

North Somerset Early Years and Childcare Strategy

Supporting each child's journey

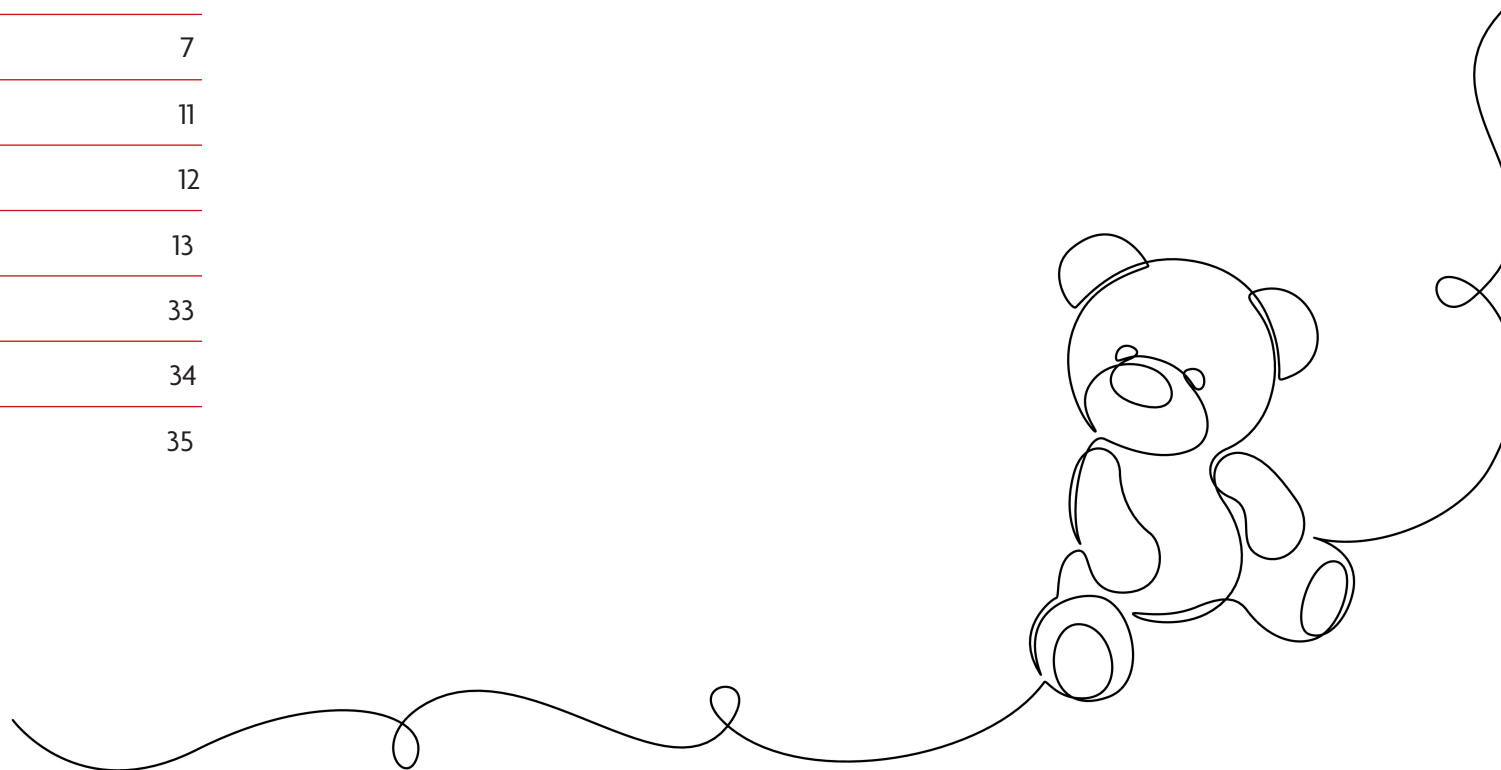
aged 0-5 years in North Somerset

September 2023 – July 2026



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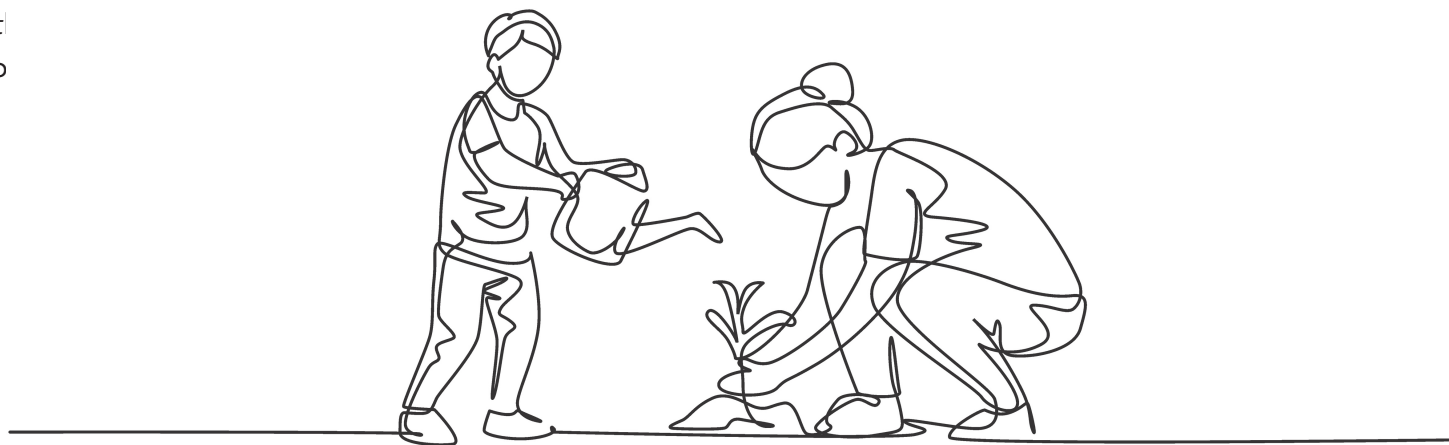
Our Vision

Create a deep sense of belonging for every child that is built upon feeling understood, nurtured, accepted, and respected. We will meet children's needs through promoting quality Continuous Professional Development and supporting early years educators to be the best they can be.

Across the early years sector, a robust knowledge of child development, trauma-informed practice and nurture theory will underpin this strategy

We will build on the strengths of our early years workforce and help staff to be more confident and resilient by equipping them with the skills and understanding they need to support the complex needs of all children. We will grow the status of the early years workforce in line with the importance of its work, and establish strong

partnerships with all children's agencies so that there is a true sense of common purpose, shared responsibility, visibility, and active participation from all partners. This will be achieved through bringing professionals together more effectively to work holistically with children and families.



Introduction

In North Somerset, we have the same aspirations and expectations for every child and young person. We want them to make good progress in their development and learning from birth, to achieve well, and to have the best opportunities in life as they become young adults.

