



Bristol Early Help Partnership

Prevention and Early Help Strategy for Children and Families 2026-2029



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Our vision	9
Priority One: Improve Early Help Offer and Access	17
Priority Two: Best Start in Life (Early Years)	20
Priority Three: Inclusive Education and Attendance	23
Priority Four: Safety from Domestic Abuse	26
Priority Five: Young People Thriving into the Future	8
Priority Six: Physical & Mental Health	31
Priority Seven: Parents/Carers' Health & Well-being	33
Appendix One: Early Help Outcomes and Key Indicators	35

Executive Summary

The Bristol Early Help Partnership Prevention and Early Help Strategy (2025–2028) sets out a city wide commitment to ensuring all children, young people and families in Bristol can easily access information and support to enable them to feel they can belong and thrive in their communities. The strategy aligns with Bristol’s Belonging and Thriving Strategy 2025–2030, emphasising inclusive communities and equitable opportunities for every child and family.

Purpose and Vision

The strategy outlines how partners across health, education, local authority, police, and the voluntary and community sector work together to deliver a **coordinated prevention and early help system**. It aims to ensure families can access the **right help at the right time and place**, strengthening resilience, reducing inequalities, and enabling positive outcomes across all stages of childhood and adolescence.

The vision is that every child and young person in Bristol can thrive in a city that is ambitious, safe and joyful, and where support is accessible from pre birth into adulthood.

Principles

The strategy is underpinned by system-wide principles, including:

- Eliminating inequalities and tackling the impact of poverty
- No Wrong Door Approach
- Trauma-informed and relational approach
- A skilled early help workforce
- Co-design and collaboration with families and communities and partners
- Improved data and information sharing - earlier identification and prevention
- Collaboration and co location of services

It outlines a clear commitment to strengthen collaboration and co-design work with children, young people and families, ensuring strong feedback-loops so that they know how their voice and collaboration informs planning, decision making and results in change.

Strategic Context

The strategy aligns with a wide breadth national and regional strategy and reforms, including for example: Family First Reform, Health 10 Neighbourhood Plan, Youth Matters Youth Strategy; West of England Growth Strategy. These frameworks collectively emphasise prevention, integrated neighbourhood delivery, early intervention, equity and inclusion. This is a continued golden thread across Bristol’s multi agency plans.

Outcomes Framework

The strategy defines 10 core outcomes, grouped under:

- Thriving in early years
- Thriving and achieving in inclusive education
- Thriving into the future
- Families thriving in their communities

Outcomes are measured at strategic, service, and individual/family levels.



Summary of Priority Areas

Priority 1: Improve Early Help Offer and Access

Bristol will expand its Family Hubs network to 16 hubs and strengthen digital, community-based, and multi agency access to support. The focus includes reducing inequalities, improving information sharing, integrated neighbourhood delivery, and workforce development.

Priority 2: Best Start in Life (Early Years)

Building on the Start for Life programme our Best Start in Life Plan focuses on providing better joined up support for families with 0-5 year olds and creating better access to high quality early years education and child care.

Priority 3: Inclusive Education and Attendance

Recognising post-pandemic declines in attendance, Bristol will strengthen early identification of needs, embed trauma-informed approaches, support inclusion, and deliver coordinated multi agency interventions for attendance, behaviour, and SEND support.

Priority 4: Safety from Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can have a profound impact on children and early help can prevent the future need for support from social care. The strategy commits to whole-school approaches, improved early help pathways, enhanced support via Family Hubs, and better information for both children and parents/carers.

Priority 5: Young People Thriving into the Future

The strategy enhances youth provision through Young Futures Hubs, expanded play and youth activities, targeted interventions for those at risk of exploitation, and strengthened education-employment pathways including the Youth Guarantee and NEET Reduction Programme.

Priority 6: Physical & Mental Health

With growing concerns about mental health and health inequalities, the strategy aims to improve pathways for emotional wellbeing, and expanding digital support, and improving access to support for young people in communities and schools.

Priority 7: Parents/ Carers' Health & Well-being

Recognising the potential impact of parental mental health, trauma, and substance misuse on children, Bristol will expand access to adult wellbeing support, peer support, financial and employment support, perinatal mental health pathways, and integrated family support.

Governance

The Bristol Early Help Partnership Board will oversee delivery, reporting into the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership and other citywide boards. An Early Help Delivery Group will coordinate operational leadership and alignment.

Overall Summary

This strategy represents Bristol's comprehensive, multi-agency roadmap to strengthen **prevention, early intervention**, and **community empowerment** for children, young people, and families. Through integrated neighbourhood delivery, strengthened Family Hubs, strong partnership governance, and deep commitment to reducing inequalities, it aims to create a city where every child and family has the support they need to thrive.



Introduction

Our Belonging and Thriving Strategy 2025-2030 sets out our commitment to work together so that all children and young people in Bristol feel they belong, can achieve and thrive, and where they are supported be ambitious, safe and joyful.

‘Every child and young person in Bristol should feel they belong. We want every child to be part of their family, school, and community, and to have the chance to grow, learn, achieve and thrive, no matter who they are or where they come from.’

(Belonging Strategy 2025-2030)

Our Prevention and Early Help Strategy sets out our priorities; how we will work together across the partnership to deliver prevention and early help for children and families; and how we will progress a systems wide approach to ensuring that families are empowered in their communities to thrive, accessing the information and support they need, when they need it.

This strategy sits alongside our Early Help Offer Guidance ([add link](#)).

What is Early Help?

Prevention activity aims to increase the resilience of individuals, families and communities to improve outcomes.

Early help, also known as early intervention, enables families to access the right help at the right time to tackle emerging challenges and support positive outcomes. A family, child or young person may access early help at any stage in a child’s life, from pre-birth into adulthood.

The aim is to prevent issues and concerns arising in the first place through prevention activity, with a focus on early identification of need and an offer of support for families at the earliest opportunity when they need it.

In Bristol, early help is a collaborative response with a range of services and organisations working together with families and communities across the city to provide access to information, advice, guidance, and support.

Early help can keep children safe and improve long term outcomes linked to child development, inclusion and achievement, health and well-being, and financial stability. It is provided through a range of means – digitally, on-line, and in education, community and home settings.

There is strong evidence that effective early help can prevent families’ needs from escalating, enabling and empowering children and families to thrive in Bristol.

