

Bright Start Strategy 2023–28

Islington's Strategy for Maternity and Early Years from conception to age 5, including the Start for Life 0–2 offer



Working in
partnership to
support every
child and family
to thrive

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Foreword

Maternity and the Early Years are an essential investment.

I am delighted to introduce our 2023-2028 Bright Start Strategy for Maternity and Early Years, a collaboration between Islington Council, Whittington Health and wider maternity and early years partner services.

Early experiences have profound and enduring effects on children’s health, wellbeing, and learning. Our vision is for all children to have the best start in life. This means that children learn and develop physically, emotionally, and socially to reach their full unique potential.

In 2017, Islington launched Bright Start, trailblazing a new way of working with integrated partnerships at its core and an ambitious vision to build resilience and empower families to give their children the best start in life.

Islington is rich in culture and diversity, but we are also an economically diverse borough with many children growing up living with deprivation. Islington’s mission for the next decade is to create a more equal, child-friendly borough where children start well from conception, thrive by five and grow up into adulthood life ready. Our child-friendly approach strengthens the resilience of all children and families through high-quality universal and targeted services that are easily accessible in the community, so children feel safe, develop well, keep physically active, eat healthily, and have good mental health leading to positive, lifelong change.

The [Early Intervention Foundation](#) has strong evidence for lifelong improved outcomes following early interventions for children with social, developmental or health needs. Research also suggests that high-quality early education can have a positive effect on children’s long-term outcomes helping to raise attainment and close the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and other children.

Giving children the best possible start in life is vital to reducing inequalities and ensuring that every child can start school healthy, has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life whatever their background.

Never has it been more important to have an ambitious and innovative Maternity and Early Childhood strategy building on the strengths of the Bright Start integrated partnership to reduce inequalities and achieve the best possible outcomes for young families.

This strategy, developed in partnership with maternity, early childhood services and parents and carers, sets out our ambitions, priorities, and commitments for the next five years focusing on the areas that matter most, increasing accessibility, reach and inclusion and developing our workforce. Together we will improve outcomes for babies, children, and their families.

Councillor Michelline Ngongo
Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families Islington Council

Introduction

In this strategy we set out our collective vision, priorities, and commitments for Bright Start Islington, 2023–28. It provides a shared language for how we will work together and with families so that every child in Islington has the best start in life.

We identify how we will improve our maternity and early years partnership, so we have the greatest impact on families and reach those who need it most. We aim to provide the best possible support to parents and carers so they can nurture their babies and children, improving health and education outcomes for all. We put

families and children at the centre with a strengths-based approach delivering relational practice – working with the whole family to support those first years of life. Challenging inequality is at the heart of this strategy and influences every priority and commitment, in line with the wider corporate mission to create a fairer Islington.



"Great support from
both Health Visitors and
Children's Centres"
Bright Start parent

What is Bright Start?

Bright Start Islington joins up high-quality activities and services to bring local families a seamless offer from pregnancy until their child is five.

It brings together all of Islington's health and local authority children's services, as well as activities for under-fives and their families, delivered by Islington Council, Whittington Health, University College London Hospital (UCLH), and voluntary sector partners.

Bright Start core services are provided by health visitors and early childhood practitioners in children's centres, health centres and community spaces within three integrated area teams.

This partnership delivers a comprehensive package of integrated universal health and early childhood services in Islington, and targeted interventions where families need more support. The graduated approach from universal through to targeted and specialist services empowers families to provide their children with a loving, stable, safe family life via a tailored offer of support.

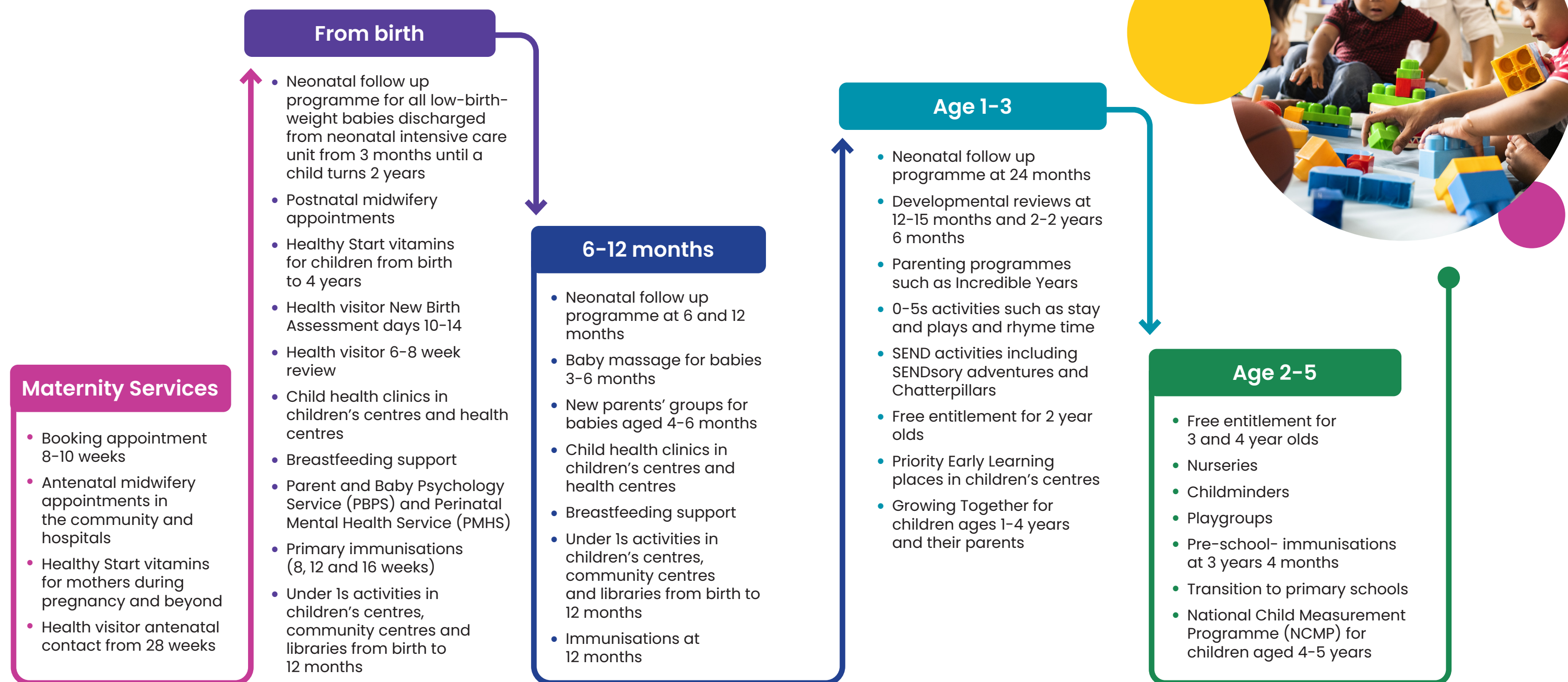
For Bright Start's universal offer, all families can access several services and activities under one roof such as health visiting, stay-and-play, midwifery, child health clinics, breastfeeding support, speech and language support for children, parenting support courses, and high-quality early education provision and childcare.

