

Closing the gap 2022



Introduction

The majority of children in Hertfordshire achieve a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are well prepared and ready to start school by the time they leave reception.

However, a small number of children do not achieve as well as their peers in the early years. This gap increases as children progress through school and ultimately can effect their life chances. We believe that children are being prepared for school from the moment they are born, through the interactions they make, the relationships they develop and the situations they are given access to. This document outlines Hertfordshire's position, the plans we have and how we intend to realise them.



FIND OUT MORE

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/beststart

Best start for life

In March 2021 the government published 'The Best Start for life. A vision for the 1001 critical days' (HM Government, 2021. The Best Start for life, London: Crown Copyright) Partners from the Hertfordshire early years strategic group responded to this with 'The vision for early years services in Hertfordshire' which outlines the priorities that all partners have committed to which will contribute greatly to this strategy.



FIND OUT MORE
Our best start for life.

Context

Research has shown that the pandemic has had a significant impact on our youngest children, particularly those who were already more at risk of achieving at a slower rate than their peers, and not being able to access services has had a negative effect particularly in relation to personal, social and emotional development and also communication and language.



Impact of the pandemic

'Nearly half of early years providers believe the gap between disadvantaged under-fives and their peers has grown during the pandemic, a survey suggests, with the majority finding that fewer children across all backgrounds are reaching expected pre-Covid levels of attainment'.

Early Years alliance - May 2021



Corporate priorities

One of the priorities in the Hertfordshire County Council corporate plan 2022-2025 is to give every child the best possible start in life.

We want all children in Hertfordshire to be able to be happy, healthy and able to reach their full potential. This vision is shared by all partners who work with children aged 0-5 and their families.

This strategy and the accompanying action plan outlines how we intend to intend to fulfil that priority.



FIND OUT MORE

Our corporate plan 2022-25.

Measuring outcomes

Hertfordshire has an outcome framework called the Outcome Bees.

The aim of the framework is to enable us to use a consistent set of indicators to measure the outcomes against the targets we have set. For the purpose of this strategy the sections of the framework we will measure targets against are:

Be independent

Be ambitious

Be included

We recognise that in order for a child to fulfil the 'be happy' criteria, they need to be satisfied in all other outcome areas.



FIND OUT MORE
The Outcome Bees



School readiness

In Hertfordshire our definition of school readiness is that children who are school ready are happy, healthy, curious, and ready to learn.

We believe that enabling children to be ready for school starts from pre birth with the interactions and experiences they are exposed to.



FIND OUT MORE

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Closing the gap

According to the most recent Early Years foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data (2019)....

73%

Of children reached a good level of development

67%

Of males reached a good level of development

79.1%

Of females reached a good level of development

27.4%

Of Hertfordshire's Special Educational Needs (SEN) children reached a good level of development

31.4%

The percentage points between the lowest achieving 20% and all others in Hertfordshire



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Our profile results 2018 to 2019



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EYFS policy



Our plans

1. **Ensure that ALL children are able to take up their Free Early Education and childcare entitlement in a setting that meets their needs.**

2. **Simplify for families the pathways of all partner services**

To ensure that children can get the speech, language and communication support they need at the right time.

3. **Support smooth transitions**

Facilitate the sharing of information to ensure that children's needs are fully met.

4. **Embed the use of progress data**

As a way of informing training and development. Progress data is submitted by all providers to show how children are progressing through the year.

5. **The health and development Ages and Stages Questionnaire results to be shared with the Early Settings**

To enable timely interventions at the earliest possible point.



Measuring our progress

- ◆ An increased number of children reach a good level of development
- ◆ Family Support Service report on the number of interventions instigated as a result of Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) data
- ◆ A greater number of children with SEND are taking up their free entitlement
- ◆ Reports from partners detail children accessing a range of therapies to meet their needs
- ◆ There is an increase in the percentage of children whose level of need is shared before starting school



FIND OUT MORE

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/beststart



Hertfordshire's Local Offer

Hertfordshire's Local Offer is a directory of services that support children and families with special educational needs and disabilities.



Our Local Offer directory of services

Information for children with a social worker.



A handbook that brings together information about children looked after



An early years interactive sign posting tool to support colleagues with Children In Need, Child Protection, Child Looked After or any vulnerable learners in the early years



FIND OUT MORE

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/beststart



Useful links

We know that parents are a child's first teacher. Below you will find a number of links to websites that might help parents to help their child.



Support for children, their parents and carers



Support to develop communication skills through fun activities



Helping you to give your baby the best start in life by providing the building blocks to a healthy brain



Simple fun activities for children 0-5



A range of activities for parents and children to do



Health advice and resources for parents, young people and pregnant women



Information about Hertfordshire's speech and language therapy service