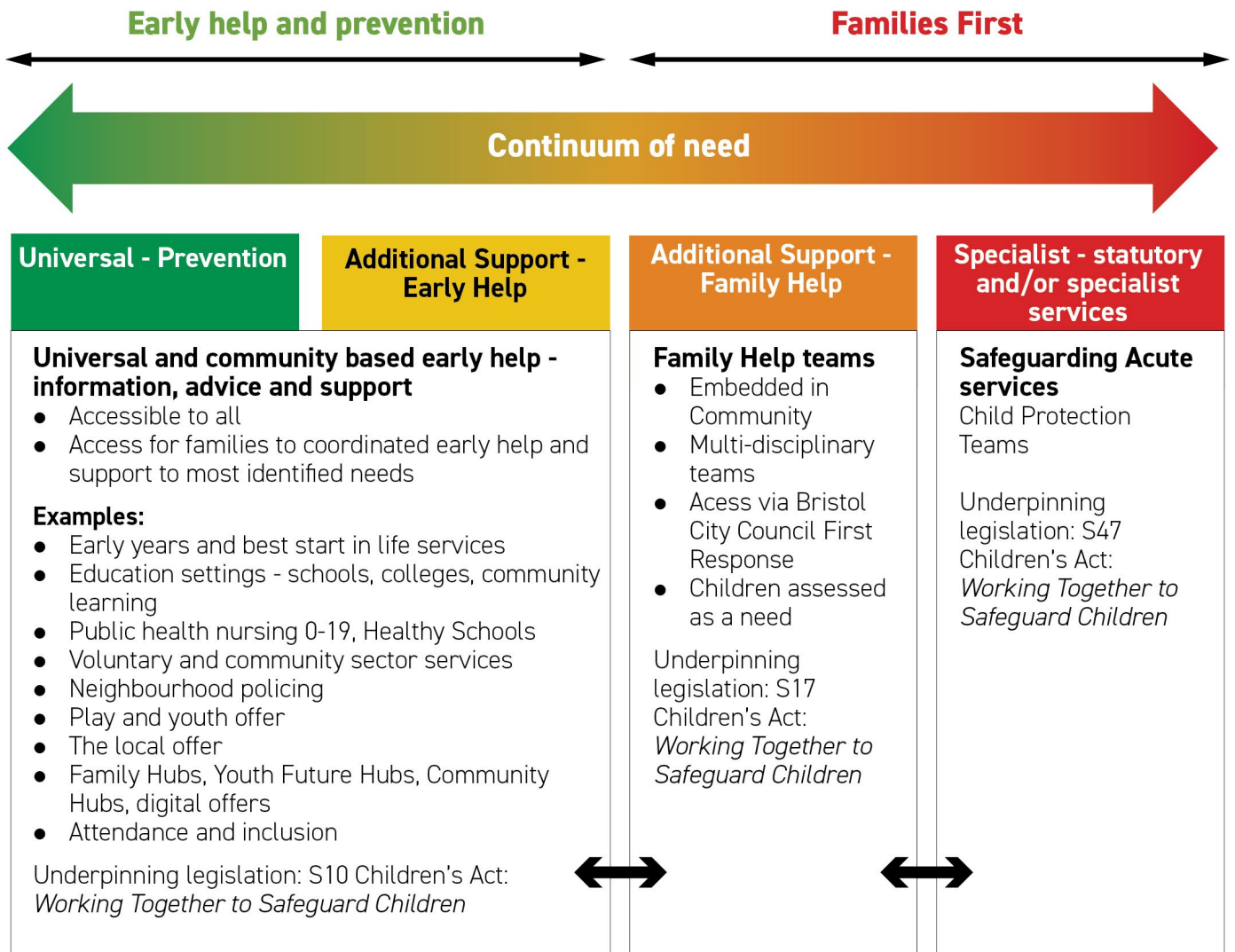
Bristol's Prevention and Early Help System

Our Early Help system is a dynamic, network of interlinking community organisations, services and agencies working collaboratively with children, young people and families in their community. The Early Help Offer Guidance ([link](#)) provides guidance on how to access services and support within the early help system:



Bristol's continuum of need

The [Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership: Effective Support for Children and Families in Bristol](#) outlines the support that children and families can access within the context of the continuum of need.



I-Thrive Framework

The Continuum of Need is closely aligned to the I-Thrive framework.

The I-Thrive framework was developed for use to articulate mental health service delivery and is increasingly used across our services, including health visiting and family hubs, to help articulate service delivery for families.

The emphasis is on prevention and promotion of health and well-being across whole populations. The model recognises that people may need different types of advice, help and support at different times to thrive.



Our vision

Our vision across the partnership is that all children and young people in Bristol feel they belong and can thrive in a city that enables them to be ambitious, safe and joyful.

Our vision for early help is for every child, young person and family to access information, support and help at the right time and the right place to enable them to thrive.

We are committed to eliminating inequality and tackling poverty so that every child in Bristol has the best chance of living a safe and healthy life,

to feel included and to be supported to reach their full potential.

Our long-term ambition is to develop a comprehensive integrated neighbourhood offer across the system that delivers seamless access for children, young people, families and communities to services within their community and across all our agencies – health, police, local authority, education and voluntary and community services.

Our principles – underpinning our strategy and how we work together

Eliminate inequalities and tackle the impact of poverty - breaking the link

We work together to break the link between deprivation, inequalities and poorer outcomes for children, young people and families. We enable children and families most impacted by inequalities and poverty to access the information and help they need at the earliest opportunity, so they are empowered to be healthy and thrive.

Children, young people and families at centre

We work collaboratively with children, young people and families to plan, design and deliver early help. Their leadership and active participation to improve health and wellbeing will be at the centre of all that we do.

No wrong door

Children, young people and families will be able to get information, advice and help from points of access and hubs across the city and wherever they touch services.

Trauma informed and relational approach

Our approach to delivery and collaboration is trauma informed, strength based and relational - we work with the whole family context

and wider sources of support to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Skilled Early Help Workforce

Our connected workforce will be culturally competent, and trauma informed.

Our workforce will understand their role and responsibilities in relation to early help; be confident and skilled in listening to families, identifying need, supporting access to early help as needed.

Data and information sharing

We will improve our data and information sharing to inform our strategy and planning of services; to enable earlier identification of children and families who may benefit from early help; improved targeting of services; and swifter response to needs.

Collaboration and co-location - integrated systems, planning and delivery

We will create opportunities for collaboration and co-location of our service in communities, making it easier for families to get the help they need in their neighbourhood; and using our resources effectively to meet needs. We will simplify pathways between universal and specialist help.

Voice and lived experience of children, young people and families

We work collaboratively with children, young people, families and communities to ensure their lived experience and voices inform the design and delivery of our services.

This includes understanding the barriers to accessing early help and working together to address these.

There are several family voice forums able to support co-design in Bristol. Examples include the Maternity Voices Partnership; Bristol Autism Team Parent Group Leaders; Family Hubs Parent/Carer Panel, Bristol Parent Carer Forum.

The city hosts a vibrant array of youth-led initiatives, including Bristol City Youth Council; Area Youth Forums; Children in Care Council; Listening Partnership (SEND); Young Carers Voice; Post 16 Voice; Barnardo's HYPE. These groups collaborate through the Bristol Youth Voice Network to share learning and improve practice.

There are a range of ways in which we gain understanding of the experience of children, young people and families, Recent examples include:

- National independent DfE commissioned ECORYS **Evaluation of the Family Hubs** programme. This report will provide valuable feedback and insights from 179 families in Bristol about the development of family hubs and their access to services. The data is informing the development of Family Hubs.
- **Bristol Pupil Voice Report 2024**, 2,647 pupils from 35 schools completed survey. The data informs the development of schools' approach to health and well-being. Findings are embedded in the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/9844-jsna-children-and-young-peoples-health-profile> and supports planning and delivery of children and young people health services.
- Young people participate as key partners in the design of the **play and youth offer**. Over 110 young people have taken part in workshops to inform the Young Futures Hub plan.