Every child has the right to go to a good or outstanding early years education and childcare setting, and to have access to the best support for their learning and achievement. They should also benefit from all providers working in partnership with each other to share best practice as they continue to improve together.

People who work with our youngest children, supporting and inspiring their early development and learning, sit at the heart of this strategy. The commitment, energy, passion, and professionalism of the early years workforce across North Somerset is striking. Whether it is in a day nursery, a pre-school, school nursery class, or a childminding setting, there is the same dedication to making children's first years of life matter - creating physical and emotional learning environments that are safe, nurturing, inspiring, and joyful.

Almost all children now experience some formal early childhood education and care well before they start school. This is set to increase with the expansion of free childcare support proposed by central government. The early years of a child's life are vitally important as this is a time during which lived experience will determine the course of their life. A time during which foundations are created that support each child's journey toward becoming a responsible adult. It is therefore a critical time to provide effective support to children and families.

The Field Report demonstrates the overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most readily predicted by their development in the first five years of life. As a result, there is a critical window before the age of five where interventions will have the greatest impact.

We also know that gaps in attainment can be seen even before the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is essential that we support all children in these first few years to build the foundational skills which will support their later learning and development.

We are delighted to introduce North Somerset Council's Early Years Strategy 2023-2026. Our ambition is that all children get the best possible start in life. This can only be achieved if we provide the most effective, co-ordinated support to children and their families so that they feel safe, have access to high quality learning environments, have good health, and are supported to achieve their full potential.

No child should be disadvantaged by not being able to attend a high-quality early years setting or school.

This Strategic Plan continues to build on the significant success in the early years sector in North Somerset.

Foreword

I am extremely proud of the good outcomes achieved for our pre-school aged children in North Somerset.

This is in no small part due to the fantastic work of early years providers, who ensure that children have the best start in life, recognising the lasting impact this has on health outcomes and life chances.

However, we need to recognise of the importance of this work across the wider Local Authority, which is something this strategy aims to support and embed.

It is so important that children thrive and achieve the very best that they can at all stages of their development and the work that is carried out in those early years of life is invaluable. It is a crucial period for brain development, impacting a child's social and emotional resilience in later life, and for ensuring children start school with an ongoing

thirst and enthusiasm for learning. In their earliest years of life children are deeply curious and inquisitive learners and it is our aim to nurture all characteristics of effective learning, identifying, and supporting barriers to this at the earliest opportunity and working to counter the effects of disadvantage wherever possible.

There have been serious consequences because of the disruption to services during the Covid pandemic. The 'Babies in Lockdown' Survey of over 5,000 parents of 0 to two-year-old found nine out of ten parents and carers experienced higher levels of anxiety during lockdown. 25% reported concern about their relationship with their baby. This makes the work of this strategy more important than ever.

Through the measures set out in this strategy, we want to see families that are better enabled to be the best they can be. This strategy will be delivered through working closely with our early

years partner agencies, because we know that by working effectively together, we can ensure that every child in their early years is given the best chance to thrive.

Catherine

Councillor Catherine Gibbons (She/Her)

Labour Councillor for Milton Ward, Weston-super-Mare

North Somerset Council
Labour Group Leader

Deputy Leader of Council
Executive Member for
Children's Services, Lifelong
Learning and Skills

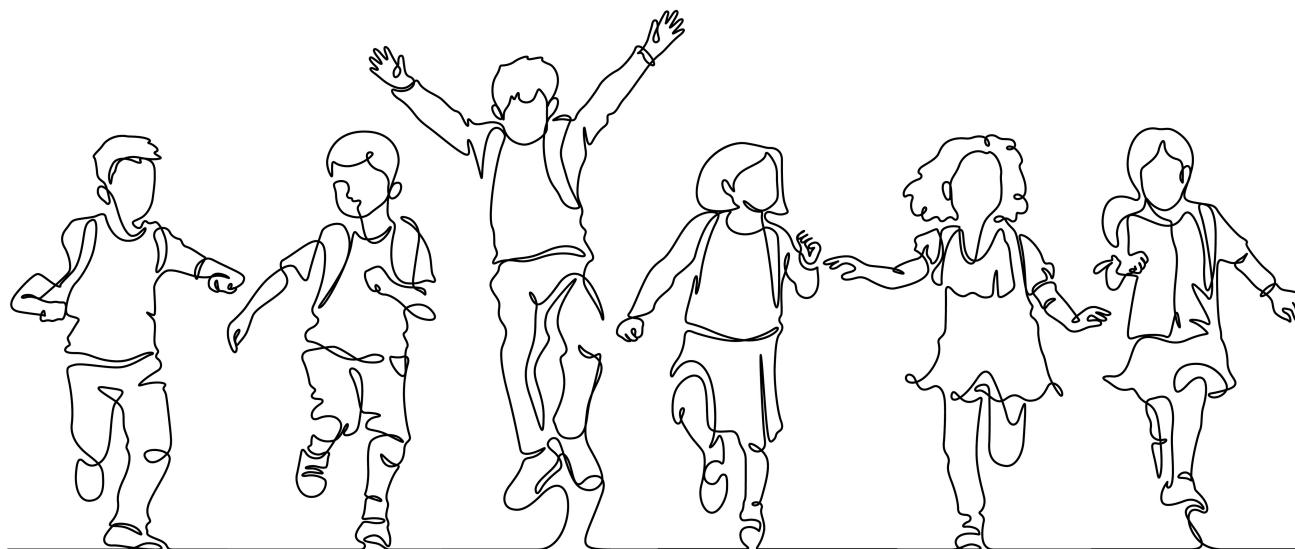


The main five aims of this strategy are:

- Early learning
- Health and well-being
- Equality and fairness
- Safeguarding
- Sufficiency and quality

The strategy aligns closely with others within the local authority, including: The Health and Well-being Strategy, The SEND Strategy, The Education Strategy, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework, as well as the Sufficiency Report.

We are proud to see how organisations across North Somerset have worked in partnership to develop the strategy and action plan. We are very grateful to them for contributing their thoughts and ideas to shape the development of the strategy.



We are committed to making sure that our services are coordinated and delivered in a way which enables a seamless pathway of services for children and their families from conception to five years. We aim to offer exciting and positive universal experiences, while making sure that targeted support is available for those who need it.

We are also committed to using this strategy to make sure that we provide the best support for potentially widening inequalities which may have occurred due to the Covid pandemic.

