East Riding of Yorkshire

Forward

In the East Riding of Yorkshire we want every child to have the best start in life possible. We know, from research, that a great start in life for all is one of the key ways to impact upon positive health, wellbeing and success. We are proud to be writing the foreword to the East Riding of Yorkshire ‘Best Start in Life’ Plan for the delivery of early years services across the area.

This plan has been developed in partnership and builds on the existing relationships with key partners across the Children and Families Partnership including East Riding of Yorkshire Council, schools, early years providers, Humber NHS, Neighbourhood health teams, Communities and Parents and Carers. We look forward to working with you on the plan and supporting children to have the best start in life.

Cllr Aitken/Merlin Joseph

1. Our Vision for a Best Start in Life Plan 2026 to 2029

Our vision is that every baby and child in East Riding of Yorkshire has the best possible start in life, with improved development and health outcomes from conception through childhood, supported by joined-up services across health, family services, education, childcare, schools and the voluntary and community sector.

This Best Start in Life Plan sets out how East Riding of Yorkshire will deliver the government's *Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life* (Department for Education, 2025) ambition. It describes how we will implement Best Start Family Hubs, strengthen early intervention, and work together across services to improve outcomes for all children and families in the county focusing on improving outcomes for babies and young children through co-ordinated, evidence-based support for families, particularly during pregnancy and the first 1,001 critical days.

The plan supports national priorities including Best Start Healthy Babies and the Family Hubs, the Child Poverty Strategy, the Family First Partnership Programme and The NHS 10 Year Plan by promoting integrated, place-based services that address health, development and wider determinants of wellbeing, such as poverty and inclusion.

This plan has been developed in direct response to the national expectation that all local authorities must publish a local Best Start in Life plan by April 2026.

The East Riding of Yorkshire Children and Families Strategic Plan (CFAS_Children_and_Families_Strategic_Plan_2025-2030.pdf) underpins this document and states the bold partnerships vision is:

FOR ALL CHILDREN IN THE EAST RIDING TO HAVE THE BEST START IN LIFE: TO BE SAFE AND GROW UP IN A LOVING HOME, TO BE EQUIPPED WITH THE SKILLS AND VALUES TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL AND THRIVE

In 2025, 68.5% of children in the East Riding of Yorkshire achieved a Good level of Development at the end of the reception year. The Department for Education has set a local authority target for 76.3% of all children to achieve a Good Level of Development by 2028, alongside 56.3% of those children eligible for free school meals.

> *A Good Level of Development is a national measure used at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A child is said to have achieved a Good Level of Development if they reach the expected level in the Early Learning Goals for the three prime areas of learning—communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development—as well as the specific areas of literacy and mathematics. The judgement is made*

as part of the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage Profile assessment at the end of the reception year and is based on practitioners' professional observations over time. Achieving a good level of development is widely recognised as an important indicator of school readiness, reflecting that a child has developed the essential skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum and continue to learn and thrive in school.

We will work together across services, settings and communities to identify need early, provide timely support and improve outcomes for all children, with a particular focus on those who need it most. Our East Riding practice model, the Stronger Together approach, supports the Best Start in Life plan by promoting consistent relational practice, shared responsibility and co-ordinated multi agency working. Through being curious, building meaningful relationships with families and working in partnership across services, we are better able to identify needs early and provide timely, joined up support. This way of working strengthens our collective ability to improve children's outcomes and increase the number achieving a Good Level of Development.

The plan is rooted in local insight from multiagency discovery workshops and steering group activity across East Riding, bringing together education, health, family help, SEND services, parents, voluntary and community partners.

It is underpinned by a strong legal framework, including the Childcare Act, Children and Families Act, Child Poverty Act and the Equality Act, ensuring duties around safeguarding, inclusion and reducing disadvantage are met, while also upholding children's rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Why the focus on support from conception through the early years?