Bright Start's more targeted and specialist services work with those who would benefit from the greatest support. This includes family engagement workers at the Family Support Surgeries, specific parenting courses, education support, adult and children's mental health services, Early Help, specialist infant feeding support, services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), employment, training, benefits and money advice, and English classes.

Families access Bright Start in friendly, safe, and welcoming venues, as well as some services being delivered in the home or online. Bright Start aims to be inclusive and improve equality of access to universal and targeted support by working closely with voluntary sector partners with good reach into diverse communities.

For all levels of support, Bright Start emphasises prevention, early identification, and intervention, working with families who might benefit from more help at different times as their children grow and develop, to prevent early problems from escalating.

Bright Start Islington Services Road Map



Family Hub network including wider services and support

- Family support services, including surgeries
- Family Information Service
- Parenting workshops and family learning
- Courses for English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)
- iWork employment service
- Health and well-being activities and services
- Parenting Programmes
- Speech and language support
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health support (CAMHS)
- Specialist support services such as Children's Social Care, iCope and coaching, Solace Women's Aid and the Early Years Development Team

The Bright Start vision

We want every child in Islington to have the best start in life, and our vision is built on what the research tells us makes all the difference in the early years. Our vision, which informs our way of working and ongoing delivery of Bright Start, is for all families to receive the support and services they need, when they need them via a single, non-stigmatising point of access.

Our vision statement

Bright Start supports **every child and family** in Islington, from conception to age five. Our vision is for all children to have the **best start in life**. This means that children learn and develop physically, emotionally and socially to reach their unique full potential.

Together, we support families to have happy, healthy, safe and active children. Everything we do is based on **what matters most** to all young children and families.



Where we are in 2023

The [2021 Bright Start profile](#) gives an extensive summary of the needs and key health priorities for families with children under the age of five in Islington. Bright Start continues to evolve and respond to the changing local needs and wider context.

The impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on families' health and wellbeing, and children's development. Some of the key impacts known for maternal, antenatal, and early years were changes in availability and support in pregnancy and for new parents; less access to routine immunisations leading to potential future outbreaks; developmental delays and little early socialisation; and impact on perinatal mental health. This affected those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds more and highlighted the inequalities in our community and across the UK. This strategy commits to learning from the pandemic and together rebuilding a better Bright Start for everyone in Islington.

Deprivation and vulnerabilities

Islington has been ranked the sixth most deprived local authority in London, and families with children have even greater levels of deprivation. Poverty is a major risk factor for many aspects of health and wellbeing, and wider family issues. For example, many children experience food poverty in Islington, with almost 1 in 4 children attending Islington primary schools qualifying for free school meals.

Sadly, this has been further impacted with the cost-of-living crisis. Bright Start has continued to holistically support families who need extra help through our Family Support Surgeries, food packages at

community events, and working with our partners to set up warm spaces.

The Start for Life offer

Bright Start is also expanding and enhancing to deliver the national Start for Life 0-2 offer – the funded element of Family Hubs. Family Hubs is a national coordinated framework for delivering universal prevention and early intervention services for children, young people, and their families from conception to 19 (or 25 for those with SEND). It will be a delivery vehicle for a range of programmes including Start for Life, the Healthy Child Programme and Supporting Families.

"The family support practitioner was great. I was anxious about her coming. She was really clear and helpful – sorted out our Covid payment which was really great. It was a good experience – just the right amount of support – any more interaction would have felt too intensive. It was 'bang on'."
Bright Start parent

"Out of 5, I'd give them a 10!"
Bright Start parent



Our approach to developing the strategy

In 2021, Bright Start partners worked with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to assess its offer against the EIF maternity and early years maturity matrix.

Overall, EIF found that Islington had already made considerable progress to set up a strong maternity and early years system and was well placed to go further by carrying out the local actions identified in its self-assessment and recommendations from the EIF panel. One of the recommendations was to develop a formal integrated strategy so that Bright Start's direction of travel over the next few years continues to drive forward innovation; and achieves the best outcomes for families.