Context

- The population of North Somerset is 215,052 (49% male: 51% female)
- Children and young people make up 21.4% of the total population; older people aged 65 and over make up 24% of the population
- The population is growing and by 2024 is projected to include an additional 7,960 people (and 16,221 by 2030)
- Overall life expectancy at birth is 80.7 years for men and is 84.6 years for women, which is higher than the England average and in line with the average for south-west England
- 361 children aged 3 and 4 were claiming Early Years Pupil Premium 2022/2023
- 98% of all funded early education was with good and/or outstanding providers
- The proportion of children aged 2 years offered Ages and Stages Questionnaire as part of the Healthy Child Programme review or integrated review has dipped slightly from 96.8% 2017 to 92.6% in 2022-23
- The inequality gap in achievement across all the Early Learning Goals has increased from 23% in 2013 to 24.9% in 2019

Early Years

- The percentage of 2 year olds benefitting from funded early education has risen consistently from 68% in 2015 to 87% in 2022
- The total number of 3 year olds benefitting from funded early education rose by 6% from 2022/2023
- The total number of 4 year olds benefitting from funded early education rose by 5.4% in 2022/2023
- The percentage of children and young people eligible for free school meals in North Somerset is below England averages for primary and secondary pupils
- Population vaccination coverage in North Somerset during the early years as of 2020/21 is mixed when compared to regional and national averages, with not all achieving the minimum 95% coverage
- Based on the most recent data (2018/19), North Somerset has a lower rate per 1,000 of AandE attendances for children aged up to four than the national average but is showing an increasing trend. Emergency admission rates in North Somerset for early years children are also lower than regional and national averages (2019/20) but also show an upwards trend
- 9.4% of children under the age of 16 years in North Somerset are from low-income families (absolute) compared to 11.7% in the south west of England and 15.6% nationally. The percentage of children in low-income families in North Somerset has decreased since 2014/15
- 79.5% of North Somerset children received their 12-month review in 2022-23 and 95.2% by age 15 months. For the 2-2½ years review in 2022-23, 87.4% of North Somerset children received their review
- 23% of children aged 4 and 5 were overweight or obese in 2021/22 and 32.8% of children aged 10 and 11 were overweight or obese. Substantial inequality is also evident with higher prevalence observed among those living in areas of deprivation

- 13.9% of children aged five surveyed across North Somerset had visually obvious dental decay compared to 20.4% across the south west of England and 23.4% nationally. North Somerset has improved significantly since 2011/12 when 30% of children aged five had signs of visually obvious dental decay
- 332 children aged five and under were in receipt of Top Up Funding (TUF) in July 2023. There are rising numbers of children aged under five who have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)
- 62 children were identified as being a Child In Need (CIN) aged five and younger across North Somerset (June 2023)
- Funding for Early Years Entitlement is allocated on a national formula, statistics show that North Somerset Council is a low funded local authority in comparison to other local authorities

Number of early years providers in North Somerset

- 121 childminders
- 44 day nurseries
- 39 pre-schools
- 13 school nursery classes
- 3 private school nursery classes

Ofsted inspection outcomes for childcare providers – June 2023

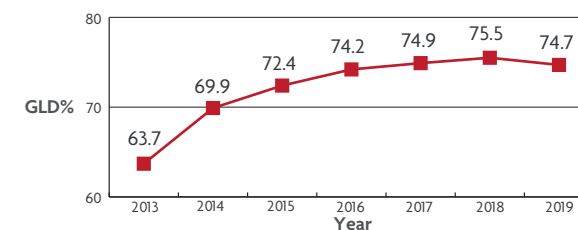
- Childminder –
76.6% Good and 8.5% Outstanding
- Day nursery –
74.2% Good and 20% Outstanding
- Pre-school –
68.75% Good and 12.5% Outstanding

Early Years Foundation Stage profile data

Since 2013, North Somerset Council has gradually improved and sustained the proportions of children attaining the Good Level of Development (GLD), with the local authority consistently scoring above the national GLD outcome.

In 2020 and 2021, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data collections were cancelled by the Department of Education (DfE) due to the Covid pandemic.

Then in September 2021, a new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was implemented with revised assessment criteria. Therefore, the EYFSP data submitted in 2022 is the beginning of a new set of statistics and trends for the local authority.



In 2022, the GLD for the local authority was 71.6%. This is above the national outcome and ranks North Somerset Council in tenth place nationally.

In 2023, the GLD for the local authority increased to 72.3%. Once again ranking North Somerset Council tenth place nationally.

The highest attaining Early Learning Goals (ELGs) in 2023 were Gross Motor Skills (physical development) at 94% and Building Relationships (personal, social and emotional development) at 92% and both ELGs within the area of learning Expressive Arts and Design at 91%.

Of the 27.7% of children who did not attain the GLD, in 2023, the following characteristics are most prominent:

- Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND): 13.9% of children attained the GLD
- Pupil Premium (PP): 50.2% of children attained the GLD
- Sex: 79.3% of girls attained the GLD compared to 65.9% of boys
- Term of birth: 81.5% of autumn born children attained the GLD compared to 64.1% of summer born children

This Early Years Strategy seeks to sustain the good GLD outcome, while also seeking to increase the number of children attaining the GLD in the above identified groups. For those children who are unable to achieve a GLD, the strategy will implement a system that gives them the best start to their educational journey.



1,001 days and beyond

Our Early Years Strategy draws from the vision outlined in the 1001 Days policy paper 2021. The commitment to the 1001 days policy is also echoed within North Somerset's Corporate Action Plan 2024-2028 to 'ensure families have access to the services they need for the first 1,001 critical days.'

The 1001 Days publication sets out a vision for brilliance in the 1,001 critical days from conception to age 2. We know that these 1,001 critical days are a unique period for a baby that sets the foundations for lifelong emotional and physical well-being.

There is clear, compelling evidence that the first 1001 days, beginning in pregnancy, are a significant and influential phase in development. This is an age of opportunity. What happens during this period lays the foundation for every child's future health, well-being, learning and earnings potential. It sets the groundwork for children's developing emotional well-being, resilience and adaptability; the competencies they need to thrive.

"The period from pregnancy to age 3 is when children are most susceptible to environmental influences. Investing in this period is one of the most efficient and effective ways to help eliminate extreme poverty and inequality, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow."

-UNICEF, World Bank and World Health Organisation, Nurturing Care Framework

North Somerset Council commissions health visiting services up to age 5 as part of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) provided by public health nursing in collaboration with other services as needed. The HCP provides support to parents, carers and children to optimise physical and emotional health and well-being and to identify opportunities for additional support. North Somerset's Baby Friendly Initiative 'Gold Award' and public health programmes such as breastfeeding support, training around attachment and bonding, oral health programmes, stop smoking services in pregnancy, local opportunities for families to be

active, and our Healthy Early Years Settings scheme, among others, also contribute to giving children the best start to life in this critical period. Our Early Years Strategy has drawn on the expertise of multi-agency partners, combining skills, knowledge and resources from colleagues in health, safeguarding and education to secure positive outcomes for our youngest children.

National picture and policy

There are a range of DfE reforms that have been implemented that place an emphasis on supporting vulnerable learners to close the gap.

In the government's 2023 spring budget, the Chancellor announced transformative reforms to childcare for women, parents, children, and the

economy. By 2027 to 2028, the government is expected to be spending more than £8bn every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England.

This new offer will empower parents, allowing them to progress their careers and support their families. The new entitlements will be introduced in phases.

