

Best Start in Life

Best Start in Life strategy published July 2025 set out the UK Government's long-term vision to improve child development outcomes from pregnancy through age five, outlining a whole-system approach to:

- Better Support for Families
- More Accessible Early Education and Childcare
- Improving Quality in Early Years (including Reception)
- Strengthen Early Health Interventions

Every local authority must publish a Best Start local plan by 31.03.2026.



Measurables outcomes

- **Target set for BCP Council:** At the end of the 2027/28 academic year, **at least 79.9%** achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) and **at least 60.1%** of those eligible for Free School Meals achieving a GLD
- Other outcomes will be outlined in **Best Start in Life local plan** as markers of progress towards GLD outcome, as well as other indicators for success
- Achievement of GLD is the responsibility of all services that support children and their families pre-birth to age 5, through **collaborative working**

Governance

- Best Start in Life Partnership
- Stakeholder Engagement: Dorset HealthCare Trust, BCP Public Health, Parent/Carers, Voluntary Sector, Early Years Sector, Perinatal Mental Health, MHST team, Speech & Language Team, Early Help Leads, Data Teams, Schools and Education providers

Best Start Family Hubs will:

- Be based in most deprived areas (70% of hubs located in the most deprived 30% areas)
- Enhance and build on well-targeted existing provision
- Have trained staff to connect families to range of 0-5 universal health and family services (collocated where possible)
- Onsite professional support for parent/carers of children with additional need (SEND professional)
- Deliver outreach services linked to hub site
- Parents, carers and VCFS organisations involved in shaping offer
- Deliver core services – HLE programmes, Parenting programmes, Perinatal mental health support, Parent-infant relationship support, Infant-feeding support, Support for children with additional needs



Funding grants are to be used to:

- Establish and deliver Best Start Family Hubs including using branding
- Provide evidence-based parenting and home learning environment services
- Develop and implement Best Start local plans including workforce development plans

Strand	% ¹	2026-27 Allocation ²	2027-28 Allocation	2028-29 Allocation
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - programme	46%	£442,200	£361,600	£371,300
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - capital	11%	£88,400	£90,200	£92,000
Parenting support	18%	£147,700	£149,600	£156,100
Home learning environment support	26%	£212,700	£215,300	£224,800
Total		£891,000	£816,600	£844,100

Bringing together a wide range of statutory and non-statutory services for 0-5s spanning education, childcare, health and social care

Update on progress

- One Best Start Family Hub site identified (Boscombe Family Hub) with additional site (West locality) to be identified by April 2026
- Project managers in place to support preparation and delivery
- Best Start in Life Workgroup established with key stakeholders
- Mapping work underway to identify established work already aligned to Best Start in Life priorities to build on this
- Readiness survey submitted to government on 9th January
- Guidance being published across January to March from government – responsive
- Links with LGA and other local authorities have been made to inform local plan utilising best practice



Roadmap

- **December 2025** – Initial working group convened, scoping activity started
- **January 2026** – Project managers allocated, scoping work continues, plans for funding usage being mapped
 - 12th January - Readiness check
 - 20th January – Children’s SLT
 - 29th January – CMB Deadline (Modern.gov submission)
- **February 2026** -
 - 9th February – Informal Cabinet (Cabinet/CMB Briefing)
- **March 2026** –
 - 4th March – Cabinet
 - 31st March – Local Plan to be published online
- **April 2026 onwards** - Monitoring & evaluation - track progress, review data, and ensure continuous improvement