Our strategy sets out our priorities for the next five years which will help to achieve our ambition for all children in Islington to have the best start in life. To achieve this, this strategy sets out our two key drivers:

- **Improved outcomes for children and families**
- **A mature, integrated early childhood system**

The strategy has also been informed by what families tell us about their experience of Bright Start services:

- Families have good knowledge of the services available to them
- Families have trust in the services
- Services are accessible to families
- Family context and culture is understood by services
- Staff and families understand and communicate with each other
- Suitable services for families' needs are available

Families are happy with the Bright Start offer, but we know we have more work to do, particularly around making our services accessible, trusted, and known by all our diverse communities.

It is through improving our systems of support that we can improve outcomes for babies and young children and reduce inequalities in early childhood.

Bright Start's delivery model and strategy for 2023-28 are driven by a range of both national and local commitments and guidance.

Nationally

The Bright Start offer and this strategy has been informed by the key maternity and early years drivers: the [Early Years Foundation Stage Profile \(EYFS\)](#) and the [High impact areas from Public Health England's guidance on supporting children, young people, and families](#).

Bright Start is also the delivery vehicle for several statutory programmes and guidance: the [Healthy Child Programme](#) underpinning the delivery of Health visiting, [Reducing Parental Conflict guidance](#), [Working together to safeguard children guidance](#), [Supporting Families \(Early Help\)](#), and more recently, the Start for Life offer as part of [the Family Hubs programme](#). This sets out delivery of the government's commitments outlined in ['The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days'](#).

The Bright Start Strategy uses the key principles guiding the Family Hubs model:

- **More accessible** – through a universal single point of access, a clear local family hub offer, recognised and understood by families, which includes hub buildings, virtual offers, and outreach

- **Better connected** – ensuring every family receives the support they need when they need it
- **More relationship-centred** – building on families' strengths to build trusting and supportive relationships and networks and emphasising continuity of care

It also commits to the six action areas identified through the Start for Life report:

1. Seamless support for families
2. A welcoming hub for families
3. The information families need when they need it
4. An empowered Start for Life workforce
5. Continually improving the Start for Life offer
6. Leadership for change

Locally

As well as the legal duties and guidance that informed how Bright Start and this strategy was developed, our approach is also informed by local commitments, including: the [Islington Together 2030 Plan](#), Islington's strategic plan to create a more equal Islington including a child-friendly borough; [Islington's Early Intervention and Help Strategy 2015-25](#); [Islington's Plan for Education 2023-30](#); and [Islington's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2022-27](#).

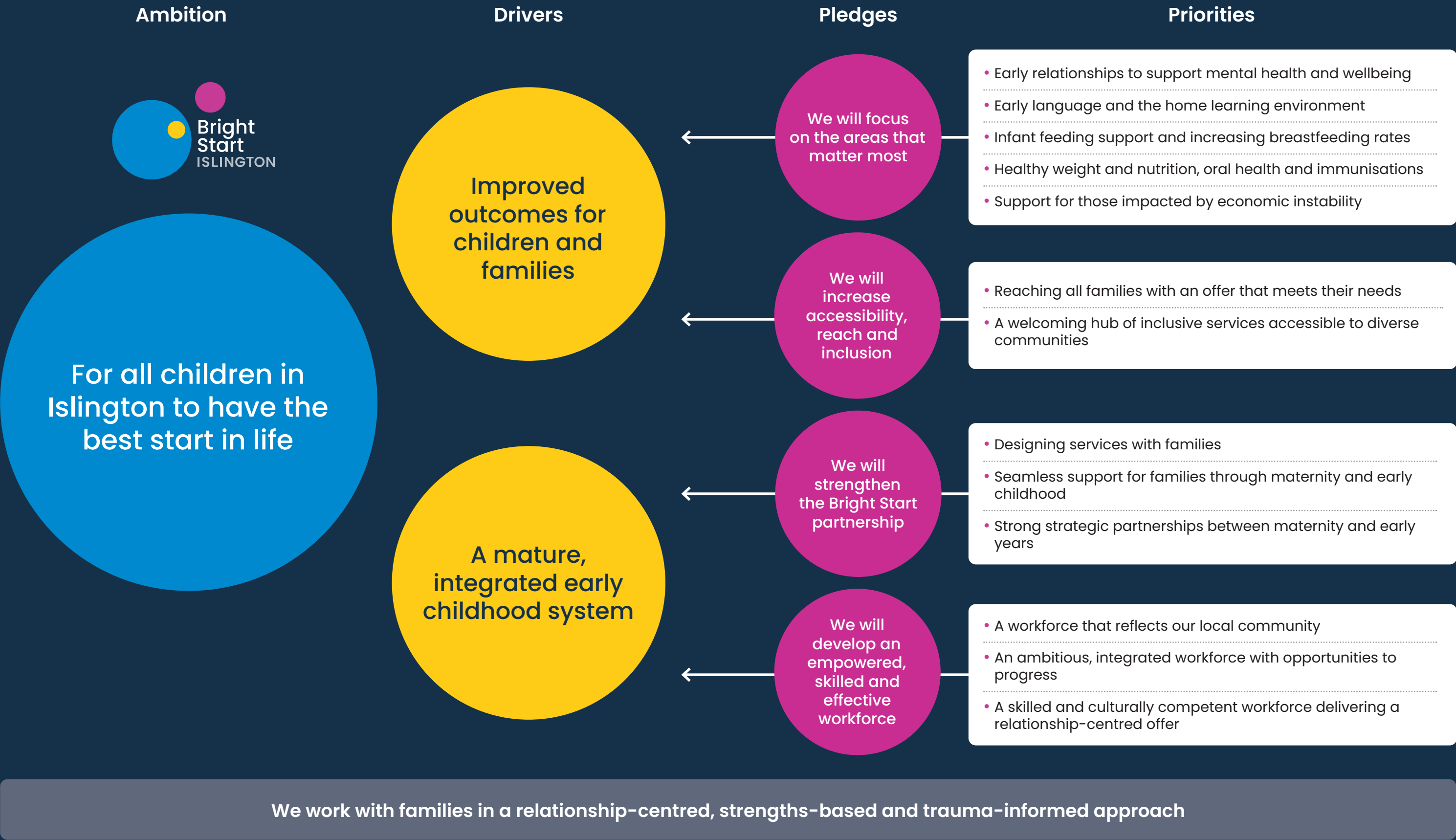
The [Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy \(2023\)](#) informs our way of working together to tackle inequality and change lives through high-quality, integrated all-age prevention and early intervention. The Bright Start Strategy is underpinned by