All three and four year olds are eligible for 15 hours of funded early education per week

Early Years Pupil Premium for disadvantaged children: an additional £300 per child to support their development

From September 2024, all working parents of children aged nine months up to three years will be able to access 15 hours of early education per week

Currently two year olds whose families are on low incomes can access 15 hours of funded education. From April 2024, all working parents of children aged two will also be able to access 15 hours per week

From September 2025, all working parents of children aged nine months up to three years will be able to access 30 hours funded early education per week

Encourage high quality entrants to the early years workforce through bursaries in early years apprenticeships, and introducing Teach First in Early Years in disadvantaged areas

Encouraging schools to offer nursery provision and to extend that provision from 8am to 6pm

An Ofsted Inspection Framework which challenges settings, schools, and childminders to have high expectations for children and to close the gap in attainment

Covid recovery

Education recovery in early years providers, published by Ofsted in December 2021, advised about the impact that the Covid pandemic had on children aged up to five.

Attendance in early years provision was good during the pandemic, however children new to early years took longer to settle. During the pandemic, children had limited opportunities to socialise and had limited contact apart from their immediate family. Childcare providers noticed that the language, communication, and vocabulary skills of these children was not as strong as those they had previously cared for. Some also struggled with social skills and anxiety. Childcare providers stated that there were three main areas of learning where the children had fallen behind:

- Communication and language
- Personal social and emotional development (PSED)
- Physical development



Our Strategy Aims

1

Early learning

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.

Enrich language development for all children.

2

Health and well-being

Create an ambitious and high-quality universal offer which makes sure every child in North Somerset gets the best possible start in life.

3

Equality and fairness

Prioritise high quality targeted support for all children who may be at risk of poor outcomes.

4

Safeguarding

Establish robust safeguarding systems and practice, with consistent service delivery and effective early help and intervention for families at the point of need.

5

Sufficiency and quality

Maintain and further develop a strong, skilled, well respected and knowledgeable early years and childcare workforce to expertly support the early learning development and well-being of every child.

The safety and well-being of children, their families and early years staff is the foundation of our practice

Aim 1

Early learning

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

Enrich language development for all children

Focus Area 1

Increase the use of The Poetry Basket within schools and early years settings

Who

- All early years sector, all Health Visitors, all Weston College early years students, Foster Carers looking after children aged up to five, Children's Centres and Family Hubs and parents, voluntary sector

What

- All children have exposure to, or know, all 12 chosen core poems from the Poetry Basket on entry to reception class
- All poems to be in plain sight as part of the provision
- Share poems broadly across communities in public spaces
- Promote World Poetry Day
- A set of 12 poems to be available for all children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

Why

- Setting feedback shows positive impact through engagement in project to date (June 2023)
- “Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they're four years old, they're usually among the best readers by the time they're eight.” Mem Fox
- To strengthen parental partnerships and promote stronger home learning environments
- To give equality of opportunity for all vulnerable groups for example Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
- Strengthen transition process from early years into school
- Grow strong community connections through shared common experience and language

When

- Ongoing roll-out to embed this universally across North Somerset 2023 to 2026

Outcomes

- 100% of early years settings and at least 80% of schools to be engaging in this project (by July 2026)
- Positive feedback from Reception teachers when receiving children who have been part of the project
- Use of poetry named in Good and Outstanding Ofsted reports
- Evidence of poems being shared in educational and community spaces across North Somerset

Focus Area 2 Tots Talking – Early intervention strategies

Who

- Level 1 – Upskill Early Years Team, educational partners.
- Level 2 – Offer training to early years sector, Family Support Workers and parents

What

- Further develop close links with Health Visitors at point of two year old child development checks. Develop strategy to lessen numbers of unseen children at this assessment
- Evidence based Tots Talking/Early Talk Boost programme accessed by targeted groups in one (2023) spreading to universal groups in years two and three (2024-2025)
- Early Talk Boost to continue to be embedded across early years settings
- Early Years Speech and Language Toolkit to be launched

Why

- To close the communication and language gap for children aged three and four with communication and language delay in response to low EYFSP results

When

- Tots Talking – Early Years Literacy Consultant to deliver training in September 2023 to Early Years Team and education partners
- Sector targeted groups autumn 2023 to summer 2024

- Universal roll out autumn 2024 to summer 2026
- Early Years Speech and Language Toolkit to be available online summer 2023. Awareness and use of this toolkit promoted through early years provider briefings 2023/2024

Outcomes

- Increased percentage of children aged two being seen by Health Visitors for development check
- High engagement of sector in Continual Professional Development
- Improved language outcomes in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in communication, language, and literacy (2024/2025)

Focus Area 3 Helicopter Stories

Who

- All early years sector and schools (Reception class)

What

- Establish a lead network (Helicopter Stories Beacons) to embed a peer-to-peer model of excellence
- To create accreditation of this model. Schools and early years settings to become mini hubs

Why

- Evidence of positive impact on children's outcomes gathered through three-year project in North Somerset as part of Paul Hamlyn funding bid (2020-2023)
- Focus on narrowing the gap for our disadvantaged children to enable all children's language to flourish, based on research

When

- Re-launch Helicopter Stories initiative to Early Years settings and schools by July 2023
- Lead Beacon network group established by September 2023
- Engage second cohort in September and October 2023 to start training in January 2024 (levels one and two)

- Engage third cohort in September 2024 to start training in 2025 (levels one and two)
- Level one visits to Beacon settings to observe practice 2023/2024
- Level two engaging in online Helicopter Stories programme for deeper level continual professional development from January 2024 to July 2026

Outcomes

- A lead learner network established (Helicopter Stories Beacon group) in September 2023 and have consistent attendance at meetings and positive feedback
- Minutes of meetings recorded and shared
- Share and use evidence-based feedback from Paul Hamlyn project (supplied by Makebelieve Arts by December 2023), to further embed and grow this practice

Focus Area 4

Roll out and implementation of the new Speech and Language Toolkit

Why?

- Studies suggest that between 5% and 8% of all children in England and Wales are likely to have language difficulties
- Children from socially disadvantaged families are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with a language problem
- Disparities in child language capabilities are recognisable in the second year of life, and clearly have a negative impact by the time children start school
- Language skills play a key role in children's school attainment and employment opportunities later in life
- A number of charitable organisations have highlighted the impact of early language skills on children's later literacy and school achievement
- Well-supported arguments exist for prioritising early language development as a primary indicator of child well-being

- Children with language difficulties fall behind their typically-developing peers in academic achievement at every stage of education, from the EYFS right through to GCSE level and above (‘Language as a child well-being indicator’, Early Intervention Foundation Report 2017)
- The gap in the cognitive development, and specifically oral language skills, between children from different social backgrounds is widely acknowledged. This gap is identifiable very early in life and well established by school entry (Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) Guidance 2020)
- North Somerset Council recognises that early identification of language difficulties is crucial and that there is a need to equip the early years workforce with effective knowledge and resources to manage this (Speech and Language Toolkit)

What

- New Speech and Language Toolkit to support high-quality EYFS practice alongside the early identification of any difficulties