79% of families said they know where to get support in 24/25 survey compared with 66% in 23/24

Families using Family Hub services are reporting stronger outcomes across health, education, relationships, and housing. Improvements in adult mental health (+20%) and child physical health (+19%) are particularly notable

- **NEET Peer Reduction Report 2025**, funded by the West of England Combined Authority, Bristol City Robins Foundation worked with peer researchers to explore why others in Bristol become NEET. Over 100 interviews combined surveys and conversations, capturing authentic insights from young people. The findings were used to inform the NEET Reduction and South Bristol Youth Guarantee programmes. [Breaking Barriers: What Young People Told Us About Becoming NEET in Bristol – Bristol Post 16](#)
- Following on from the **100 Women Project**, funded by the local DWP to support women experiencing social isolation in Bristol a group of women trained to become social researchers and carried out in-depth interviews with residents in Bristol. The recommendations from the report are shaping the strategy and they have a direct line of communication with the Early Help Partnership Board to ensure a feedback loop on progress.

We will improve our collaboration and co-design work and ensure strong feedback-loops so that children, young people and families know how their voice and collaboration has informed planning, decision making and change.

National, Regional and Local Strategic Context

Prevention and early intervention are reflected across the national strategic landscape. Some of the key national drivers include:

Families First Partnership programme

The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme sets the Government's vision of a single seamless system that brings together targeted early help, children-in-need and multi-agency child protection teams into an integrated model. Universal and community based early help have a critical role in identifying emerging problems and providing support at an early stage.

Local authorities are encouraged to build on the strengths of universal and community based early help when developing Family Help. Family Hubs and other community-based settings can act as a gateway to Family Help and offer an ongoing, local support network to families who no longer require targeted and specialist services.

Figure 1. Our vision for a reformed system

In Bristol: the Families First Transformation Programme is building on the current locality delivery model to develop seamless, partnership delivery within neighbourhoods from early help through to child protection.

Neighbourhood Health Service – 10 Year Health Plan

Sets out the plans for a Neighbourhood Health Service that brings care away from hospitals and into local communities wherever possible and a shift to prevention.

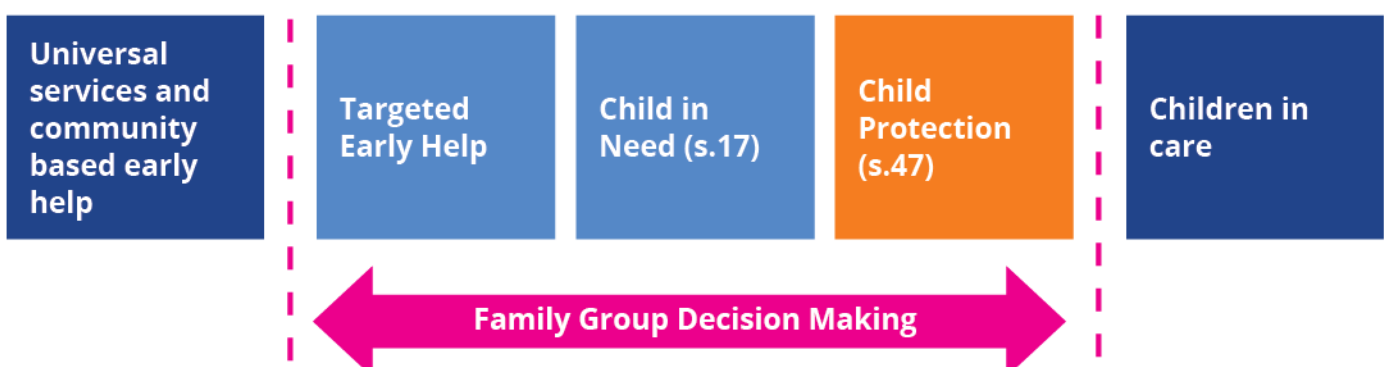
Delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services

Aims to make maternity and neonatal care safer, more personalised and equitable for women, babies and families [NHS England » Three year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services.](#)

Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life Strategy

The plan for improving child development and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5-year-old in England have a good level of development by 2028. The strategy recognises that the foundations of success are laid in early childhood and that some children are getting left behind right from the start [Giving every child the best start in life - GOV.UK](#)

An integrated system of Family Help and Multi-Agency Child Protection



Families First Partnership Guide, DfE, 2025.

The plan is to:

- expand and strengthen family services through Best Start Family Hubs
- strengthen health services – including maternity, health visiting and oral care
- create a more affordable, accessible and sufficient early education and childcare offer
- Improve quality and inclusion within early years settings.

Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy

Sets out the 10-year plan aimed at addressing challenges faced by young people focusing on:

- 1) **People who care** - activity to improve opportunities for young people to build safe, trusting relationships with adults;
- 2) **Place to go and things to do** - investing in youth work and activities, including through Young Futures Hubs ; improving education, guidance, training and support; keeping young people safe in their communities; supporting health and well-being;
- 3) **Seen and Heard** - young people's participation in decision making including through lowering the voting age; involving young people in national and local funding decisions; and methods for young people to hold the government to account on implementation of the strategy.

Better Futures Fund

Aims to enable children access better education, a safe home and a supportive environment through working with government, local communities, charities and social enterprises and philanthropists to work together to give children a better future.

Post-16 education and Skills Reforms

Sets out plans to develop a skilled workforce and break down barriers to opportunity for young people.

Our Children, Our Future Tackling Child Poverty Strategy

Aims to tackle drivers of child poverty across UK

Get Britain Working

Aims to break down barriers to opportunity for young people and sets out the vision for a Youth Guarantee.



Additional Regional and Local Strategic Context

There is city-wide partnership commitment to early help and prevention as articulated in Bristol's Belonging and Thriving Strategy, and this is a golden thread across our strategic landscape.

The Prevention and Early Help Strategy is crosscutting with alignment of priorities and collaborative action towards the achievement of early help outcomes, linking across a number of regional and local plan, such as:

- Belonging and Thriving Strategy 2025-30
- [Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028](#)
- [Health and wellbeing strategy](#)
- BNSSG Maternity and Early Years Priority and Plan;
- BNSSG Infant feeding strategy (2026)
- [Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028](#)
- [Bristol Harm outside the Home Strategy 2025-2030](#)
- Bristol Youth Justice Partnership Plan
- [Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2024-2027](#)
- Healthy Child Programme [Bristol Healthy Schools](#)
- [Bristol Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan](#)
- [Bristol Youth and Play Alliance Strategy](#)
- [The West of England Growth Strategy](#)
- Community Safety Plan
- Children and Education Plan
- [Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Plan 24-29](#)
- Bristol Drug and Alcohol Strategy (2026)

Governance

Our Bristol Early Help Partnership Board oversees the development and implementation of our early help strategy. The Bristol Early Help Partnership Board is accountable to the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership via the Keeping Children Safe Board. Progress on the strategy will also be reported to the Health and Well-Being Board, Keeping Communities Safe Board and Children and Young People's Board as requested.

