, Family Hub activities, and communication in ways that genuinely reflect local lived experiences. This includes engaging parents and carers through parent and carer panels, surveys, workshops, outreach, and targeted engagement with communities whose voices are historically underrepresented. Co-production will be embedded in governance, evaluation, and continuous improvement cycles, ensuring families influence service priorities, design, delivery, and review. Through this pillar, the system becomes more responsive, inclusive, and accountable to the families it serves.



5. Workforce Investment

A skilled, confident, and well-supported workforce is fundamental to delivering high-quality early help and early years support.

We will invest in training, professional development, reflective supervision, and staff wellbeing to ensure practitioners have the knowledge and confidence to work relationally, holistically, and effectively with families. Workforce development will focus on embedding training into practice, ensuring staff are supported to utilise and practise their new learning, strengthening expertise in early childhood development, SEND, infant mental health, early communication, trauma-informed practice, safeguarding, and culturally competent practice. Cross-agency training and shared learning will promote consistency and strengthen a unified Best Start in Life culture. By prioritising workforce stability, role clarity, and leadership development, we will build a resilient workforce equipped to deliver improved outcomes for babies, young children, and families.



6. Innovation

We will work collaboratively as partners to drive innovation by harnessing technology and embracing new ways of working that positively impact our ambitions for Barnsley's children and families.

Through a test, learn, and grow approach, we will pilot digital solutions, explore data-driven insights, and develop agile service models that respond swiftly to emerging needs. By sharing learning from successful initiatives and adapting our practices accordingly, we will foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that technological advancements and innovative working methods are embedded across all aspects of service delivery. This commitment to partnership and experimentation will help us to reach more families, streamline access to support, and create scalable solutions that make a tangible difference to outcomes for babies, young children, and their families. We will aim to embed clear measures of social value and community impact across BSIL programmes. This includes capturing the wider benefits delivered through volunteering, community-led provision, early intervention outcomes, and the economic and wellbeing impact of strengthened local partnerships.

Our Three Priority Areas

1. Support for Families



Why this priority matters:

Strong families provide children with the security and resilience they need. Early, practical support prevents difficulties escalating and reduces inequalities. Ensuring every child can thrive begins with the foundations laid in the earliest days of life, when the environments and relationships a child experiences have a profound impact on their development now and across their future. Promoting positive and nurturing relationships is essential to ensure babies and young children receive the responsive care, connections, and attachments they need to thrive. Strong and secure parent infant attachments is also important in enhancing parental wellbeing, resilience, and confidence, to ensure secure attachments are sustained and consistent over time.

Families are central to children's wellbeing, and ensuring they receive early, accessible, and practical support is essential for preventing needs from escalating and for building long-term resilience. Our partnership will strengthen early identification across services so that families receive timely early help, while also ensuring that parenting support, practical assistance, and targeted interventions are consistently available through Family Hubs and linked services. We are committed to developing integrated pathways across health, early years, SEND, social care, and Family Hubs so that support feels joined-up, coherent, and easy to navigate for all families. Community-based and peer-led support are proven to reduce isolation and build stronger networks of resilience.

What we will do together:

Recognising the vital role of parents, partners and their families, we will involve them as equal caregivers across all aspects of family support, ensuring that services are accessible, welcoming, and responsive to their needs. Families will also shape this priority directly; we will co-produce early help pathways, Family Hub activity, and service development with parents and carers so that support reflects lived experience and community priorities providing a strong evidence based parent support offer. Through the Healthy Child Programme, families will receive consistent early identification, anticipatory guidance, and timely support, ensuring that emerging needs are addressed before they escalate. We will utilise government funding to ensure families have access to a trained SEND professional within our family hubs to support early identification of need and access to support. We will encourage and empower peer support and community initiatives. We will actively target those children we identify as at risk of not reaching good levels of development offering interventions targeted to their needs.

Delivering this ambition requires a strong and confident workforce, and we will continue to invest in relational, whole-family practice and evidence-based training across our workforce to ensure high-quality support for every family.

How we will know we have made a difference:

We expect to see increased engagement with Family Hubs, fewer families reaching crisis or requiring specialist support, and greater participation in evidence-based parent support programmes as this work progresses. A higher number of Early Help Assessments with outcome of needs met indicating that needs are met at the earliest opportunity. A higher number of dads and partners and seldom heard groups will be actively involved in services, and family feedback will reflect improved accessibility, coordination, and usefulness. Co-production will be clearly visible in-service improvements and decision-making across the best start in life system.