Early childhood sets the foundation for a child's future health and life outcomes. Acting early during this time enables needs to be identified sooner, reduces health inequalities before they become entrenched and delivers the greatest long-term benefits for children and families.

Across the East Riding many children have a great start in life already, but we know some families in more deprived areas, or with higher levels of need, require more support at times.

Working across the East Riding of Yorkshire Children and Families' Partnership helps join up services around children and families so support is timely, accessible and better matched to need. By bringing together health, education, childcare, libraries, the voluntary and community sector and family support, we can improve school readiness, strengthen the home learning environment and reduce inequalities, helping more children achieve a good level of development and supporting healthier, stronger communities and a more prosperous economy.

3. Our Aims

3.1. Give every child the best start in life from prebirth to age five

Recognising this period is critical to shaping life chances and preventing inequalities from becoming embedded before children start on their educational journey. Attachment, bonding and the parent/carer-child relationship is pivotal to supporting development in the first 1001 days of a child's life and beyond.

3.2. Narrow the disadvantage gap by acting early

Reduce inequalities by prioritising support for babies, young children and families experiencing disadvantage, recognising that a considerable proportion of the attainment gap at age 16 is already present by age five. We will use local data to target resources, programmes and workforce capacity to areas and groups experiencing the greatest disadvantage, and ensure inclusive, accessible support for children with special educational needs and disabilities and speech and language needs.

3.3. Improve overall school readiness and increase the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development

Focus collective effort on supporting strong parent-child relationships, thereby improving early language, social and emotional development, physical development and early learning so that more children start school ready to learn. There will be a strong emphasis on delivering evidence based early interventions to support rich home learning environments and parenting, for families with the highest levels of need, alongside strengthened transition arrangements between early years settings and schools, particularly for vulnerable children and those with SEND, to ensure continuity of support and learning.

3.4. Transform support for families through working in partnership

We will bring together health, education, childcare, family support and community organisations into a coherent, joined up early years system. The network of Children's Centres across the East Riding of Yorkshire will transform into Best Start Family Hubs from April 2026. This supports the redesign of early years system, whilst aligning with the Family First Partnership Programme, strengthening integration with health, early years providers, schools and neighbourhood services.

Our clear governance and delivery framework will unite East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Humber NHS 0-19 Health Visiting and school nurse service, Humber NHS Speech and Language service, Neighbourhood Teams, early years providers, schools, libraries, the voluntary and community sector and communities around shared outcomes.

4. Our Priorities

INSERT A GRAPHIC FOR THE KEY PRIORITIES FIRST AND THEN HAVE LIST THEM AS THEY ARE BELOW IN DETAIL.

4.1. We will build our strong networks of partners around a shared Best Start vision

We will strengthen partnership working across East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Humber NHS services, early years providers, schools, libraries, the voluntary and community sector and local communities, aligned to shared priorities, improved outcomes and collective accountability for children's early development, health and wellbeing. We will do this alongside Integrated Neighbourhood Health Teams, which are multidisciplinary, place-based teams across health, social care, local government and the voluntary and community sector. They work at neighbourhood level to provide co-ordinated, person-centred support, improve access to preventative support and early intervention, reduce fragmentation and health inequalities, and help people to stay well closer to home.

4.2 We will deliver a joined-up pathway for children and families offering early identification and intervention

- Establish a shared, agreed pathway of child development checks and interventions across maternity, health visiting and other health partners, early years education, childcare, libraries, early years inclusion and SEND support, parenting support and family services through Best Start Family Hubs, in collaboration with the voluntary and community sector.
- Improve data sharing agreements and accessibility to support earlier identification of need.
- Use evidence from the above services, including health checks and early years inclusion requests to target support.
- Ensure families experience seamless support from pregnancy, infancy and early childhood to starting school, with a focus on ensuring families who need the most support receive it from the right service at the right time.