our ['Fairer Together'](#) approach to create a more equal Islington, where everyone has an equal chance to thrive.

This strategy has also been informed by internal reviews and consultation with key stakeholders that have identified our main priorities. These reviews and consultations include: the EIF review in 2021; the Health Visiting High Needs Review – an internal review conducted in March 2021 using focus groups of key partners including parents/carers; and several engagement sessions with stakeholders such as the voluntary sector, health visiting, midwifery, early years, and parents and carers.



Bright Start Five-Year Strategy 2023-28



Pledge one:

We will focus on the areas that matter most

What this means for a child:

"I am ready to learn"

"I am healthy, happy, and supported by my family"



Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure outcomes
1) Early relationships to support mental health and wellbeing	Families feel better equipped to manage their mental health, understand what is important for a child's wellbeing, and know how to get further support.	• More children are achieving the expected level in personal-social skills at their two/two and six months review. • More parents are using the parenting support offer, including Journey to Parenthood, Family Kitchen, and Emotional Wellbeing Visits. • Scores from the Family Star wellbeing assessment and maternal mood assessments show improved family resilience. • More health visitors and wider partners are trained to do new-born observations.
2) Early language and the home learning environment	Parents, carers, and practitioners have the tools, knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively support children's speech, language, and communication development so that children are ready for school and make good progress from their starting points.	• Year on year, the number of children who score below the cut off for communication in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire decreases, and our scores for communication and language are in line with national and Inner London neighbours. • Increase in parent/carers and practitioner confidence in supporting children's speech, language, communication development. • Increase in take up of the free early learning childcare offer.
3) Infant feeding support and increasing breastfeeding rates	Parents and carers receive timely, consistent, evidence-based information about infant feeding that's relevant to them. They feel supported to start and continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish. More babies and children receive a greater proportion of breastmilk in their diet for a longer period of time.	• Increase in the percentage of exclusive and partial breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks. • Increase in the number of venues signed up to be "Breastfeeding Welcome". • More mothers report satisfaction with infant feeding support service. • Achieved 'gold standard' UNICEF Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative re-accreditation.

Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure outcomes
4) Healthy weight and nutrition	Children are eating a balanced and nutritious diet and are more willing to try new food, with fewer children with excess weight at Reception age. Families have access to activities that promote a healthy lifestyle including physical activity, with opportunities for women to be physically active pre- and post-natally.	• Reduced percentage of children at Reception age with Body Mass Index (BMI) equating to overweight/obesity measure. • More children are willing to try new foods, as shown by the Families for Life Child Eating Behaviour Questionnaire. • Increase in the number of vitamins distributed to families, and number of qualified families signed up to the Healthy Start card.
5) Oral health	Children have less oral health decay.	• Less hospital admissions for dental caries for 0-5s. • Increased dental visits by children aged 0-5.
6) Immunisations	More children have all their recommended vaccinations before starting school.	• An increased percentage of children are fully vaccinated at age five.
7) Support for those impacted by economic instability	Parents and carers are better informed about what economic support is available and are accessing the benefits they're entitled to. They feel that their economic needs are supported all in one place.	• Staff report knowledge and confidence of signposting through the bi-annual staff survey. • Increase in uptake of the Healthy Start scheme and universal vitamins distribution. • More parents are using the free early learning places.

Priority 1: Early relationships to support mental health and wellbeing

Why is this important for Islington?

Fostering a strong and positive early relationship between parent/carer and their infant is essential for a child's wellbeing and early development. If unsupported, mental health issues can have significant long-term impacts on the parent/carer, their child, and their wider family. For a child, this can impact physical health and school performance. Poverty can also have a detrimental effect on maternal and young people's mental health. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, women and their families have faced extra pressures on their mental health, and mental health difficulties have increased.¹

Where are we now?

The Bright Start offer includes the Parent Baby Psychology Service (PBPS), the Perinatal Mental Health team (PNMH), a team in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who support families with children aged one to five called Growing Together, parenting programmes such as Journey 2 Parenthood, and strong links with community midwifery teams delivering from children's centres. Practitioners receive specialist training to support early relationships and mental health.

Universally, health visitors have conversations about mental health with around 84% of parents/carers by the time a baby is eight weeks – with the aim of speaking to all. Health visitors have also introduced New-born Behavioural Observations (NBO) training to help parents/carers understand their baby's behaviour as a form of communication and be better attuned to their baby's needs. Health visitors have been trained to offer evidence-based Emotional Wellbeing Visits to more effectively support parents and carers who are experiencing mild to moderate emotional difficulties in the perinatal period.