An Early Help Delivery Group will be established in early autumn 2025 to bring together the key developments at an operational leadership level to ensure the continuous alignment of developments and that and opportunities for collaboration are maximised.

Bristol – A city of possibility for children and young people

Bristol is a young and diverse city. Our mix of cultures and experience is one of Bristol’s biggest strengths...

Over **1 in 5**
Bristol residents
are aged
0-19



The city is home to over 180 nationalities, 90 main languages and 45 religions



Over a third of Bristol’s children and young people are from ethnic minority groups


For many children and young people, Bristol is a place of belonging and provides an opportunity to achieve and thrive. We know, however, that this is not the case for all children and young people. For instance...

35.4%
of children and young people live in poverty (after housing costs) and nearly 16,000 experienced food insecurity




The rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Bristol in 2024 was 158.7 per 100,000 population. The gap between Bristol and England rates has narrowed significantly since 2014 marking the city average as statistically similar to the national average (138.3 per 100,000) for the first time in 2024.

We know that children in poverty do least well at primary and secondary age and that South and East Bristol are amongst the worst places in the country for educational outcomes for young people by the age of 21



While the rate of children achieving a Good Level of Development in their early years is above the national average, the rate for children from deprived parts of Bristol is much lower

Hospital admissions of children and young people for mental health conditions, and as a result of self-harm are both high and well above the England average. Bristol’s 2024 0 –17yrs in-patient admission rate for mental health conditions was 131 per 100,000 children, compared with the England average of 80 per 100,000 children



But we've already seen how working together can make a positive difference in the lives of these children and young people, and the communities they live and play in...

68.7%

of children had a Good Level of Development which is higher than the national average



We bucked the national trend with a reduction in the percentage of reception children who were overweight



We've seen an increase in attendance across all education phases up to 91.9% and are getting closer to the national average



The average Attainment 8 score has increased by 1.6 points for Key Stage 4 across the last academic year and we are above the national average for the first time in over a decade



We've seen a reduction in the rate of repeat referrals to children's social care. The rate of 19% is well below the England average of 22%

19%
Bristol

22%
England

The rate of children who have a Child Protection plan and the number of children entering care has steadily reduced, and our rate of children in long-term stable care is now better than the national average.

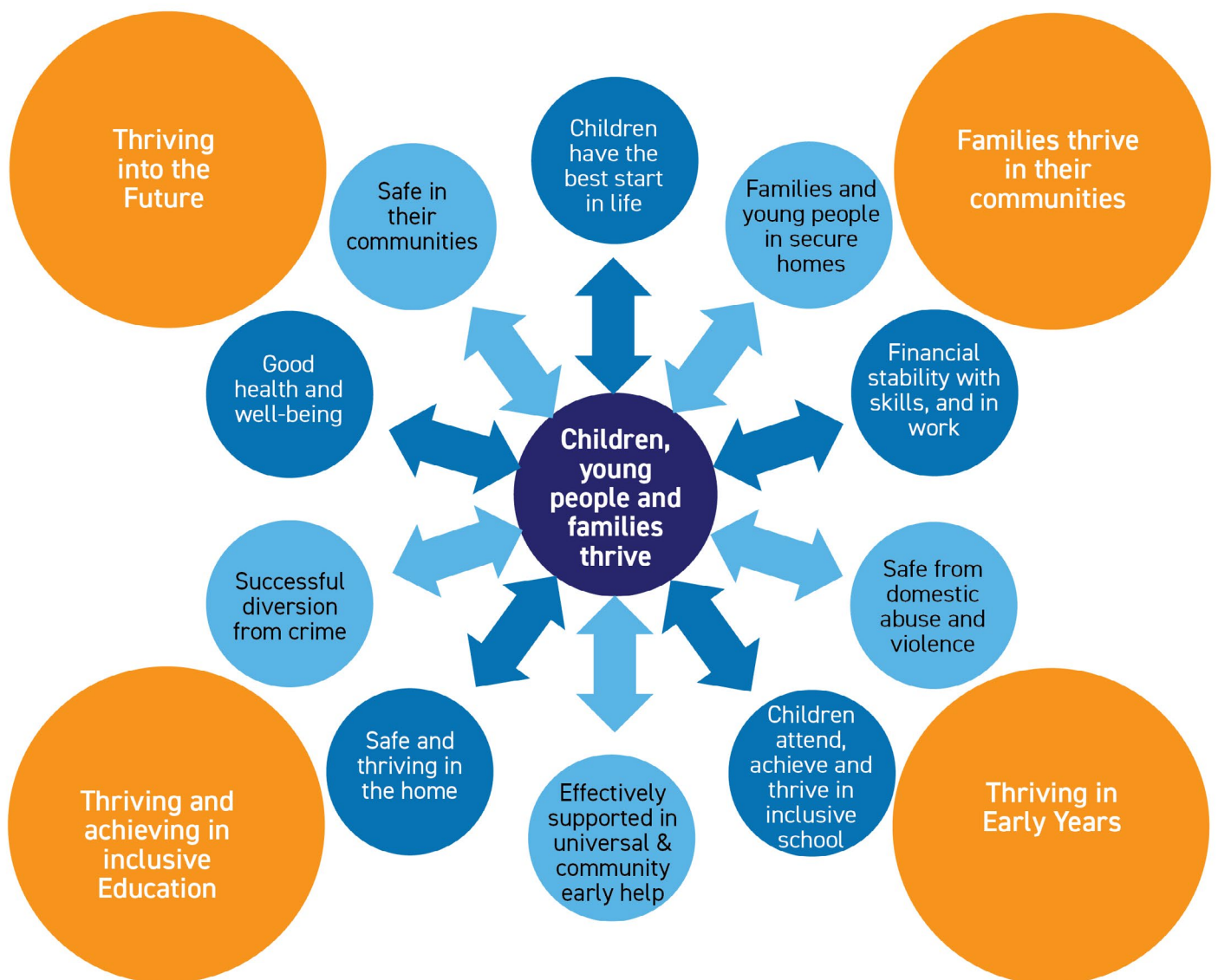


Our Outcomes Framework

10 key outcomes enabling children, young people and families to thrive:

We measure progress against early help outcomes on different levels:

- **Strategic level** - measured through key performance indicators. This provides us with high level data that tells how effectively our early help system is working and where we need to focus.
Appendix: EH Outcomes – Key Indicators
- **Project and service level** - using theory of change and logic models to define clearly the activity needed to achieve specific outcomes and the ways in which we will measure impact.
- **Child, young person, family level** – capturing change and impact for a child, young person and parents/carers/carers, help the family identify change and outcomes they want to achieve and measure the distance they have travelled.
- Qualitative **feedback** from and listening to the **voices** of children, young people and families



Priority One: Improve the early help offer and access to early help

All parents/carers at different times will need some help at some point in their child's journey. We want all children, young people and families to thrive and prosper through having equitable and timely support in their community.

We are committed to reducing inequalities in health, social and educational outcomes for children, supporting all children and young people to reach their full potential. This includes tackling poverty; addressing barriers to access to services and ensuring we can identify and challenge racism and discrimination in our organisations and communities.

Early help services are open access, but we target our resources and services to reach children and families most impacted by inequalities and poverty.