4.3. We will strengthen the quality and capacity of staff and volunteers to develop a sustainable, skilled and confident workforce

- Deliver shared training across health, education and family help and the wider partnership in evidence-based interventions.
- Utilise the Stronger Together quality of practice framework to quality assure and improve the support provided to children and families by promoting proactive, reflective practice within a culture of high support and high inquiry.
- Develop a common language and understanding of Best Start in Life
- Support workforce wellbeing and capacity through clearer roles and pathways

- Ensure children and families benefit from high quality support, early education and care, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- Embed an evaluation cycle to continuously improve the quality and impact of training.

4.4 We will target resources and programmes where they will make the greatest difference

We will use data and feedback to target support, to families and neighbourhoods with the greatest need. This will include young parents, care leavers, children with SEND or emerging needs, and others, through a focus on:

- **Parenting, Relationships and Home Learning**

- Strengthen support across the first 1001 days, with a focus on infant feeding, attachment, bonding and infant mental health.
- Expand evidence-based parenting and home learning environment offers such as PEEP Learning Together Programme, Togetherness Understanding Your Child, Reducing Parental Conflict and a range SEND support
- Ensure fathers, partners and wider family networks are included through programmes such as 'Fathers Read Every Day'.

- **Early Language, SEND and Inclusion**

- Strengthen early speech and language support and further development of existing pathways
- Improve access to inclusion advice for early years settings
- Ensure families not accessing formal provision are proactively supported
- Strengthen transition to school and reception year across the partnership to ensure all families have a consistent offer of support.

4.5. Communications and Engagement

- Implement a co-ordinated communications plan across early years, schools, libraries, digital platforms, social media and community venues
- Ensure information is accessible, relevant and understandable to families
- Develop and promote tools to support communication and engagement with families.
- Use consistent branding and messaging for Best Start Family Hubs
- Ensure effective use of the Best Start in Life website and tools

4.6 We will Measure Impact and Accountability through:

- Infant Feeding rates
- Increase antenatal education attendance
- Trends in Good Level of Development outcomes
- Early identification indicators (e.g. referrals into Early Support services and speech, language and communication needs)
- Family Hub engagement and reach
- Increased uptake and attendance of early years entitlements
- Increase in uptake of Healthy Start Vitamins
- Increased uptake of digital tools and online support by families
- Feedback from families regarding their experience of care, support and confidence in services
- Uptake of training by practitioners across the partnership
- Evidence from research-based programmes
- Improved experiences of staff, including recruitment, and retention
- Confidence of practitioners in working with families
- Continuous learning and system reflections

Further localised measures will be developed during the implementation of the plan and we will evaluate the impact of the programme towards the end of the 3 year funding cycle.

5. The Evidence of Need across the East Riding of Yorkshire

Local partners identified a shared set of challenges and system pressures, including:

- Fragmented data and recording systems and inconsistent use of evidence across services
- Challenges in reaching the families most in need early enough
- Variability in access to speech, language and SEND support
- Workforce capacity pressures and competing priorities
- Inconsistent messaging and lack of shared language across the partnership

At the same time, strengths were identified:

- Strong multiagency relationships and commitment to partnership working
- Increasing early identification through early years inclusion processes
- Growing use of digital tools to share child development information, such as the Best Start website, Togetherness on-line guides, Early Years Ordinarily Inclusive Provision, and the Starting Reception document.
- A clear collective ambition to place families and children at the centre of services and a passion for improving the lives of the children, young people, and families across the East Riding of Yorkshire.
- Early Intervention Funding (EIF) provides financial support for early years settings to enable them to support children with barriers to accessing education such as delays in learning, additional needs, and health needs, alongside Early Years Inclusion Funding.
- Families, partners and early years providers benefit from inclusion training and support, such as Dingley's Promise and the Portage Stamp of Approval

However, we know that in East Riding of Yorkshire:

- ✓ there are approximately 17,976 children aged 0-5, and 67,935 children and young people aged 0-19
- ✓ In January 2025, the total school population was 44,636, of which
- ✓ 20.7% (9,240) were eligible for free school meals
- ✓ 82% of children under 5 are currently registered with a children's centre and we know this is lower in some areas of highest need such as Goole
- ✓ In 2025, 68.5% of children in the East Riding of Yorkshire achieved a Good level of Development at the end of the reception year, with 45.1% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving a GLD
- ✓ In the 2024/25 academic year, 8,064 pupils in East Riding of Yorkshire were identified as having Special Educational Needs.
- ✓ Of these, Speech, Language and Communications needs is the most common primary need (1,959 pupils).

- ✓ Overall East Riding of Yorkshire is less deprived than the national average but contains pockets of deprivation, particularly in coastal areas such as Bridlington, Withernsea and towns such as Goole.
- ✓ In 2024 17.4% of children under 16 lived in 'absolute low income', with Bridlington having the higher proportion at 44.4%.
- ✓ Live births are approximately 2,500 per annum and issues such as low birth weight are lower than the national average.
- ✓ Breast feeding rates were 65.2% at 10 days and 54.3% at 6-8 weeks in 2024/25 which are slightly lower than national average rates
- ✓ In 2024/25 28% of our reception aged children are overweight or obese, which is higher than England average
- ✓ East Riding has a higher rate of domestic abuse-related incidents than the national average, with Bridlington having the highest rates across family hubs areas.
- ✓ Bridlington also faces the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in the area
- ✓ East Riding Joint Strategic Needs Assessment lays out the local needs

What do we know about the performance of the system?

- ✓ In 2024/25 82% of all children under 5 were registered with a family hub, and 85% of children living in Bridlington are registered
- ✓ 99.3% of new birth visits were undertaken by health visitors within and after 14 days for 2024/25
- ✓ 94% of health visiting 6-8 week reviews were undertaken in 2024/25
- ✓ 96.1% of health visiting 12 month reviews were undertaken
- ✓ 94.6% of 2-2.5 year reviews completed within 15 months of birth in 24/25
- ✓ Over 200 children were supported through the Portage Service over the past year.
- ✓ Over 500 parents have accessed support through the Togetherness online parenting guides over the past year, demonstrating families know where to access online support.
- ✓ Between June 2025 and February 2026, East Riding of Yorkshire achieved the highest sign-ups for the Togetherness online guides
- ✓ Within the East Riding of Yorkshire, nine schools fall within the lowest IDACI banding (Bands 1 to 3). Across these schools, the Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes for 2025, demonstrate a wide range of performance, with results varying from 45% of children achieving a GLD to 78.6%.
- ✓ In the wider school system, 92% of all schools inspected are currently judged to be 'good' or better, and under the new inspection framework at the expected standard or above.
- ✓ Alongside this 98% of private, voluntary and independent early years settings are rated 'Good' or above, under the old framework or at least at the expected standard under the new Ofsted inspection outcomes.
- ✓ There are:

Childminders	137
Day Nurseries	85
Pre-Schools	25

Maintained nursery schools	4
Schools with nursery provision	73
Out of school clubs	16

- ✓ In the 2026 School Census 1,291 children are accessing a place in a school nursery.

6. Integration across existing work and strategies (add links)

East Riding of Yorkshire Children and Families Strategic Plan

East Riding of Yorkshire Sufficiency Strategy

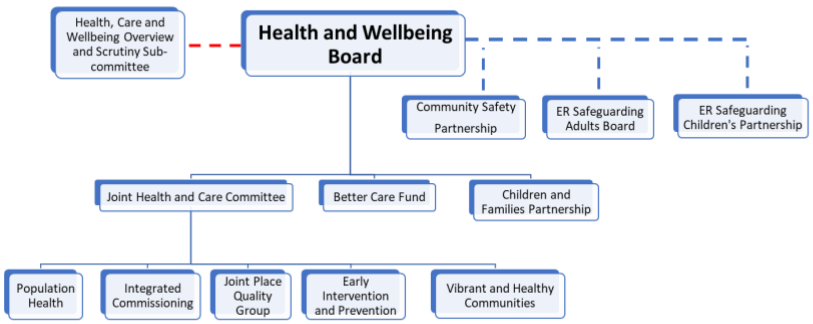
East Riding of Yorkshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy

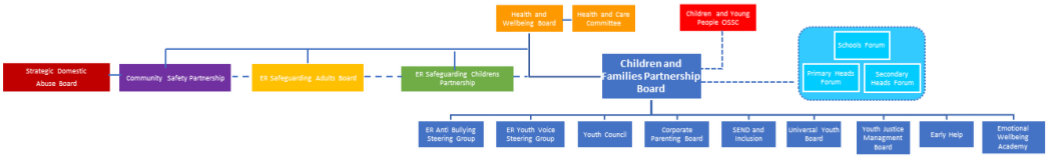
East Riding of Yorkshire Local Area Improvement Plan

Post Inspection SEND and Inclusion Improvement Plan

7. Governance and Partnership Principles

Oversight is provided through the Best Start School Readiness Steering Group, which reports to the Early Help Partnership Board and the East Riding of Yorkshire Children & Families Partnership Board, ensuring aligned decision-making and shared accountability across children's services, education, health and the voluntary and community sector.





7.1 **Working Together to Give Every Child the Best Start in Life**

Strong relationships and effective collaboration are the foundation of the Best Start in Life Plan. Improving outcomes for babies and young children cannot be achieved by any single service acting alone. Partners will work collaboratively, share intelligence, align resources and reduce duplication, enabling families to experience support as joined-up, accessible and responsive, rather than fragmented.

7.2 Equity and Inclusion

Equity and inclusion are central to the Best Start in Life Plan. Universal services are designed to reach all families, while additional targeted support is directed towards those experiencing the greatest need, ensuring resources are proportionate to need.

We recognise that inequalities in health, development and educational outcomes emerge early and can widen rapidly without action. Through integrated pathways, inclusive early years provision and Family Hub delivery, partners will work collectively to reduce barriers to access, address wider determinants of health and wellbeing, and promote inclusive practice across the system. This approach supports the ambition to narrow the disadvantage gap and improve Good Level of Development outcomes for all children, particularly those with SEND and those living in the most disadvantaged communities.

7.3 Valuing the Experiences and Voices of Babies, Young Children and Families

The lived experiences of babies, young children, parents, and carers are a critical source of insight for shaping effective services. The Best Start in Life Plan places a strong emphasis on listening to families, understanding what matters to them, and responding to their priorities and circumstances. We will do this through regular

parents' panels, feedback and evaluations. Children's early experiences, relationships and environments are recognised as fundamental to their development, and services are designed to strengthen these protective factors through consistent, supportive, and nurturing interventions.

7.4 Co-production with local families, their networks and communities

Families and their networks are recognised as children's first and most important educators. Services and pathways are developed with families, not for them, recognising the value of shared expertise and local knowledge.

The Best Start in Life Plan prioritises empowering parents and carers, strengthening parental confidence and knowledge, and supporting positive home learning environments.

Community-based provision plays a vital role in this. By actively involving and co-ordinating with voluntary and community sector partners, community groups, and local businesses, we build on existing assets, relationships, and innovation within communities. This enables delivery at scale, extends reach into trusted organisations such as Home-Start in Goole, The Hinge in Bridlington and many small church and community groups, it supports families in ways that feel local, familiar, and accessible.