2. Healthy Babies

Why this priority matters:

The first 1,001 days shape lifelong health, emotional wellbeing, and development. Early support reduces inequalities and promotes secure attachments. Babies thrive when parents receive consistent emotional, practical, and health support during the antenatal period and early parenthood. To achieve this, we will strengthen both universal and targeted health services, ensuring that families experience a smoother and more consistent journey across maternity, health visiting, and early years provision. Reducing inequalities remains a core ambition, and we will therefore provide additional support to families experiencing disadvantage or barriers to engaging with services.

What we will do together:

Supporting healthy parent–infant relationships is central to this priority. We will strengthen perinatal mental health pathways, enhance relationship-based support, and promote breastfeeding, infant feeding, and early nutrition as key components of early health. We will work with partners across health services to explore the delivery of neighbourhood health services across our network of family hubs. Parents and carers will be actively encouraged and supported to participate fully throughout the antenatal period and early parenting, recognising the critical role they play in infant development and family wellbeing. Families will also collaborate on our perinatal mental health and infant feeding pathways to ensure they meet real needs and reflect diverse experiences. We will actively target our most vulnerable babies and expectant parents supporting them to engage in family support services at the very earliest opportunity. Workforce investment is essential to delivering our ambitions, and we will continue to develop skilled practitioners across perinatal mental health, parent infant relationships, infant feeding, and early years health.

How we will know we have made a difference:

We will measure progress through improvements in early years and Healthy Child Programme health outcomes, reductions in inequalities, and increased engagement with maternity and health visiting services. Higher breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates, combined with increased participation from parents and their families, will demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach. Parent feedback and visible co-production influence will further evidence the difference made through this priority.



3. Early Learning

Why this priority matters:

Early learning shapes children's communication, cognition, and achieving a good level of development ready for school. High-quality provision and early identification reduce inequalities. Early learning lays the foundation for children's long-term outcomes, with speech, language, communication, and social development emerging rapidly in the first years of life. Early learning directly contributes to long-term social mobility, with strong evidence showing that high-quality early years provision reduces later reliance on social care and increases educational attainment. This priority also aligns with Barnsley's BSIL objective of reducing inequalities between communities by ensuring all children have access to consistent, high quality early developmental support.

What we will do together:

To support strong developmental progress, we will establish Family Hubs as a trusted front door for early learning support, ensuring that families can easily access high-quality information, play opportunities, and early communication activities to support them in providing an enriching home learning environment, positioning parents and carers as strong first educators. Strengthening the home learning environment will be a central focus, with support provided for parents to build early language and communication skills through play everyday interactions.

Healthy Child Programme developmental reviews, including the 2–2½ year integrated review, will support early identification of speech, language, communication, and developmental needs, strengthening pathways into early learning and SEND support. We will work with early years providers and schools to continue growth in the early years education and childcare sector to ensure sufficiency of places

and enable choice of providers in areas that have lower childcare ratios. This will include delivering the governments school based nurseries ambitions and encouraging new approach's to providing flexible early education and childcare places. We will continue to drive greater take-up of early years entitlements and work closely with early years providers to strive towards continuous quality improvement across all settings to maintain the high level of good quality childcare across Barnsley. By continuing to strengthen early identification and SEND pathways in the early years we will ensure that emerging needs are recognised and supported quickly, reducing the risk of developmental gaps widening over time.

Parents, carers and their families will be encouraged to participate actively in early learning activities, recognising the difference their involvement makes to children's confidence, language, and learning. Co-production with families will shape early learning programmes, transition arrangements, and locally tailored resources, ensuring that support is meaningful and accessible.