Our aim is for the early help offer to be equitable across the city with collaborative partnerships that improve outcomes, particularly for the most underserved children, young people and families

What we have done so far

Family Hubs

Since 2022, Bristol has opened 3 Family Hubs for families with children ages 0-19 (up to 25 with SEND)

Bristol's Family hubs bring together community-based access to information and support for families.

Our Family Hub Campus model enables families to access information and support across a wider range of community settings and at all stages of a child's development. Family Hub Navigators based within communities help families connect with the help they need.

The Digital Family Hub provides families and professionals with access to guidance, e-learning and information about where to get help.

Families have free access to evidenced based online courses relating to emotional health, child development and parent wellbeing.

Data-sharing across the family hub network is used to inform whole-family working and decisions about the family hub network. There is commitment to develop this to ensure consistency.

Family Help

Our Family Help multi-professional teams within our Family Help and Safeguarding locality teams deliver targeted support to families with multiple and complex needs who do not require a statutory service.

What we will do next

1. Expand our family hub offer and early support service.
 - A network of 16 Family Hubs will provide access to early support services and activities, and signposting for all families with children ages 0-19 (up to 25 with SEND).
2. Early Help Link workers will provide support to schools and professionals in navigating and accessing the early help offer for families.
 - Improve communication and support to partners in coordinating the early help offer.
 - The digital offer will be further developed.
3. Support development of multi-agency collaboration through the Family Hub Alliance at locality level:
 - Collaborate across services to identify and respond to needs within specific communities.
 - Allocate test and learn grants for voluntary and community sector organisations, including community insight work to inform strategic planning at a locality level.
4. Provide integrated support for families through the Family Hub offer linked to gaining skills; access to work and financial stability, including:
 - information, training, access to computers, careers information, advice and guidance,
 - financial education and coaching
 - community learning including critical skills for life and work
 - job coaching and support.
5. Strengthen integration through the development of future public health nursing services.

6. Apply learning from the South Bristol Early Help Project to inform early help developments across the city.
 - Build on the school leaders led partnership approach to preventative early help for families in South Bristol.
 - Implement a test and learn approach aimed at delivering evidenced based change from pre-birth to employment and lifelong skills.
7. Improve data and Information sharing
 - Improve and tackle barriers to information sharing within family hubs across health, education and family support services to improve the offer of, and access to early help for to those who need it most.
 - Embed a digital front door where families can view the offer in their neighbourhoods.
8. Develop the early help workforce.
 - Develop a skilled early help workforce that is:
 - Culturally competent and skilled in anti-discriminatory practice
 - Skilled in trauma-informed and relational practice
 - Confident in how to access the early help offer and their role-specific contribution to early help.

Success Measures

- No of families accessing family hubs services and activities.
 - % of those accessing, who are from 20% most deprived wards.
 - % of those accessing, who are from minoritised communities.
- No of children closed to early support with outcomes achieved
- No of children referred to Family Help (reduced rates)
- Reduced referral rate to children's social care (longer term outcome)
- Reduced referrals to CAMHS (longer term outcome).
- Number of parents/carers/carers who progress from all employment support activities into work or better work
- Number of parents/carers/carers without a Level 2 qualification engaged in adult skills and community learning courses
- Number of parents/carers/carers enrolled in community learning that develop new skills that support progression towards employment.

Priority Two: All children are thriving in early years and have the best start in life

We want all parents/carers and carers to have access good quality family support services and activities and the support they need to enable their children to reach a good level of development, including social, physical and emotional well-being.

What we have done so far

Start for life services (ages 0-2)

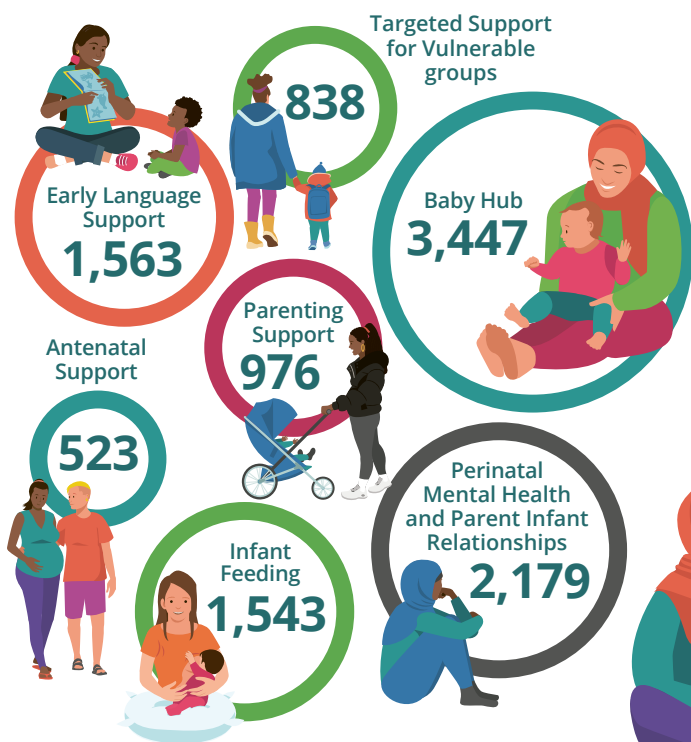
Bristol’s Start for Life programme has enabled us to develop a more consistent, and evidence-based offer to be delivered through our Family Hubs model in some of our most underserved communities where outcomes are poorest.

This has included a focus on workforce development and integrated delivery and evidence-based practice across mid-wifery, health visiting, early help family support services, early years education and the community sector.

Bristol Family Hubs: Funded Programme Highlights 2024–2025

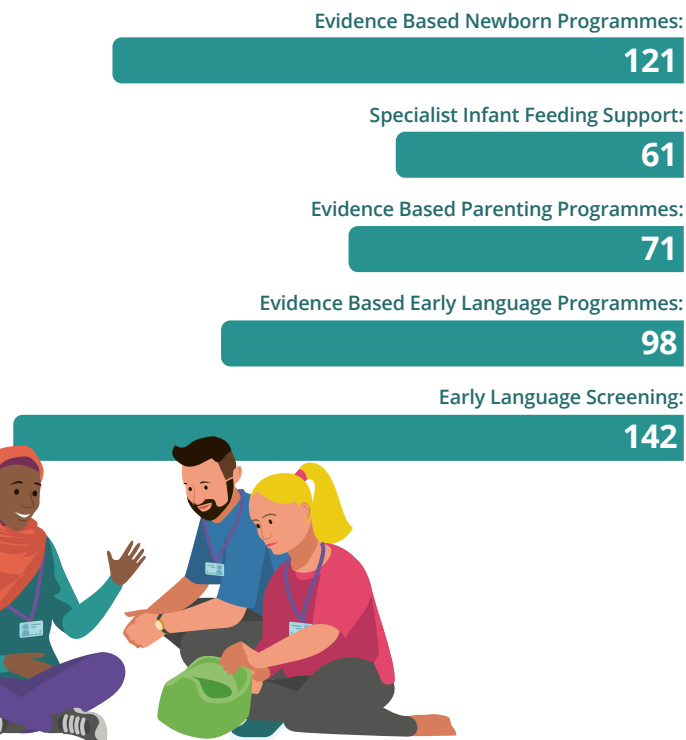
Family Hubs: Start for Life services footfall

11,069 families have accessed our Start for Life offer.