When

- Roll out by SALT team autumn 2023 to Early Years sector
- Embedded with early years sector through CPD, briefing sessions, and area SENDCo work between 2023 and 2026

Focus Area 5 Brilliant Babies

Who

- All early years practitioners working with children aged 0-2

What

- Building a learning network to share best practice
- Using peer excellence model to lead network
- Collaboration with Stronger Practice Hub 'Bristol and Beyond' to further strengthen learning opportunities for practitioners working with this age group
- Development of a closed Facebook group to share resources and seek solutions to challenges

When

- Network established 2022-2023
- x3 cluster meetings a year 2023-2026
- Collaboration with Stronger Practice Hub CPD offer 2024-2026

Why

- A gap was identified in support for early years practitioners working with this age group in North Somerset

Outcomes

- Good percentage of early years providers working with 0-2 age range attending targeted CPD
- Good percentage of early years providers working with 0-2 age range attending cluster meetings (aiming for 80% of group setting and 50% childminders by 2026)
- Positive feedback from CPD and cluster meetings collated through evaluations
- Positive comments about excellent practice with this age group in Ofsted reports

Aim 2 Health and wellbeing

Create an ambitious and high-quality universal offer which makes sure every child in North Somerset gets the best possible start in life

Focus Area 1 Development of early attachment, communication, and play

Who

- Early years sector, schools (Reception class) Family Support Workers, Children's Centre Staff, Social Care, SEND services, Health Visitors, Midwives, other partners and health professionals, voluntary community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, Portage team

What

- Implement and embed the Five to Thrive training from Knowledge Change Action (KCA) which has a focus on early attachment and bonding
- Utilise the expertise within children's centres to share best practice of delivering universal and targeted services. Full-day training courses and refresher training to be provided for all services. Resources to also be shared with parents and carers
- Five to Thrive model to be embedded into all future service provision, building on existing delivery and training already implemented

- Aim to have Five to Thrive champions in a range of schools and settings to provide support on an ongoing basis
- Watch and Play Community Nursery Nurses within the Health Visitor team to be trained in this programme which aims to enhance the parental child relationship

Why

- There is a need for consistency in training and use of a common language and practice across the early years system
- Observation of changes to children's behaviour in community health services and in other sectors, leading to recognition of a need for a more unified approach to supporting attachment and communication
- Evidence that strengthening attachment in the early years can have lifelong beneficial impacts on mental health, well-being, and a range of other outcomes

When

- Refresher training completed March 2023
- New courses planned for June and October 2023

- Further roll out to be designed and delivered by KCA for North Somerset 2024 to 2026

Outcomes

● Staff

North Somerset Council staff to increase in knowledge and confidence to apply learning, including qualitative examples of how it has been applied in practice
Professionals trained in each sector

● Early Years Settings

Children participating in Five to Thrive themed activities
Monitoring of information shared widely with parents and carers

● Children's Centres

Growing number of interventions with families using Five to Thrive model (one-to-one and group)

● Wider Data Collection

Case studies to be collected in partnership with KCA to evaluate impact

Focus Area 2

Family mental health (perinatal mental health, infant, and child mental health)

Who

- Early years sector, schools (Reception class), Family Support Workers, Children's Centre Staff, Social Care, SEND services, Health Visitors, Midwives, other partners and health professionals, Home Start, voluntary sector, Portage team

What

- Upskilling early years sector in trauma-informed practice to make sure that there is consistency in the approach and language used. Linked to refresher Five to Thrive training and two-day training to be delivered
- Family Hub experts to deliver trauma-informed workshops to Designated Safeguarding Leads in the early years sector

- Delivery of one additional workshop to early years sector on Brain development and Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy in September 2023 (recordings to be made available)
- Availability of online training material from the National Centre for Family Hubs to be promoted to the early years sector through regular newsletter and briefings
- The Family Well-being Service are committed to support staff that wish to attend specialist training in relation to Children and Young People Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (CYPIAPT). Once trained, staff can deliver enhanced support for children and families, meaning improved access to early mental health support either through our Advanced Parenting Groups or Family Support
- Further engage nine pilot early years settings in Healthy Early Years programme – Mental Well-being award
- Provision of perinatal mental health support in the community and exploration of opportunities for improving specialist support

- Development and delivery of the 'Reconnecting Relationships' champions programme by the Reducing Parental Conflict Co-ordinator. Champions to be present in early years settings with the overarching aim of strengthening relationships and reducing parental conflict. Toolkit to be used by champions to enable support to be provided to parents. Online resource to be provided regarding the model
- North Somerset Council's Public Health team to make sure mental health training courses meet the needs of early years staff. Once relevant training agreed, promote courses through the regular newsletter and briefings
- Specialist Health Visitors in place for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health. The team have a strategic response for example working with local systems and partners to develop pathways, communication, and improve access to services. Provide evidence-based training and quality improvement. Consultations for staff around supporting perinatal and infant mental health, and direct clinical work undertaken with families

Why

- The first 1,001 days, and the early years, are a critical time for development, and experiences lay the foundations for emotional health and wellbeing
- Intervention at the earliest opportunity has lifelong benefits for mental health
- A dual approach involving parents, partners, and carers as well as children, is needed to support good mental health and wellbeing
- Rise in rate of young people attending outpatient or community mental health services (1,842/100,000 in 2017/8 to 7,544/100,000 in 2019/20). Hospital admissions for mental health conditions among young people aged 18 and under rose in 2020/21 now being higher than the England average. Early intervention is needed to prevent mental ill-health later in childhood.
- Upward trend in adult diagnosed depression. 22.9% of adults self-reported anxiety symptoms consistent with a high anxiety score (2021/22)

When

- Family Well-being representatives to attend regular early years provider briefings from September 2023

Outcomes

- Increased staff knowledge and confidence to apply learning, including qualitative examples of how it has been applied in practice
- Increasing number of professionals trained in each sector
- Increased number of families attending Five to Thrive service delivery
- Qualitative feedback from families regarding holistic impact of Five to Thrive services
- Healthy Early Years Setting programme established
- Mental Well-being award to be prioritised for completion with nine pilots in settings during 2022, eight in 2023 and a further eight in 2024
- Outcomes linked to the North Somerset Mental Health Strategy 2024-2028

Focus Area 3

Focus on children who are, or who are at risk of becoming, overweight or obese

Who

- Early years sector, schools (Reception class), Family Support Workers, Children's Centre Staff, Social Care, SEND services, Health Visitors, Midwives, other partners, and health professionals, Home Start, Voluntary sector, Portage team

What

- Provide support to all early years providers and professionals regarding healthy eating and physical activity
- Create and provide training and resources for early years settings regarding outside play, being active, and healthy eating