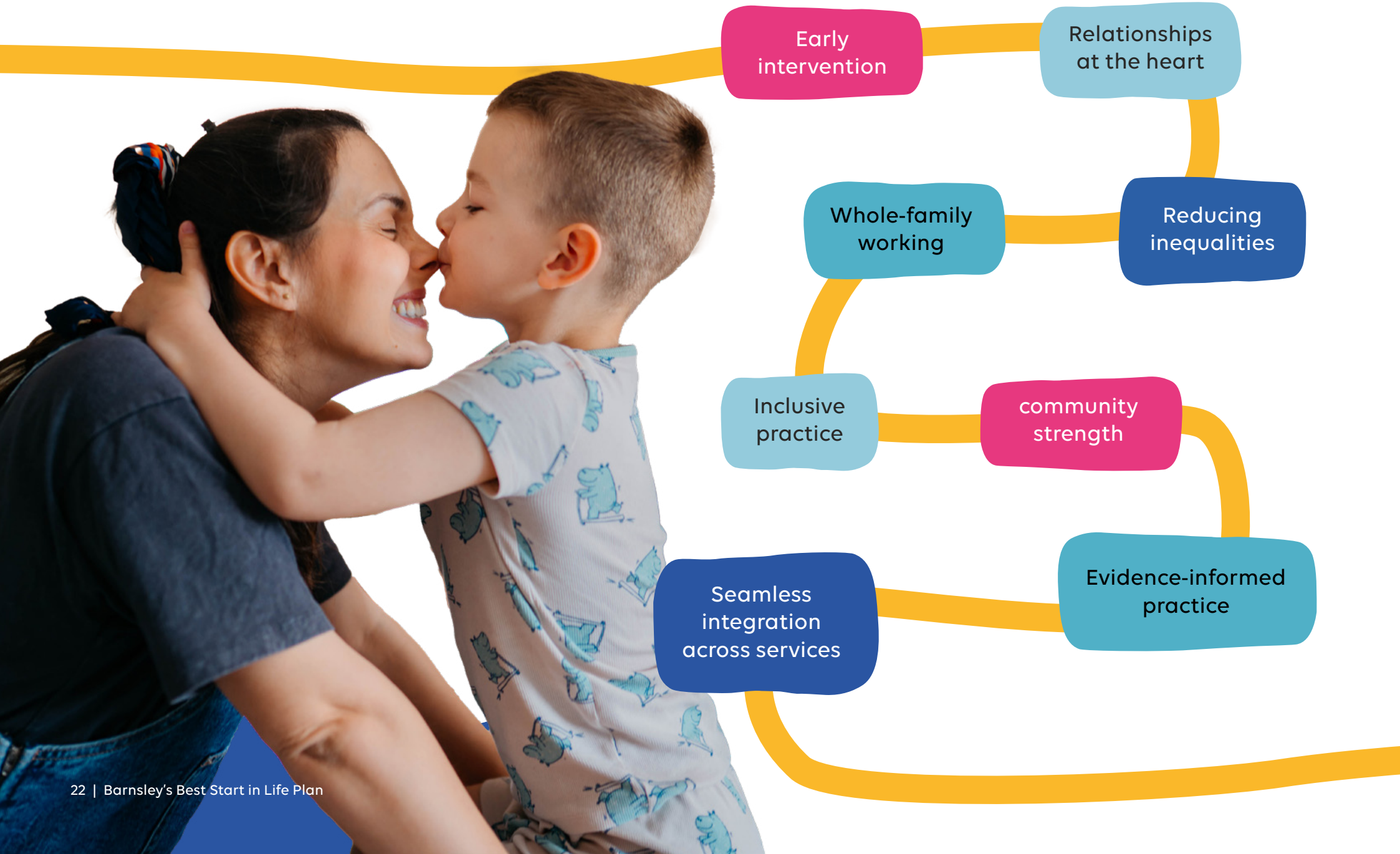
Workforce development will remain a priority, with continued investment in evidence-based interventions, SEND, early language, and high-quality pedagogy. We will strengthen this priority by embedding early learning commitments by ensuring alignment with strategic social impact goals. This will include formal collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to expand outreach, co-deliver early learning programmes, and enhance support for families in underserved communities. We will continue to collaborate between health, early years education, and family support services to ensure emerging needs are identified as early as possible and responded effectively. We know that some children are not achieving and will target programmes to engage them and their, supporting them to access early years education help to close developmental gaps.

How we will know we have made a difference:

We will know this priority is making a difference when more families are accessing early learning activities, children's communication at age two improves, and take-up of early years entitlements increases. Improvements in school readiness, including stronger Good Levels of Development outcomes, will further demonstrate the impact of early learning initiatives. Higher involvement from parents and clear evidence of co-production in early education pathways will signal that our approach is inclusive, collaborative, and effective. We will track participation rates, developmental outcomes, and parental engagement across localities to identify where interventions are most effective. Our outcomes dashboard will be developed further to support continuous improvement, enabling us to monitor reductions in inequalities and ensure the BSIL plan is delivering measurable Early Learning, Good levels of development and social impact across Barnsley.