Specialist workforce development

493 staff have received specialist training, equipping them to provide consistent, high-quality support.



Bristol and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub

The Bristol and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub provides comprehensive support to early years setting to improve outcomes for children in their local areas across the early years' foundation stage, focusing on areas of development that research informs us have most impacted on COVID-19; personal and social development; communication and language and early literacy and maths.

The range of support includes information, advice and guidance on evidenced based approaches, supporting a local network and a range of CPD programmes.

What we will do next

Implementation of Best Start for Life Plan 2025-30

1. We will work with families to develop and implement a Best Start in Life Plan with a focus on further developing collaborative working across all our services to:
 - Provide better joined up support for families with 0–5-year-olds.
 - Create better access to early years education and child care
 - Develop high quality early years education across the city.

Success Measures

- % of children achieving good level of development at 2-2.5 yr review (Local Government Outcome Framework - LGOF)
- % of children achieving good level of development at 5 yrs (LGOF)
- % of children in receipt of free school meals achieving a good level of development
- % Women smoking at delivery.
- Up-take of peri-natal mental health services by those living in 20% most deprived areas.
- Breast feeding (6-8 weeks) overall and in the 20% most deprived areas
- Child immunisations age 2 and age 5
- Take up rates: 15 hr offer for 2 yr olds receiving additional support; universal 15 hr offer 3-4 yr olds (LGOF)
- Oral Health: Percentage of 5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay – 5yr olds (LGOF)

Priority Three: Children have an inclusive, supportive education and attend school

Attendance patterns have shifted since the Covid-19 pandemic both nationally and in Bristol. Rates of persistent and severe absence have increased and with this comes concerns about inequality, and lost potential.

We know that poor school attendance affects a child's chance of securing good educational outcomes and has potential wider impacts on a child's long-term life chances such as wellbeing, and future economic outcomes.

Regular attendance and inclusion in school are strong protective factors against risks such as criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, and involvement in criminal activity.

There are many root causes that impact on attendance or may impact on behaviour that may lead to exclusion. These include inequalities, poverty, discrimination, unmet SEND needs, experience of childhood trauma, mental health and well-being (child and/or adult), and domestic abuse.

Creating trauma informed supportive and inclusive environments for children and parents/carers in education settings to respond to the underlying issues that may impact a child's attendance, engagement and behaviour in school is key to preventing issues emerging.

Earlier identification and support for children, young people and their families to respond to emerging needs and help them access appropriate support in early years settings, school, home and community environments is needed.

What we have done so far

- Healthy Schools supports schools to adopt a preventative, evidence-based, whole school approach to improve the health and wellbeing of the whole school community by creating a more inclusive and supportive environment.
- Bristol City Council's attendance team supports schools with their attendance strategies through targeted support meetings, an attendance toolkit and self-evaluation tool, resources, training and professional development, consultation and support.
- Schools are encouraged to refer pupils with attendance below 90% and engage families early to prevent escalation. Attendance officers offer advice to schools and families and referrals to early help and external agencies as part of their early intervention toolkit.
- Support for children missing education is coordinated through multi-agency panels involving education, health, social care, and other partners.
- Where schools participate in the Weapons in School programme and Drugs in School programme children and young people are offered alternative packages of support delivered by the Youth Justice Service as an alternative to criminalisation and school exclusion.

What we will do next

1. Bristol Excellence in Schools Group will develop attendance partnership work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.
2. Embed a Team Around the School model to support schools in identifying needs and enabling families to access early help at the earliest opportunity.
3. Deliver practice and interventions to support children's attendance and inclusion from early years through to 19 at the earliest opportunity, in the context of working with the family to identify and address needs. The school leaders led South Bristol Early Help Project will:
 - strengthen use of data, including qualitative feedback from children, young people and families to inform activity.
 - develop and deliver partnership activity to support attendance that is focused on the child and parent support and addressing underlying factors.
 - evaluate impact and learning to inform developments across the city.
4. Through our [Harm Outside the Home Strategy \(2025-30\)](#) we have committed to:
 - support attendance, inclusion and engagement, including through targeted mentoring, curriculum support, and social emotional learning opportunities..
 - clear support plans for inclusion through a prevention pathway/panel.
5. Strengthen capacity to support young people's attendance and inclusion through our Young Futures Hub programme.



Inclusion and support for children with SEND

6. Implement actions identified in the early intervention strand of the [Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028](#)
7. Improve joint working between health visiting, family hubs and early years following the 2-year review.
8. Improve early identification of need and inclusion through continued skill development across family hub and wider early help workforce.
9. Expand delivery of evidenced based interventions in Family Hubs to
 - improve attachment,
 - reduce inequalities in speech and language; and reduce the need for more specialist support in later years.
10. Improve workforce awareness and communication of the offer and pathways
 - SEND graduated pathway and Bristol's inclusive Play and Youth Offer.
 - speech and language pathway..
11. Enhance early intervention and support through Bristol City Council's new Inclusive Learning Service and collaborative work with SENDCO clusters.
12. Refresh the Graduated Approach framework to guide schools in supporting SEND especially at the early stage. Roll out the Digital SEND support tool for consistent identification and support
13. Tackle disproportionality within suspensions for children with SEND and children from Black and ethnic minoritised groups.

Our Success Measures:

- Good level of development at 5 years for children with SEND
- Improve attendance – reduce persistent absence/severe absent rates (+ for children with SEND)
- Reduce number of exclusions (+for children with SEND)
- Reduce rates and numbers of suspensions (+ for children with SEND, plus for children from Black and ethnic minoritised groups)
- Children with SEND supported on mainstream schools
- Close the gaps in attainment for children from marginalised groups
- Number of young people with SEND aged 18-25 who progress into education, training and paid employment.

Priority Four: Children are safe from domestic abuse and violence

Nationally it is estimated that 1 in 5 children witness domestic abuse and that 1 in 3 cases of partner abuse involve children living in the household.

In Bristol, domestic abuse is the third highest reason for initial contact for children open to social care alongside physical abuse and neglect. This was the primary reason for referral for 668 children opened to children's social care in 2024/5.

Witnessing domestic abuse is potentially a traumatic experience for children that can result in a range of emotional, psychological, behavioural and social challenges.

We know that support from parents/carers and family, other supportive relationships, trauma informed responses, and participation in extra-curricular activities can help to mitigate the negative effects.

The association between poverty and domestic abuse is complex. Poverty and a lack of financial means can trap a woman in an abusive relationship and financial strain may also exacerbate violent and abusive behaviours. Women who have experienced DVA are more likely to report both financial difficulties and ongoing financial abuse from former partners (eg withholding Child Support Contributions). (Joseph Rowntree Foundation/ University of Bristol)

Our Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy has a strong emphasis on prevention and is focused on promoting healthy relationships for children and young people as well as early intervention and support for children impacted by domestic abuse.