- Breastfeeding peer support and continued partnership working to promote breastfeeding and to address related inequalities, with specialist Infant Feeding team providing support within the health visitor service. Continued support provided by localised breastfeeding specialist clinics. Commitment to maintain UNICEF BFI Gold standards among all partners involved
- Implement a settings approach to healthy weight through the Healthy Early Years Programme for North Somerset. A pilot programme was established in 2022-2023 across nine early years settings with a focus on food and nutrition and oral health. A larger group of settings will be involved from September 2023. New settings will have a focus on food and nutrition and oral health with pilot settings focusing on mental health and illness and injury prevention. Learning will be shared between those involved in pilot settings and other settings
- Comprehensive signposting from all partners to local support offers for example regarding impacts of the cost-of-living, food support, food banks, community initiatives, weight management services, active travel, and physical activity

- “Reviews for children aged two” undertaken by Community Nursery Nurses and Health Visitors enable identification, health promotion and referral to GP, if required
- Universal provision of health visitor baby hubs where timely introduction of solids and healthy weight is discussed

Why

- 23% of children aged four and five were overweight or obese in 2021/22 and 32.8% of children aged 10 and 11 were overweight or obese. Substantial inequality is also evident with higher prevalence observed among those living in areas of deprivation
- Children being overweight and obese is associated with a wide range of negative impacts on health in childhood and throughout life. Prevention and early intervention are critical to reducing the impact on health and well-being

When

- Healthy Early Years Programme (September 2023-August 2024 and September 2024-August 2025)

- Supervised toothbrushing scheme. Pilot group roll-out autumn 2023. Broader roll-out 2024 to 2026

Outcomes

- Healthy Early Years Settings programme established in 2022, to be rolled out to early years settings in 2023 to 2026 to improve outcomes regarding food, nutrition, and oral health.
- Reduction in the prevalence of unhealthy weight in reception-aged children
- Increased proportion of children consuming five pieces of fruit and vegetables a day
- Increased confidence among early years staff to talk to children and families about healthy eating and healthy weight
- Delivery of infant feeding, oral health and food, nutrition, and healthy eating training to Early Years staff champions in Healthy Early Years Programme Settings
- Increased provision and uptake of infant feeding, oral health and food, nutrition and healthy eating training in wider Early Years settings



Aim 3

Equality and fairness

Prioritise high-quality targeted support for all children who may be at risk of poor outcomes

Focus Area 1

Identify a child's needs early and ensure the appropriate early support is available

Who

- Early years sector and schools (Reception class)

What

- Roll out of the Graduated Response document to the early years sector. Embed the Graduated Response over the next three years
- Effective transition to school for children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
- Strengthen partnership work with Health Visitors and early years settings for early identification at the development checks for children aged two
- Further support around making an EHCP request to the early years sector
- Early Years Speech and Language Toolkit to be launched and rolled out in 2023. Embedded 2024/25
- Continual promotion of the SEND Hub (Local Offer)

Why

- To target support with early identification of children's needs in order to provide support at the earliest opportunity. This will improve outcomes for all children
- To establish common language and tools across professionals which will enable more immediate results by working in a more collaborative way

When

- Roll out of Graduated Response document September 2023 to July 2024
- Transfer document and guidance circulated to all schools and settings by June 2023
- Regular targeted meetings across the year with Health Visitors and Early Years Team

Outcomes

- High attendance from early years sector to Graduated Response document roll out sessions. Feedback through North Somerset Annual Conversation Audit shows improved confidence across the early years sector

- Data and information collection from Reception classes (autumn 2023 to autumn 2026) shows improved early identification of need over time
- Universal uptake of transfer document across early years settings and schools
- High attendance of early years sector at Support and Advice for Settings INCCO sessions

Focus Area 2

Strengthen and target Education Psychology support for early years

Who

- Early years sector and schools (Reception class)

What

- Improved access to CPD and support for the early years sector from the Education Psychology Service
- Analysis of Additional Needs Tool (AANTS) – Education Psychology Service to deliver Early Years AANTS CPD

- Identify and work with key early years settings through the Early Years Inclusion Co-ordinators to signpost to AANTS for very early intervention
- Self and co-regulation CPD through short videos designed by Educational Psychology Service to support early years sector, topics to include:
 - Biting
 - Hitting out
 - Throwing objects
- Work with Business Intelligence team to improve data to support early intervention strategies and monitor effectiveness of Educational Psychology targeted work

Why

- Links back to the SEND strategy
- Both AANTS and Nurture UK principles have a solid research evidence base
- These approaches will be accessible to a wide range of settings, leading to improved outcomes for children

When

- Summer 2023 term a soft launch for AANTS will be undertaken. From September 2023 the AANTS model will be available to all
- Digital offer – roll out from September 2023 from the Educational Psychology team

Outcomes

- Early years settings understand how to request support from the Educational Psychology team and the children we are supporting are being seen before a request for an EHCP is made at least 75% of the time
- High attendance across the early years sector at CPD events and data that is collected through evaluation forms indicates the positive impact of these events on early years professionals' understanding and confidence
- Strong evidence of the agreed actions from AANTS being used through Top Up Funding applications
- Improved data to support and evidence this work that will include the Educational Psychology service having developed a method for measuring the impact of AANTS consultations on early years practice

Focus Area 3

Nurture groups for early years

Who

- Early years sector

What

- Set up pilot groups with three local authority nurseries
- Roll out – introduction to Nurture groups

Why

- Improving the offer of CPD for equipping practitioners and parents with skills and strategies. Looking at supporting positive outcomes and solutions

When

- Annual training using Nurture UK principles included in CPD offer 2023-2026

Outcomes

- High attendance at targeted CPD events
- High engagement from early years practitioners across the sector

- Positive feedback from families indicates the effectiveness of this change in approach
- Positive feedback received from sector about ‘What to Expect When’ document and stronger knowledge of child development

Focus Area 4

Anti-Racism Strategy

Who

- Early years sector and schools (Reception class)

What

- Sector to feel confident to promote anti-racist practice
- Use newly-established provider reference group to consult and share information with sector
- Establish widespread use of Anti-Racism Statement across early years settings
- Establish widespread use of Anti-Racism Audit Toolkit across early years settings (link sent out with or embedded into annual audit)

- Use strong partnership with Better Bilingual to target CPD in settings with high numbers children with English as an additional language (EAL)
- Early Years Team and Anti-Racism Strategy group to audit and promote children’s books that support this area of practice with the sector
- Strong CPD focus for the sector to be offered on an annual basis to meet need
- Use a series of bespoke short videos created for North Somerset Council by Better Bilingual to upskill the sector
- Early Years Team to work with corporate Anti-Racism Strategy to make sure the approach and message is consistent

Why

- The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and the Covid pandemic have brought ongoing inequalities both locally and globally into sharp and painful focus
- Every child has the right to live free from discrimination as stated in Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

- “It is a privilege to be taught about racism, rather than experiencing it” Dr. Stella Louis 2020
- The Best Beginnings report (July 2020) advocates that solid foundations mean a generation of children who grow up able to learn, play, thrive, and participate in society. The early years is the prime place to encourage and support young children to explore race and cultures that are different to their own. Early years practitioners need both support and challenge through professional development to empower them to facilitate these explorations with sensitivity and confidence. Our communities in North Somerset are diverse and we need to meet the needs of everyone.