Our commitments

- Promote our offer so that all families know where to get support for mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Deliver more training and increase awareness of perinatal mental health issues among a wider range of practitioners working with parents and carers.
- Update the Islington Perinatal Mental Health Pathway so that all practitioners are confident in signposting families to the most suitable sources of support for their mental health.

Between 10-20% of women develop a mental illness in the perinatal period. Between 5-15% of men experience depression or anxiety in this period.²

In Islington, 889 children aged two to four years (12%) are estimated to have a mental health condition.

¹ [Maternal mental health during a pandemic | Centre for Mental Health.](#)

² The costs of perinatal mental health problems, LSE and Centre for Mental Health, 2014 and Darwin et al, Frontiers Psychology, 2021.

Priority 2: Early language and the home learning environment



Why is this important for Islington?

Early language development is central to a child's learning, and social and emotional development. Children and young people with communication difficulties are at increased risk of social and behavioral difficulties and mental health issues.

Though the proportion of children receiving a Good Level of Development (GLD) score in Islington at the end of Reception is now similar for England (65%), we have one of the lowest scores of the fourteen Inner London boroughs. Data shows a clear decrease in communication skills and overall development for children during the pandemic. Despite Bright Start's early years settings remaining open for the most vulnerable throughout the pandemic, children's development has still been impacted. We're determined to support those children who were left behind and enhance our offer.

Where are we now?

Home learning includes the physical characteristics of the home, and the quality of learning support a child receives from their caregivers. Home learning resources have been developed to support parents and carers with learning in the home environment, with some translated into key languages and distributed to all Islington settings and schools for use with families. Our 'Bright Start Bright Ideas' and 'Quick Tips' e-newsletters, with over 6,000 subscribers, deliver key messages to families on how to support children's development.

Bright Start offers stay and play courses focused on communication (Chatterpillars) which share strategies with parents and carers to support their child's expressive language needs.

The Bright Start Speech and Language Therapy service offers a diverse training programme for all early years practitioners, and the team is available at many Bright Start sessions to share information, advice and guidance around speech, language, and communication. Bright Start has recently completed the EIF maturity matrix: speech, language, and communication in the early years. The recommendations from this review will inform our system development in this area.

Our commitment

- Coordinate and strengthen the way we package, promote, and give access to home learning resources and support available for families, with a focus on reaching families most impacted by the pandemic.
- Bring together universal and targeted services to better coordinate support for children's speech, language, and communication at every stage of development as needs emerge.

Children not meeting the developmental threshold in communication increased from 12% in 2019 to 26% in 2021. In January 2023, it was 12%, returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Priority 3: Infant feeding support and increasing breastfeeding rates

Why is this important for Islington?

Infant feeding is important to both health and relationship-building for parent and baby. Breastfeeding has many short-term and long-term health benefits for both mother and baby, including reducing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis for mothers.

For children, breastfeeding reduces the risk and severity of respiratory infections, gastro-intestinal issues, ear and urinary infections, Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, sudden infant death syndrome, and excess weight and obesity. Breastfeeding also promotes a close and responsive relationship between mothers and babies, supporting their brain development and helping them feel secure.

Where are we now?

Bright Start has achieved UNICEF baby-friendly accreditation and is in the process of re-accreditation, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. We have a well-established breastfeeding support service, infant feeding referral pathway, and workforce training programme.

As many mothers experience difficulties and need support with infant feeding, Bright Start is committed to making sure all mothers are supported to start and continue breastfeeding for as long as they want, increase breastfeeding rates, and support families with safe and responsive feeding practices where bottle feeding occurs.

Our aim is to enhance our offer to support children to develop positive relationships, emotional resilience, balanced nutrition, a healthy weight, appetite control, and body autonomy and to support maternal confidence, empowerment and wellbeing.

Our commitments

- Work with our peer supporters and parent champions to share high-quality information and consistent messaging about infant feeding with a diverse range of community groups.
- Further embed Baby-Friendly standards across Bright Start and progress towards the Achieving Sustainability award.
- Refresh and expand the Breastfeeding Welcome scheme to support mums' right to breastfeed throughout the borough.



Islington's breastfeeding rates are positive and well above the national average (47.6% in 2020/21).
In 2021/22, 1,793 infants (81.6%) in Islington were being breastfed at their 6-8-week check, half of whom were exclusively breastfeeding.

Priority 4: Healthy weight and nutrition

Why is this important for Islington?

Having excess weight has health and wellbeing consequences in childhood, including increased blood lipids, glucose intolerance, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and psychological problems such as social isolation, low self-esteem, teasing and bullying.

Children with excess weight or obesity are also more likely to have excess weight or obesity as adults. In Islington, obesity is a key risk factor for adults. Adults with excess weight have an increased risk of heart disease, several types of cancer and years lived with disability. Children are also more likely to have excess weight if their parent has excess weight and 1 in 4 (22%) children in Islington start school overweight. It is therefore vitally important that this strategy maintains attention on healthy weight and nutrition with a whole-family approach.

Where are we now?

Bright Start runs a range of programmes for families that promote healthy weight and nutrition, including Starting Solid Food workshops and Family Kitchen. These help families understand what is important to lay the foundations for a healthy relationship with food.

Bright Start also promotes healthy eating through offering fruit and vegetables during stay and plays and physical activities are on offer for all the family, such as family fitness, family relaxation and movement, song and movement and outdoor stay and plays.

Family health advisors offer low-level support for weight management, healthy diet and exercise, measure Body Mass Index (BMI) at the age two Health Review and can refer into community dietetics and GP services.