What we have done so far

- Redesign and relaunch of the Bristol Idea Award
- Successful bid by Next link and partners for Home Office Funding for the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA Fund, increasing the offer of support to children and young people in the city.
- The Healthy Schools Pupil Voice Survey provides valuable insights into young people's experiences including experience of family conflict and unwanted sexual attention from peers.
- Domestic abuse support is offered via Family Hubs and through early family support

[\(Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy 2024\)](#)

What we will do next

1. Support Bristol schools to take a whole school approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence through completion of the Bristol Ideal Award which includes implementation of the VAWG framework.
2. Implement learning from Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) interventions and Home Office evaluation of Healthy Relationships Schools work.
3. Schools will be supported to deliver good Quality Relationship Sex and Health Education lessons with teachers trained to adapt approaches for children with SEND.
4. Schools will be supported to implement bystander approaches (Actions above from [Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy 2024](#))

Additionally, we will:

5. Ensure wider early help workforce has skills and is confident in early identification and implementing pathway to respond to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

6. Expand our Family Hub offer, including the digital offer, to strengthen information, coaching and support for benefit advice, financial education, skill development and employment support for parents/carers with children with low income and no or low formal qualifications.
7. Expand Family Hub offer to support victims of domestic abuse recovery, including specific programmes to support children's recovery.
8. Provide specific programmes for girls and young women that have experienced domestically abusive relationships.
9. Improve communication and mapping of pathway for domestic abuse support services for children and parents/carers.

Success measures

- Reduction in police referrals to children's social care for domestic abuse
- Reduction in % of referrals to children's social care with domestic abuse as primary need
- Numbers of schools engaged with Bristol Ideal Award and Healthy Schools programme.

Priority Five: Young people thriving into the future

All children and young people should have the foundations, opportunities, skills and confidence to thrive into adulthood and feel safe in their communities.

We will enhance the offer for children and young people to deliver improved outcomes linked to:

- **Improving physical, emotional and mental health and well-being (See Priority six)**
- **Opportunities for education, personal and social development, skills and careers**
- **Reducing children's vulnerability to being drawn into crime**
- **Being safe in their communities**

What we have done so far

Play and Youth Offer

The Offer is developed in partnership with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, Bristol Youth and Play Alliance (BYPA), Bristol City Council (BCC) and children and young people. It includes BCC funding via a grant-funded model. The Alliance is a collective of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations providing youth activities and sector leadership across the city.

The Offer is designed to support the personal, social, and emotional development of children and young people aged 8–18 (up to 25). Delivery is prioritised in geographical areas of greatest need and aims to ensure daily provision across wards, with additional bridging support to help young people access opportunities.

The Offer provides open access provision as well as tailored support for priority groups such as young carers, care leavers, children and young people with SEND and those from minoritised communities. 21,729 children and young people accessed the offer in 2024/5 through over 186 weekly play and youth sessions across the city.. [\(Early Help Offer Guidance\)](#)

Reducing children's vulnerability to being drawn into crime

Bristol's youth justice service (YJS) delivers targeted early intervention for children on the cusp of offending. This will be further developed through the Prevention Partnership. Additional group and individual work with young people at risk of exploitation and serious youth violence is both commissioned and directly delivered via Bristol's Safer Connections and violence reduction partnership. Barnardo's Against Child Exploitation is BCCs commissioned strategic partner.

Safe in their communities

Bristol's Harm Outside the Home strategy (2025) outlines how partners will work together to prevent children and young people from harm in community contexts, including online. This includes early identification and intervention for children and young people at risk of child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence and harm outside the home.

Support to education, employment and training

Young people are supported into education, employment, and training (EET) through several programmes focused on meaningful experience of work opportunities and skill developments. This includes specific support for young people in Youth Justice Service, those with SEND, and Care Leavers.

What we will do next

1. Co-design a new cohesive city-wide youth strategy
2. Improve young people's access to trusted adults, activities, opportunities and the support they need in their communities
 - Co-design and open a DCMS funded Young Futures Hub in East Central Bristol in March 2026
 - Open the Bristol's Youth Zone 224 in South Bristol in June 2027
 - Create welcoming, safe spaces, with a range of youth work activities and co-located multi-agency support services in our Hubs
3. Develop the strategic leadership, quality assurance and capacity of the City's Youth Offer through Bristol's local youth transformation plan
 - improve evidence impact and outcomes for young people through the Offer
4. Deliver our Youth Guarantee in South Bristol
 - supporting young people ages 17-21 into education, employment and training (EET).

5. Deliver an enhanced offer of coaching and skill development programmes
 - Improved offer for 15-year-olds and 16/17-year-olds through the West of England Combined Authority funded NEET Reduction Programme.
 - Co-located Post 16 services in our Hubs
6. Develop a Partnership Prevention Pathway
 - Earlier identification of young people at risk of exploitation and crime
 - create a tailored plan of support.
 - Improve digital safety through education and empowerment work with young people across our youth services and in our schools
7. Improve access to early support for young people at risk of homelessness.

Success measures

- Reduction in first time entrants to youth justice
- Reduced reoffending rate for young people
- Numbers of children at risk or experiencing harm outside the home
- Numbers of children and young people reporting feeling safe in their communities (Bristol Pupil Voice Survey)
- No of young people aged 17-21 who achieve a positive outcome through the Youth Guarantee programme
- % of 16–17-year-olds who are NEET
- % of 16–17-year-olds whose destination is Not Known
- % 18–25-year-olds with an EHCP NEET/ Not Known
- Number of young people aged 17-21 who achieve a positive EET outcome through the Youth Guarantee programme.



Priority Six: Improving children and young people's health, including emotional well-being and mental health

Improving children and young people's health and well-being is integral to enabling young people to thrive and remains a high priority for young people in Bristol (Youth Council Report 2024).

The Quality-of-Life Survey 2024/5 found that 66.1% of 16-24-year-olds report being satisfied with life. 20.5% report poor mental well-being, rising to 24% for those living in the 10% most deprived areas. For school pupils, reported levels of poor mental health are lower: 12.8% of primary school pupils and 10.4% of secondary pupils report poor mental health (Pupil Voice Survey 2024).

Bristol's admission rate for children (0-17) with mental health disorders has been higher than the national average since 2019 and there is a higher rate of self-harm presenting to Accident and Emergency (A & E) amongst 15-19-year-olds than any other age group. (JSNA Child profile 2025 up-date).

Young people also want good access to information and support on a range of issues such as vaping, drug and alcohol use, sexual health and relationship matters, healthy eating.

What we have done so far

- Bristol's Play and Youth offer enables children and young people to access positive activities which have a focus on supporting children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- Support and advice about sexual health and relationships and drug and alcohol use is available online and through school nursing and organisations such as Brook, Unity and Bristol Drug Project.
- A range of in person and digital services are commissioned via ICB and Bristol City Council including Kooth; Off the Record and, the Silver Cloud service from Autumn 2025.
- The Kooth digital offer has been expanded to 10- 18-year-olds in response to needs identified in the Bristol Pupil Voice survey
- Primary mental health workers are located within Family Help services and offer consultancy and training to the targeted early help workforce.