When

- Baseline set through the annual conversation questions
- Provider reference group launched September 2023 with termly meetings set
- Provider briefings twice a year plus recording to be shared

- Early Years Team meetings to be held monthly. Through these communication channels, children’s books that promote anti-racist thinking to be shared and offered for review
- Book reviews and articles shared in monthly early years newsletter and offered to other publications across North Somerset

Outcomes

- Increased numbers of early years settings displaying Anti-Racism Statement target of 70% of all settings by 2026
- Increased number of early years settings completing Anti-Racism Audit by 50% by 2026
- Increased in-depth early years educator knowledge evidenced through setting feedback and evaluations following targeted CPD
- Nine in-depth book reviews researched by Early Years Team and Anti-Racism Strategy Group members to be shared with sector through early years newsletter by 2026
- Positive evaluations from CPD offer in this area
- Early Years Team to attend corporate CPD and discussion as part of the rollout of an Anti-Racism Strategy across North Somerset Council

- Increased views of bespoke short videos by early years sector (monitored through YouTube analytics)

Aim 4 Safeguarding

Establish robust safeguarding systems and practice, with consistent service delivery and effective early help and intervention for families at the point of need

Focus Area 1

An early years workforce that is skilled, knowledgeable, and confident in their safeguarding practice

Who

- Early years sector and schools (Reception class).

What

- Continue with three briefings and three workshops a year for the early years sector targeting Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Promote North Somerset Safeguarding training pathway for early years providers and make sure it is understood and robustly followed
- Deliver robust strategic communication of new approaches in safeguarding through strong partnership work
- Robust online safeguarding audit to be completed once a year by all early years providers (Section 175 Audit by schools)
- Effective use of data from audit to inform Safeguarding CPD for early years sector

- Strengthen the safeguarding partnership link with early years sector and relevant subgroups including Family Hubs, Children's Services, Front Door, and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Leaders and DSL remain conscious of the changing workforce – to include training, development, and awareness through regular attendance at briefing sessions. Early Years Team to monitor DSL attendance and re-engage sector where necessary
- Monitor safeguarding outcomes for early years sector through the review of Ofsted reports

Why

- Safeguarding is everyone's business

When

- Termly targeted workshops for DSL, using expertise from colleagues in Family Hubs, and Children's Social Care
- Front Door team to run three hour-long online workshops each year for the early years sector on writing effective requests for support
- Early Help updates to be delivered to early years sector through termly DSL clusters

- By 2026, deliver two hour-long online workshops each year on managing allegations
- Annual training – Having Difficult Conversations autumn 2023 to July 2026
- Annual training – Documenting Safeguarding Concerns autumn 2023 to July 2026

Outcomes

- Increase and monitor number of early years providers attending CPD sessions
- Collect evidence of impact through analysis of CPD Evaluation forms
- No providers who are classed as Inadequate/ Requires Improvement by Ofsted due to breaches in Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding requirements

Focus Area 2

A network of early years providers that understands how to identify, assess, and support children where there is a safeguarding concern

Who

- Early years sector and schools (Reception class)

What

- Roll out the Effective Support document
- Raise awareness of the Signs of Safety Approach across the early years sector through Designated Safeguarding Lead clusters
- Supervision processes and toolkit consistently promoted through early years clusters.
- Monitor attendance of early years sector at Safeguarding CPD sessions, and re-engage with non-attending settings

Why

- Safeguarding is everyone’s business

When

- Signs of Safety messages to be promoted at all early years clusters and briefings
- Roll out of Effective Support Document – March 2023 to March 2024 understanding the Continuum of Need
- Regular communication scheduled every year to early years Sector regarding training and changes in practice – through Safeguarding Partnership, newsletters, briefings, social media and websites

Outcomes

- High attendance of early years providers attending Effective Support document briefing. Aiming for 90% attendance by early years settings
- Positive feedback from attendees on evaluation forms
- Effective online system that holds safeguarding policy, guidance, and handbooks accessible and known to all
- Evidence of effective use of supervision and appraisal processes in Ofsted reports
- Collect evidence of impact through analysis of CPD evaluation forms

Focus Area 3

The early years sector is confident in identification, assessment, and supporting children experiencing neglect

Who

- Early years sector

What

- Making sure the workforce understands what is meant by neglect
- Building confidence in using the Neglect Toolkit through CPD and briefings
- Ensure that training on neglect is cost-effective and accessible
- Providing improved opportunities for professional dialogue, challenge, and learning about neglect

Why

- Safeguarding is everyone's business

When

- Offer neglect CPD refresher every year using current local and national data, and Neglect Toolkit
- Neglect Toolkit initial roll out in June 2023 for core staff. Safeguarding Training team to develop a course for early years sector from September 2023
- Neglect one-day training multi-agency course offered once a year

Outcomes

- Increased number of early years providers attending CPD sessions
- Positive feedback from attendees on evaluation forms
- Evidence of the Neglect Toolkit in Requests for Support, Social Work Assessments, Early Help Assessments and Child Protection Reports



Aim 5 Sufficiency and quality

Maintain and further develop a strong, skilled, well respected and knowledgeable early years and childcare workforce to expertly support the early learning development and well-being of every child

Focus Area 1 Workforce development and retention

Who

- Early years sector, Early Years Team, and partners

What

- Planning, development, and delivery of a wide ranging CPD offer to the sector including briefings and training to support curriculum. Sessions cover safeguarding, curriculum, assessment and moderation, SEND and current challenges
- Develop CPD offer every year. Development responds to information gathered from Early Years Provider Annual Conversation, Early Years Provider Safeguarding Audit and current climate and topics

Why

- Make sure that our training messages are consistent, with a focus on North Somerset Council's training. Maintaining the high quality of courses that North Somerset Council offers to improve outcomes for all children

- Without a skilled workforce with a quality CPD offer, there is a risk that there will not be sufficient provision. It also helps to retain the workforce within the sector

When

- Offer a yearly CPD programme. This offer may vary as a result of the annual conversation, audits, evaluation, and government strategy

Outcomes

- Increased number of early years providers attending CPD sessions
- Positive feedback from attendees on evaluation forms
- Improved outcomes for all children as shown in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results and narrowing the disadvantage gap as shown in the EYFSP results
- Positive feedback about CPD offer through Ofsted reports and feedback. Every year, generate a CPD Report for North Somerset Council's Early Years Team to monitor and celebrate quality of the CPD offer

Focus Area 2

Re-establish Provider Reference Group

Who

- North Somerset Council staff together with representatives from the early years sector and nurseries chaired by The Head of Learning and Achievement

What

- Establish a Provider Reference Group with representatives from across the early years sector to be a subgroup of the Strategic Schools Forum. Two to three online meetings a year, in addition to any extraordinary meetings

Why

- To strengthen communications and partnerships between the local authority, the early years sector and other key partners on any current issues arising in the sector including funding, sufficiency, well-being and CPD