Golden Threads



Strategic Actions

- Develop a detailed delivery plan that translates the strategic priorities into clear, measurable actions. This will include defined timescales, responsible leads, and outcome measures to track progress and ensure accountability across the system for improving outcomes.
- Build on our existing universal and targeted best start in life services, including parenting support programmes, home learning interventions and health services with a focus on continuity of care and grounding these in a solid evidence base.
- BSIL and Healthy Babies Implementation group to drive forward the implementation of agreed actions and monitor outcomes to ensure sustained delivery and improvement with oversight from the Starting Well Delivery Group.
- Continue to grow and develop high-quality childcare and nursery provision, prioritising areas of greatest need.
- Continue to develop and strengthen integrated pathways of support that enable early identification of need and timely access to support with family hubs
- Maximise opportunities to further strengthen links between health, education, and social care through joint training and shared data systems and intelligence sharing, fostering collaborative working.
- Strengthening ties with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), recognising the vital role these organisations play in early support, community resilience, and family engagement.
- Developing strong linkages and collaboration to deliver neighbourhood health services
- Launch public awareness campaigns on the importance of early childhood development.
- Support community-led initiatives and peer networks for families.
- Promote and embed innovative practice across early years services, encouraging the use of new technologies, test, learn and grow initiatives, and evidence-informed approaches.
- Strengthen partnerships with local businesses to enhance social value, create opportunities for families, and support workforce development across Barnsley.
- Use test and learn approaches to specific areas of work trialling ideas on a small scale, gathering evidence, and refining quickly based on what works to help us make informed decisions, reduce risk, and improve solutions before wider rollout and scalability.
- Use our data and intelligence to identify and actively target children who are not achieving and at risk of low levels of development.
- Apply and utilise the Best Start in Life and Healthy Babies grant funding to design, deliver and embed services that support achievement of the plan's strategic objectives to improve outcomes that meet the needs of Barnsley's children and families.

Partnership and Community Engagement

Delivering this ambitious plan requires genuine partnership between Health, Early Education, Family Services, Schools, voluntary, community and faith organisations, civil society and business. We will:

- Increase membership of the Best Start In Life and Healthy Babies Implementation group to oversee delivery and foster collaboration. The group will report directly to the Starting Well and Growing Well Boards
- Involve parents, carers, and children in shaping services and evaluating impact
- Work closely with Health, Early Education, Family Services, Schools, voluntary, community and faith organisations, civil society and business
- Champion co-production and shared leadership at every stage

Measuring Success

Progress will be tracked using clear, locally relevant key performance indicators, such as:

- Good Levels of Development at Reception, including disadvantaged children
- Percentage of children showing typical development in communication and language skills at age 2 – 2.5
- Delivery and uptake of Healthy Child Programme universal contacts and developmental reviews
- Improvements in early years health outcomes (e.g., immunisations, obesity, dental health)
- Access and uptake of early years and family support services
- Access and uptake of early years entitlements
- Feedback from families and frontline practitioners



Conclusion

Our Local Best Start in Life Plan provides an opportunity to impact on a number of cross cutting areas such as SEND reform, Families First welfare reforms and the ambition to improve healthy life expectancy and commitment to addressing health equity.

This focus, responding to national strategy and advancing local priorities such as health equity, inclusive services and early identification and intervention positions Barnsley to deliver a transformative, inclusive model for children and families. This alignment not only advances the borough's vision for children and young people to meet their full potential and experience a great childhood in strong families and communities, but also supports the broader goal of cultivating the healthiest generation in Barnsley.

By leveraging DfE funding and adhering to established national guidance, drawing on strong evidence bases, Barnsley is well-positioned to implement a comprehensive, place-based model for children and family services. Prioritising early identification, preventative measures, and multi-agency collaboration enables the borough to secure sustainable, locally-led improvements.

Barnsley will use this plan as the foundation for a detailed delivery plan that sets out clear actions, timescales and measurable outcomes. This will enable partners to track progress, drive accountability, and ensure changes are delivered consistently across the system.

By aligning BSIL activity with defined milestones and indicators, Barnsley will monitor impact, refine practice and ensure continuous improvement for children and young people.

Barnsley stands at a pivotal moment. By embracing an ambitious, collaborative approach, we can transform outcomes for our youngest residents: let us work together to give every child the best possible start in life, laying the foundations for Barnsley for generations to come by enabling our youngest residents to grow, play, learn and thrive.



Endnotes

- 1 Children's Act 1989 (amended 2024)
- 2 <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/o5qczsu5/health-and-wellbeing-board-strategy.pdf>
- 3 Healthy Child Programme guidance 2026
- 4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67cacd6ba175f08d198d80c1/Family_Hubs_and_Start_for_Life_programme_guide_2025-26.pdf
- 5 2024 data, Office for National Standers
- 6 ONS data – Urbistat
- 7 [Nesta.org.uk/BSIL](https://www.nesta.org.uk/BSIL)

 **BEST
START
IN LIFE**