In Islington, as well as regularly promoting the Healthy Start scheme that financially helps families on lower income to buy fruit and vegetables, we also have an offer for free vitamins for all women trying to conceive, pregnant women, new mums and children under four to make sure they're getting the vitamins they need.

Our commitments

- Train family health advisors and other early years staff to have the understanding, confidence, and opportunity to promote healthy weight in every conversation.
- Promote the support available to all families and develop more programmes for families with babies between six and 18 months and children over three.
- Support settings to provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks to children in their care.

In 2022, 20.27% of pregnant mothers booked with a Whittington midwife were living with obesity at the time of their maternity assessment.

Priority 5: Oral health

Why is this important for Islington?

Nationally, we are seeing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on oral health. This is because of changing diets, dental practices closing and deprioritising non-urgent dental care during lockdowns, and the long-term impact of long wait times for dental visits.

Between March 2020 and March 2021, uptake for dentists in children aged zero to five in Islington dropped to 8.8%. This means that during this period only 1,354 children out of 15,425 visited their dentist. We are still likely to see the knock-on effects from the pandemic. Improving oral health through supporting families to access NHS dental services and giving information and support about good oral health is also a core service delivered as part of Family Hubs.

Where are we now?

Improving oral health in children is one of Islington's priorities, in line with promoting good nutrition and healthy weight, evidenced by the inclusion of oral health in the Public Health 0 to 5 Obesity Strategy.

Islington's oral health promotion includes Brushing for Life, where trained staff give out toothbrushing packs to all children who go to Bright Start children's centres and promote good oral health practice; supervised tooth brushing in children's centres and nurseries; and the fluoride varnish programme to protect children's teeth against tooth decay.

Our commitments

- Increase the number of settings signed up to the supervised tooth brushing programme.
- Make sure that the family hub offer includes oral health promotion and information about what's on offer.
- Support children and families to access dentists.

In June 2022, 23% of children in Islington aged zero to five visited their dentist in the last 12 months compared to 53% in June 2020.



Priority 6: Immunisations

Why is this important for Islington?

Children are due several routine immunisations before they start school. Vaccinations are the best way to protect children and their communities from preventable diseases such as polio and measles, which can have serious consequences. Islington has seen declining rates of most childhood vaccinations in the last seven years and has lower rates than the London average for many vaccinations including the MMR2 vaccine by age five. Uptake in Islington of MMR2 was 67% in 2021/22, lower than London (74%) and England (86%) and well below the target level of 95%.

Where are we now?

In Islington, the immunisations clinical lead works with primary care practices to increase opportunities to access vaccinations and make sure GPs repeat invite families to vaccinate. There is often discourse around distrust of vaccines, and unfortunately this was heightened in the media with the Covid-19 vaccines.

It's vital that we continue to promote vaccinations as the safest way to protect children against diseases and increase uptake of childhood vaccinations. That's why we've developed a training offer around vaccinations for staff and parent champions and why we are exploring checking children's vaccination status at nursery and school entry as a public health measure.

Our commitments

- Carry out a survey of parental attitudes to understand what influences parental decisions around vaccinations.
- Increase opportunities to promote vaccinations at mandated contacts, groups and entry to childcare or education.
- Train all staff to feel confident to talk about vaccines.

In Islington,
1 in 3 children haven't
had their full set
of vaccinations by
age five.



Priority 7: Support for families impacted by economic instability

Why is this important for Islington?

Islington is a culturally, but also economically diverse borough, and many Islington families are living in poverty. In 2019, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranked Islington as the 53rd most deprived local authority area in England (out of 317 local authorities) and 6th most deprived local authority in London.

The economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in the numbers of people experiencing food insecurity. Since 2021 the rising prices of energy, food and bills have impacted those who need the most help, and some families have found themselves in a position which they've never been in before. When talking to families and frontline staff, one of the biggest stresses for families is financial, including poverty, unstable and poor housing, and unemployment. Poverty worsens other issues and creates barriers to families having continuous engagement with Bright Start services.

Where are we now?

During the pandemic Islington supported residents with food parcels, free school meal hampers, hot meals, and food vouchers. We have continued with fruit and vegetable distribution at stay and plays, promoting the Healthy Start offer to help families on low income buy fruit and vegetables, and widely promoting the free-education offer for two-year-olds for those on low income. We work with partners across the borough, including food banks, to support the most vulnerable families and take part in cost-of-living events.

Bright Start's early help service assesses and helps to improve families' financial situations through the Family Outcomes Star tool. The Family Support Surgeries allow access to specific support services. We aim to respond to the needs of families in a holistic way, so that families can get support or be signposted to the right help from anywhere in Bright Start.

Our commitments

- Train staff to understand the housing and benefits systems for better signposting.
- Make sure families with disrupted housing have continuous support and access to Bright Start services when they need it.
- Raise the profile of the help family support practitioners can offer families and destigmatise this more enhanced level of support.

30.6% (9,840)
of children are in
low-income families
in Islington

Pledge two:

We will increase accessibility, reach and inclusion

What this means for a child:

"Bright Start helped me and my family when we needed it"
 "I feel welcome, included and see myself at Bright Start activities"



Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure outcomes
8) Reaching all families with an offer that meets their needs	More families, including the most vulnerable, know how to access the Bright Start offer, and experience high-quality services at the right time, in the right place, focused on their needs.	- Year on year, more families are accessing Bright Start, and report accessibility, awareness of and satisfaction with Bright Start services as measured by the annual Bright Start family survey and feedback through parent and carer panels and other forums. - Year on year, more families report that they receive the services they need, when they need them and where they can best access them.
9) A welcoming hub of inclusive services accessible to diverse communities	Families from all diverse backgrounds and with SEND report that services are high-quality and make them feel welcome and included.	- Increase in the proportion of families from Somali, Turkish, Bangladeshi, and Caribbean communities who register for universal Bright Start services. - Increase in the proportion of families with SEND accessing Bright Start. - An increase in the proportion of families from all communities, reporting that the services are high-quality through the Bright Start family survey and feedback through parent and carer panels and other forums.