What we will do next

1. Improve access to emotional well-being and mental health services
 - Better communication of the pathway for emotional and mental health support, including through the digital offer.
 - Improve access to the Mental Health Support Teams through a transformation plan.
2. Provide an enhanced offer of health and wellbeing support through colocated services in Youth Hubs.
3. Develop swifter and enhanced access to 1:1 support for young people where there are early indicators of declining mental health, emotionally based school avoidance and self harm.

Success measures

- Reduced Obesity rates yr 6
- Numbers of children participating in play and youth services
- Participation in sports & physical activities (Active lifestyles survey) /Pupil voice survey
- No/% SEN Support for SEMH/ EHCP requests for SEMH
- No accessing youth counselling services/ MHST
- Young people supported by early intervention drug and alcohol services
- Reduced prevalence of drug and alcohol use (Pupil voice survey)
- Reduction in self-harm for 15–19-year-olds

Priority Seven: Families thrive in their communities - Parents/carers are supported to have their health and well-being needs met

All parents/carers want to do the best for their children and parenting is both rewarding and challenging. Most parents/carers will need help at some point. The impact of stress, and more long-term issues such as unresolved early childhood trauma can affect parenting or a parent's ability to cope. Being a parent when dealing with one's own health challenges can be particularly stressful, and can exacerbate problems and may have an impact on children in the household. Challenges for parents/carers such as poor mental health or substance use can be underlying factors contributing to a child's experience of neglect and abuse.

Enabling parents/carers to access information, advice and early help linked to their needs as both an adult and a parent, including their own health and well-being is a key priority to supporting families in being empowered to thrive. This includes making sure the right help is available in their communities to address stress factors such as money and debt issues, and access early support to promote good health and well-being.

What we have done so far

- The [Bristol Family Hubs](#) site includes a section for help for parents/carers with a wide range of information and sign posting from housing to debt advice.
- A range of family friendly information about child development, parenting and self-care for parents/carers is available on line through [Bristol Family Hubs](#) website.
- [Bristol Family Hubs](#) across the city provide access to advice, information and support, including support groups for parents/carers with children ages 0-19 and will help sign post to other services where needed.
- A wide range of parenting courses and programmes are available both online and face to face in the community for parents/carers, including dads, with children across the age ranges, including programmes for children with specific needs.
- Drug and alcohol and mental health and well-being support is available through specialist workers across Family Hubs.
- Bristol Drugs and Young People Service deliver family programmes with families impacted by parental drug use and support for children impacted by substance use.
- Support for children impacted by substance use is provided by Horizons Youth.
- Bristol's perinatal mental health pathway has been developed and peri-natal mental health visiting support is available for parents/carers via [Bristol Family Hubs](#)
- Family Nurse Partnership provides support to young parents.
- [WorkWell West](#) provides a range of local support services for people over age 16 living in BNSSG with an impairment or health condition who is struggling to stay in work, return to a job or trying to find new employment.

What we will do next

- Improve the mapping and communication of the mental health pathway to promote easier access to the right help at the right time.
- Improve support, including peer support opportunities for parents/carers in their communities, further developing the current offer available via Family Hubs.

Success measures

- Number parents/carers with/reporting positive emotional health and wellbeing including during perinatal period (participants in parent support activities)
- Number of adults with health conditions and other complex barriers supported into work through work well
- Reductions in numbers of children open to Family Help where parental mental health is a concern
- Reductions in numbers of children open to Family Help where parental drug and alcohol misuse is a concern.

Appendix One Early Help Outcomes and Key Indicators

Outcomes and key indicators	
<p>Children are effectively supported in universal/ community early help</p> <p>Priority One</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in no. of families accessing family hubs services and activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of those accessing, who are from 20% most deprived wards. ● % of those accessing, who are from minoritised communities. ● No. of children closed to early support with outcomes achieved ● Reduced referral rate to Family Help (longer term outcome) ● Reduced rates open with children in need/ child protection plans ● Reduced referrals to CAMHS (longer term outcome).
<p>Children have the best start in life - 0-5</p> <p>Priority Two</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of children achieving good level of development at 2-2.5 yr review (Local Government Outcome Framework - LGOF) ● % of children achieving good level of development at 5 yrs (LGOF) (+ with SEND) ● % of children in receipt of free school meals achieving a good level of development ● % Women smoking at delivery. ● Up-take of peri-natal mental health services by those living in 20% most deprived areas. ● Breast feeding (6-8 weeks) overall and in the 20% most deprived areas ● Child immunisations age 2 and age 5 ● Take up rates: 15 hr offer for 2 yr olds receiving additional support; universal 15 hr offer 3-4 yr olds (LGOF) ● Oral Health: Percentage of 5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay – 5yr olds (LGOF) ● Referrals to EY SEND panel
<p>Children, young people and families are in secure homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Households with children in temporary accommodation ● Families in B & B over 6 weeks

Outcomes and key indicators	
<p>Families have financial security</p> <p>Priority One</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of children (U16) living in relative low-income families ● Free school meal rate ● Reduce % of families that have experienced moderate or worse food insecurity ● Number of parents/carers who progress from all employment support activities into work or better work ● Number of parents/carers without a Level 2 qualification engaged in adult skills and community learning courses ● Number of parents/carers enrolled in community learning that develop new skills that support progression towards employment
<p>Young people are supported into education, training and employment</p> <p>Priority Six</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No of young people aged 17-21 who achieve a positive outcome through the Youth Guarantee programme ● % of 16–17-year-olds who are NEET ● % of 16–17-year-olds whose destination is Not Known ● % 18–25-year-olds with an EHCP NEET/Not Known
<p>Families are safe from domestic abuse and violence</p> <p>Priority Four</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in police notifications to children's social care for domestic abuse ● Reduction in % of referrals to children's social care with domestic abuse as primary need ● Numbers of schools engaged with Bristol Ideal Award and Healthy Schools programme
<p>Children attend, achieve and thrive in inclusive school settings</p> <p>Priority Three</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve attendance – reduce persistent absence/severe absent rates (+ for children with SEND) ● Reduce number of exclusions (+for children with SEND, + ethnicity) ● Reduce rates and numbers of suspensions (+ for children with SEND, + ethnicity) ● Close the gaps in attainment for children from marginalised groups ● Children with SEND supported in mainstream school ● Improve attainment ● Number of young people with SEND aged 18-25 who progress into education, training and paid employment

Outcomes and key indicators

<p>Children and young people are safe and thriving in the home</p> <p>Priority One</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in accidental and non-accidental injuries ● Reduced referrals to First Response due to physical abuse and neglect ● Reduced no of children with Children in Need Plan, Child protection plan, or looked after. ● % of children report feeling safe at home – Bristol Pupil Voice Survey?
<p>Children, and young people are successfully diverted from crime</p> <p>Priority Five</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in first time entrants to youth justice ● Reduced reoffending rate for young people
<p>Children and young people are safe in their communities and from harm outside the home</p> <p>Priority Five</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Numbers of children at risk or experiencing harm outside the home ● Numbers of children and young people reporting feeling safe in their communities (Bristol Pupil Voice Survey)