Below are ways we will continuously bring families into the conversation:

- Maternity Voices Partnerships
- Family Hubs Parents Panels
- East Riding Parent Carer Forum
- User Voice and Participations consultation and surveys

8. How we will deliver this plan

Throughout 2025 East Riding of Yorkshire Council redesigned the early help service to ensure that support was aligned with the Best Start in Life, and Family First Partnership reforms, ensuring support is needs led. This has placed Best Start Family Hubs at the core of the service, alongside School and Community Teams, Family Help teams and the Early Years Inclusion Team.

Best Start Family Hubs act as a front door for families, providing co-ordinated access to services from preconception through early childhood and beyond. Parents and carers can access services by phone, on-line or walking in and will be supported by experienced staff. Moving forward they will understand how and when they can access support through a published local offer, clear signposting across all teams and warm handovers, if and when needed.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council delivers the services through a hub and spoke model, ensuring rural and coastal communities can access support. This includes

family hubs in many main towns and with outreach support based in schools, libraries, charitable organisations, community buildings, and we will work alongside early years providers to offer support to families through themselves also.

MAP of HUBS

- A blended digital and face to face offer through on-line support such as Togetherness Parenting Guides, a range of websites such as the Best Start in Life, East Riding of Yorkshire Council website, NHS Connect, The East Riding of Yorkshire Local offer, Every Mum Matters, East Riding Libraries and linked directories. An online family hubs registration system is currently being developed which will support the digital offer and make registration for the services easier for families.
- Face to face support is offered through groups, sessions, activities, and one to one support for families, through the partnership, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time, in the right place.
- A wide range of services are offered from the Family Hubs, such as antenatal education, midwifery appointments, health visiting drop in clinics and health checks, specialist health teams such as Family Nurse Partnership, infant feeding groups and support, fostering and adoption support groups, parenting and play groups, dads and partners groups, early years inclusion and portage support, speech and language support, tuition services, support around parental conflict and domestic abuse.
- This will develop further through links with the Adult Education, financial and employment support and advice, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Perinatal Mental Health and SEND services, with a focus on delivering home learning and parenting support.
- Social care offer support from many of the family hubs, which will develop further as services move forward with the Family First Partnership Programme.
- There are pathways linking midwifery, health visiting, early years, speech and language, SEND and inclusion services, family help, and the voluntary sector provision. However, there will be further development of these pathways to address issues such as information sharing and communications and to ensure that effective parental and infant mental health support is also offered to families through the family hubs.
- Partners will work together as one system through shared governance, joint planning and clear, agreed pathways linking universal and targeted support across maternity, health visiting, early years education and childcare, speech and language, SEND and inclusion, family help, and the voluntary and community sector.

- We will work with Neighbourhood Health Teams to align priorities, sharing information roles and referral routes. Where partners have different statutory duties and operational pressures, this plan supports shared outcomes.
- Combined authority alignment.

Families tell us they love coming to the family hubs and know they can access support when they need it to support them on their parenting journey. However, we also know that an offer which is clearer and easier to access will ensure more families receive the support when they need it.

What parents and carers have told us:

- *Parent who attended talk time "he's completely transformed he hardly said one word and now he's using full sentences'*
- *Parent who attended Book Time 'I feel like I understand my child's thought processes more and understand I can do more than just read words on a page'*
- *Parent who attended Musical Me: 'This is such a great session which helps with child development, social skills and parent mental health too (very supportive).'*
- *Parent who attended Musical Me: 'Meeting and socialising with other children, sensory experiences and enjoying music. Please keep these wonderful community classes and sessions going, they're a valuable resource for parents'*

9. Conclusion and next steps

This plan provides a clear, joined up and evidence-based roadmap for delivering Best Start in Life in East Riding. It reflects local and national expectations, targets and need and we believe it demonstrates a shared commitment to helping all children and young people across the East Riding of Yorkshire achieve the best start in life, growing up healthy and happy.

The Best Start in Life Plan covers the next three years, and we will therefore publish a clear delivery and implementation plan. Actions and projects will be developed to address the priorities outlined in this document. Families, practitioners, and stakeholders will be actively engaged in the development of this plan.