"I recommend Family support to everyone – it's amazing!"
Bright Start parent

Priority 8: Reaching all families with an offer that meets their needs

Why is this important for Islington?

Bright Start's ambition is to support every child and family in Islington. Last year it was successful in reaching most families with children under age five (two in three families were registered with an Islington children's centre), but this means that one in three families with young children are not accessing the support they could receive. We know that Somali, Turkish, Bangladeshi, and Caribbean communities are not accessing our services as much, and we recognise that English as a second language could be a barrier.

As part of Islington's commitment to Start for Life, we're committed to ensuring that all families can get support from pregnancy, whether it's a first baby or a growing family, and that those who need more help can access it in the right way at the right time. Universal prevention and targeted early intervention are vital to supporting difficulties early and preventing problems from escalating.

Where are we now?

Bright Start is moving towards reaching all families in Islington with automatic Bright Start registrations at birth so that all families know how to access the Bright Start offer.

There is up-to-date information about the offer available both in physical spaces and online. We regularly promote our universal, targeted and specialist services, for example, creating videos in other languages to promote the funded early education offer.

Our priority is to reach and engage under-served communities through universal services, and we'll do this by better understanding the experiences and barriers to accessing Bright Start services.

Our commitments

- Develop and promote a Start for Life offer that is accessible, welcoming and friendly through knowledgeable staff and peers who are present in the family hub, children's centre or local community such as family hub navigators and parent champions.
- Use quarterly data to monitor and identify any gaps, under- or over-representation of specific communities to Bright Start services.
- Continue to implement the recommendations of the Manor Gardens Welfare Trust equalities programme to improve access for under-served groups, for example through taking services to other community venues.

"There's lots available. I dip in when I need it"
Bright Start parent

Priority 9: A welcoming hub of inclusive services accessible to diverse communities

Why is this important for Islington?

We know that some groups access some of our services less readily than others, for example some refugee and migrant families and some families whose first language is not English. Nationally, there is also evidence of how ethnicity and socio-economic deprivation affect how families experience maternity services.³ We want to provide services that are welcoming and culturally relevant, delivered in places where families feel at ease ensuring all families can join in.

We provide a range of services specifically aimed at supporting children with SEND, but we want to make sure our universal activities and services are accessible to children with SEND too.

"Sensory Adventures is welcoming and supportive. The facilitators understood my child and modelled activities in a way my child understood."
Bright Start parent

Where are we now?

Bright Start settings offer a range of services, information, support, and access for all local families – both online and in physical settings. For example, there has been considerable progress made towards delivering the Healthy Child Programme (Child Health Clinics and Child Health Reviews) in a range of settings, including children's centres, to make sure all families can access them.



Bright Start also aims to support families where English is a second language by using translation and interpreting services and facilitating the delivery of Adult and Community learning programmes such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Our inequalities project with Manor Gardens delivered a new model of equitable services resulting in several improvements, such as, delivering Bright Start services alongside bi-lingual mentors, peer

reviewed activities for inclusivity and family mentor input at multi-agency meetings.

A review of our universal offer for children with SEND in October 2022 identified the need to further develop an inclusive and accessible universal offer for children with more complex SEND such as family learning and more accessible stay and plays.

Our commitments

- Through co-production with parents and carers, work to better understand some of the barriers preventing families accessing services and develop targeted promotional materials that speak to specific groups who are less represented in Bright Start.
- Train more staff to support families with SEND and use the SEND parent carer forums and our speech and language therapists to make sure all promotional materials are inclusive and welcoming for all children and families.
- Develop a broader offer for children with more complex SEND that better reflects the universal offer for all families.

³ Evidence from MBRRACE-UK (Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK), <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrance-uk>

Pledge three:

We will strengthen the Bright Start partnership

What this means for a child:

“I have a voice and feel listened to”
“As I grow and develop, someone from Bright Start is always there to support me and my family”



Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure outcomes
10) Designing services with families	Families feel that they can shape how services are designed and delivered and can give feedback that is valued.	• Parent and carer panels are set up and representative of the local community, and there is an increase in the number of parent champions. • Year on year, more parents and carers report they feel involved in Bright Start design, planning, delivery, and monitoring.
11) Seamless support for families through maternity and early childhood	Families have seamless support through maternity and early childhood, trust the professionals and volunteers supporting them throughout their journey, and don't have to tell their story more than once.	• Increase in satisfaction rates of families about moving between services and practitioners. • Frontline professionals report better integration during the EIF self-assessment.
12) Strong strategic partnerships between maternity and early years	Bright Start and midwifery staff and wider partners report the strength of integration, have shared outcomes and effective referral pathways.	• Staff report improved integration and understanding of pathways through the bi-annual survey, and there is an increased number of joint networking events. • Integrated quality assurance activity demonstrates consistency of approach, shared language and seamless support for families.



Priority 10: Designing services with families

Why is this important for Islington?

Bright Start values working in partnership with local communities to design and improve services because it greatly benefits the community. Designing services with families recognises and respects different assets in the community, it leads to greater sharing of power, makes sure services reflect the needs of its residents, and residents feel heard. Co-design gives voice to service users and empowers them to make decisions about their community and hold those decisions to account.