When

- Launch autumn 2023. Terms of reference drawn up by the Early Years and Funding Teams by July 2023. Share at Provider Briefings and then start meetings by November 2023

Outcomes

- Core group established
- Minutes of meetings recorded
- Information shared with Ofsted and DfE from direct consultation with early years sector
- Minutes from meetings made accessible to all

Focus Area 3

Sufficiency and funding

Who

- Early Years and Education Funding Teams. The Sufficiency and Participation Officer alongside the relevant key officers

What

- Establish Sufficiency Audits with the early years sector carried out three times a year

- Continue linking with school place planning to make sure sufficient childcare places are available
- Make sure there are sufficient high quality childcare places for all children to access all of the various early years funding entitlements
- Increasing up-take of available childcare for children aged two - funding through targeted marketing and using data from the Department for Work and Pensions
- Effective promotion to parents to explain what to look for in a high-quality childcare setting
- Promote all available childcare entitlements including Holiday Activity and Food, Tax Free Childcare, and Early Years Pupil Premium to key stakeholders and North Somerset residents
- Marketing through regular communications including briefing sessions, email signature banners, website, newsletter and on social media
- Continue to strengthen working relationships with the DfE through regular meetings with them and the Early Years and Funding Teams
- Demand-led support for sector to be provided through expertise of Education Funding Team

- Lead Childminders Practitioners (LCPs) remit to be confirmed and communicated effectively to the early years sector
- Make sure there is a clear process for parents and carers to access childcare
- Funding statistics show that North Somerset Council does not receive as much funded education in comparison to other local authorities
- Children accessing high quality funded provision (consistently no lower than 96% rated by Ofsted as Good and Outstanding)
- Support for Requires Improvement and Inadequate settings to be highly effective as shown by improved Ofsted outcomes
- No formal complaints received from parents or carers
- North Somerset Council strives to retain a minimum amount of funding received from the DfE

Why

- To make sure that sufficiency is constant, and that parents and carers have access to high quality childcare and early education, utilising the funding and entitlements available to them
- To meet council priorities by enabling businesses to be viable in the local community, while also supporting the local economy

When

- Ongoing statutory work

Outcomes

- Sufficient childcare places across North Somerset

Links to other strategies

This strategy makes important contributions to the following strategies within North Somerset:

- The Education Strategy
- The Health and Well-being Strategy
- The All-Ages Mental Health Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- SEND Strategy

Corporate plan for 2020 - 2024 priorities include:

A thriving and sustainable place

We will support the sustainability and development of the early years and childcare sector.

We will help enable parents to work and train by supporting them to access high quality, affordable childcare options.

A council which empowers and cares about people

We will support providers to educate young children about their health and well-being and how best to promote this, setting positive foundations for good health outcomes in later life.

We will work to assist the sector to deliver good early years outcomes for children which will enable them to have successful educational journeys so that they can go on to access fulfilling employment opportunities and contribute to the growth of the North Somerset economy.

We will promote funding for childcare to increase the uptake of tax-free childcare, Early Years Pupil Premium and child tax credits.

An open and enabling organisation

We will develop solutions and responses which take account of the needs of all and enable improved equality of opportunity and outcomes.

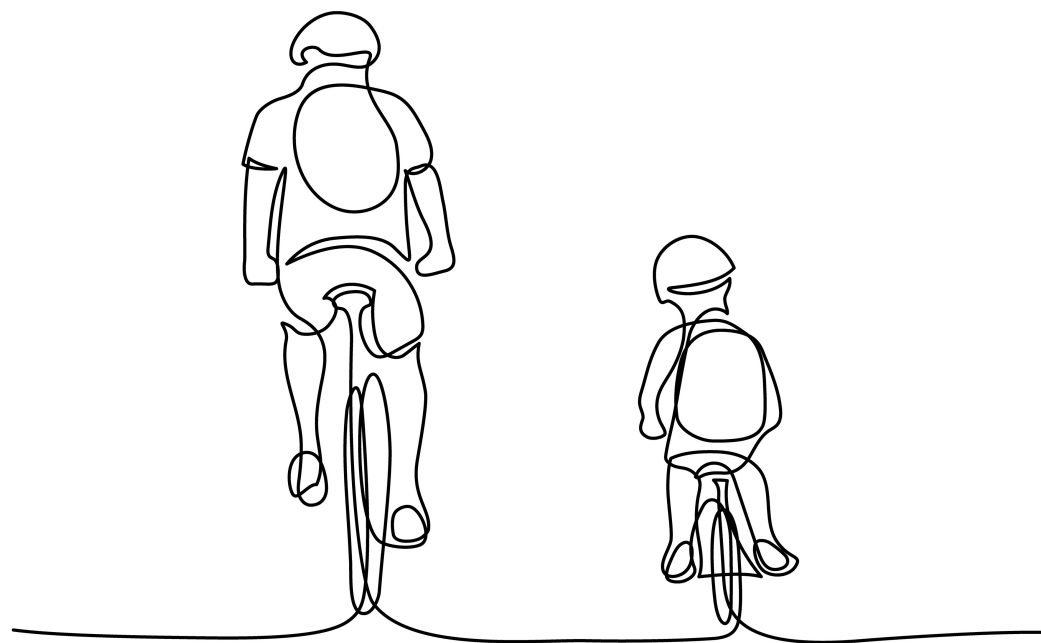
We will promote health and well-being across early years settings.

Co-production

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this strategy. It has been produced in co-production with a variety of stakeholders including:

- Early Years Team
- Education (including school representatives)
- Family Information Service
- Sufficiency Officer
- Education Finance Team
- SEND (including parents/carers representatives and partner representatives)
- Health Team
- Parenting Leads
- Children's Support and Safeguarding Teams
- Workforce Development Officers
- Family Hubs and Children Centre Leads

Our joint objectives have been agreed by all. As we implement this strategy, we will continue to engage with parents, professionals, volunteers, and with children to make sure we continue to do the right things to address need and to check if what we are doing is having a positive impact.



Glossary

AANTS	Analysis of Additional Needs Tool	FIS	Family Information Service	SENDCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
CC	Children's Centre	FSM	Free School Meals	SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
CIN	Children in Need	GLD	Good Level of Development	TFC	Tax Free Childcare
CiC	Children in Care	GRT	Gypsy Roma Traveller	TUF	Top-up Funding
CP	Child Protection	HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	UC	Universal Credit
DAF	Disability Access Fund	INCCO	Inclusion Coordinator	WTC	Working Tax Credit
DfE	Department for Education	MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub		
DLA	Disability Living Allowance	NASS	National Asylum Support Service		
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	NI	National Insurance		
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions	NSC	North Somerset Council		
EAL	English as an additional language	Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills		
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan	PSED	Personal social and emotional development		
ELG's	Early Learning Goals	PVI	Private, Voluntary, Independent		
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile	SALT	Speech and Language Therapy		
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium				
FEE	Free Early Education				

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