

Appendix 2 - Best Start in Life Funding allocation

BCP Councils provisional allocation for financial years 2026-29 of the programme is **£2,551,700**

BCP Council are expected to use this spending to be broadly in line with the distribution in Table 1 (which is specific to BCP Council) over the life of the programme. The only exception to this flexibility is for capital spend, which should only be used on capital activities.

Table 1: Distribution of your funding allocation across the relevant programme strands for financial years 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29.

Strand	%	2026-27 Allocation	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

Please note: The distribution of funding has been rounded to one decimal place. The sum of percentages across strands may not total 100% due to this rounding. The allocation for 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29 has been rounded to the nearest 100 pounds. The sum of the allocations across strands may not total the maximum funding allocation due to this rounding.

The government expects overall local authority spending on evidence-based interventions (EBIs), service delivery and universal family support to increase over the funding period, to reflect that this investment is additional to existing expenditure. This funding should not substitute or displace existing resource for family services and should be used to expand and deepen existing offers where they are already in place.

Funding beyond the 2026–29 period will be subject to future government spending review processes, but local authorities should consider long-term sustainability, including join up with statutory services, as they develop a local offer.

Payment of BCP Council's funding allocations is subject to meeting the expectations of the programme. The government reserves the right to withhold or reduce 2026-29 funding if local authorities do not meet these expectations.

Potential Risks associated with the grants

Delivery of the Best Start in Life Local Plan is dependent on the effective use of Best Start Family Hub grant funding. There are several financial risks that could impact successful implementation and the achievement of intended outcomes for children aged 0–5.

Risk of underspend and clawback

The Best Start Family Hub grant must be fully utilised within the defined national timeframes. There is a risk that delays in recruitment, programme mobilisation, or commissioning may result in unspent funds.

Mitigation: Robust financial monitoring will be in place, including monthly budget reviews, forward planning of expenditure, and strong project management oversight by Early Help Partnership board.

Risk of misaligned spending leading to limited impact

Funding that is not tightly aligned to evidence-based priorities risks being allocated to activities that do not contribute to the programme's core outcome of improving children's early development, including Good Level of Development (GLD). This may lead to ineffective use of public funds and reputational risk if investment does not demonstrably improve outcomes.

Mitigation: All investment decisions are being made through a multi-agency governance structure, ensuring spend aligns with national Best Start in Life priorities, local needs assessments, and targeted early years outcome measures. Evaluation requirements are built into all funded activity.

Commissioning risks and long-term sustainability

Where funding is used to commission external providers, there is a risk that services established through short-term grant funding may not be financially sustainable beyond the life of the grant.

Mitigation: Commissioning decisions will include sustainability assessments, clear exit strategies, and alignment with existing service pathways to maximise integration. There will be a mix of commissioned and internally provided services to ensure longevity of programme impact.

Risk associated with Family Hub transformation funding deadlines

The national Family Hub transformation programme has strict spending timelines. If this funding is not fully utilised by the 31st of March 2026, it may be withdrawn. There is therefore a risk that any unspent Family Hub transformation costs would need to be considered for coverage through the Best Start in Life grant.

Mitigation: Close integration between the Best Start In Life programme and Family Hub transformation project teams ensures clear oversight of planned and actual expenditure.

Best Start Family Hubs funding expectations

The Government set out their expectations for local authorities – Best Start in Life (July 2025), Best Start Family Hubs Delivery guidance (December 2025) and various letters, including funding allocation letter (November 2025).

	Government expectations for funding strand
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - programme	• local Best Start Family Hub teams working with families directly and local authority teams to deliver and embed the programme • strategic oversight of wider system transformation and the implementation of Best Start local plans • outreach and engagement activities • multi-agency workforce development and training • evaluation and continuous improvement activity • digital and data systems to support the hub and collect service user data • integration of a range of statutory and non-statutory 0–5 health and family services, either delivered face-to-face in the BSFH or delivered elsewhere within the system • practitioner within the hubs to support families with children with Special Education Needs and/or Disability
Best Start Family Hubs delivery grant - capital	• Funding allocated to each Local Authority's capital strand should only be spent on capital activity. • Capital includes adapting existing buildings improving accessibility and enabling multi-agency working (which could include: IT upgrades, signage, improving building space, new furniture to ensure suitability for older children, and new equipment to support the co-location of the start for life workforce, such as desks, phone systems and sinks or specialist flooring for clinical use by midwives or health visitors).
Parenting support	• Activity should be strategically focused at delivering Evidence Based Interventions for the 3–4 age group • Local authorities should be able to demonstrate how their investment builds delivery capacity and contributes meaningfully to improved outcomes for this age group. • Any spend outside of Evidence Based Interventions should be clearly justified by its contribution to the Good Level of Development ambition or strengthening and expanding parenting services within Best Start Family Hubs for the long term. • Local Authorities can continue to fund existing parenting services for 0-2s but from March 2026 should prioritise spend on Evidence Based Interventions suitable for 3 & 4-year-olds.
Home learning environment support	• Activity should be strategically focused at delivering evidence-based interventions for the 3–4 age group, as this cohort is central to achieving progress towards the 2028 Good Level of Development target. • Local authorities should be able to demonstrate how their investment builds delivery capacity and contributes meaningfully to improved outcomes for this age group. • Any spend outside of evidence-based interventions should be clearly justified in terms of its contribution to the Good Level of Development ambition or strengthening and expanding home learning environment services within Best Start Family Hubs for the long term. • To support a coherent and integrated home learning environment local service offer across the early years, outreach and peer support should be targeted at families with children aged 0–5.