It is also a key principle of developing family hubs, with funding for the development of parent and carer panels, which will play a key role in designing and continuously improving family services.

Where are we now?

Bright Start greatly values feedback and input from its families and has channels for this, including a parent/carers survey, regular Integrated Practice Weeks, and parent/carers forums. Most recently, these parent/carers forums were used to engage families on refreshing our vision and understanding what needs are most important to them. This was a good example for how we can use parent/carers forums for future consultation.

Bright Start also has channels that lend themselves for designing services with families such as regular Early Childhood Area Partnerships (ECAPs) in each locality with parent representation, and a strong parent champions network which is a key two-way channel of information.

We recognise we need to work more closely with families to design services to make sure we fulfil our pledge to create inclusive and diverse services accessible and equal to all.

Our commitments

- Set up a parent and carer panel through building on the work of parent champions. Work with voluntary sector partners to make sure the parent carer panel is representative of the diverse communities we serve and reflects the child's journey – antenatal to school.
- Take a systematic approach to capturing, analysing, and sharing child and family feedback across the family hub network. This will inform the shaping of local services and make sure that parents see the value and impact of their feedback.



Priority 11: Seamless support for families through maternity and early childhood

Why is this important for Islington?

The Bright Start offer is a partnership of several services including maternity services, health visiting, early years practitioners, specialist services – and many more. Though they work together in an integrated way, these can be complex systems for families, particularly new parents, to navigate. The transition to parenthood is a crucial time for families, therefore ensuring that there is continuity of care throughout this period is a key priority.

It is also important that families have a seamless transition between universal and more targeted services, so that they can get more immediate help if their needs escalate or can be stepped down from higher levels of need with a plan for sustainable support without feeling abandoned.

Sharing data between services, building robust mutual understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities, and pathways will help to identify needs early so that families access services as soon as they need to.

Where are we now?

Automatic Bright Start registrations at birth ensures a smoother transition for families into Bright Start so no family gets left behind. Midwifery services are integrated in the community, with clinics at local children's centres to improve access and visibility for families, and work closely with early years staff.

Forums for information sharing between teams and organisations, such as health visiting and midwifery liaison meetings and Bright Start attendance at UCLH maternity safeguarding meetings work well but need embedding at the Whittington.

There is still more to do, such as setting up maternity bookings at family hubs and improving our system so that early years and midwifery staff can work in multiple settings and reach families where they are.

Our commitments

- Coordinate shared training and joint pathways between Bright Start core staff and midwifery to make sure consistent messaging is being taught in antenatal education and infant feeding support.
- Create a model for Whittington safeguarding meetings to include Bright Start representation.
- Adapt children's centres to work better for midwifery teams, such as improving IT systems.

**"Bright Start is amazing! Without your help we wouldn't be doing as well as we are now."
Bright Start parent**

Priority 12: Strong strategic partnerships between maternity and early years

Why is this important for Islington?

To offer seamless support for families, our maternity and early years services also need to be strategically aligned, working closely together in a coordinated way. When speaking to our staff across the system, they have expressed interest in building better relationships between services – from midwifery to health visiting to housing. This also includes having a better understanding between roles so that they can holistically support families by signposting them more effectively.

Families in Islington are served by several hospital trusts. This can be a barrier to effective communication and services. It is therefore essential to have solid partnerships that help us overcome those barriers.

Where are we now?

At an operational level, we have good working relationships and a partnership approach to service delivery.

From the EIF review, our workforce recognised that we could strengthen our partnerships by having better data sharing to understand our population's needs with our wider partners, integrated workforce planning, more community engagement and involvement in developing services, and improved visibility of consistent messaging for families through maternity and early childhood.

Following the EIF review and recommendations, we have developed the strategic partnership and leadership arrangements to take account of maternity services, so we that we now have a joint Maternity and Early Childhood Partnership Board in place. Bright Start also attends the Maternity Voices Partnership at both hospitals, and has representation at Whittington midwifery leadership monthly meetings, and good partnerships with the continuity of care teams.

Developing family hubs is going to need even stronger partnership-working, including co-location, better integration, data sharing, shared outcomes and governance. We will strengthen these partnerships – not only with maternity and early years, but also our wider

partnerships with local voluntary, community and faith sectors.

Our commitments

- Regularly evaluate progress towards recommendations from the EIF Review and take action to address gaps.
- Strengthen the wider strategic and operational partnership in planning the delivery of family hubs using multi-agency data to better inform decision-making at a strategic and local level.
- Formalise and build on the multi-agency meetings which happen at locality level.
- Further develop opportunities for integrated quality assurance activities to evaluate how well the early help system and whole family approach is embedded across the wider partnership.



Pledge four:

We will develop an empowered, skilled, and effective workforce

What this means for a child:

“I know and am comfortable with Bright Start staff. They know me and understand my needs, and help others understand my needs too”



Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure outcomes
13) A workforce that reflects our local community	Parents and carers feel represented and can relate to Bright Start staff.	• Reported protected characteristics of staff at all levels are broadly reflective of the local population. • Increase in trust and satisfaction rates reported through the parent and carer panels. • Increase in the number of parent champions moving into employment.
14) An ambitious, integrated workforce with opportunities to progress	Staff understand the range of roles delivering Bright Start and opportunities to advance, and there is increased staff retention and progression of the workforce.	• Year on year, a decrease in staff turnover within Bright Start. • Increase in the number, and good attendance of events for networking, shadowing, peer learning. • Improved staff feedback on training and development opportunities and events.
15) A skilled and culturally competent workforce delivering a relationship-centred offer	Families feel supported by a knowledgeable, culturally competent, skilled, and confident workforce.	• More staff are completing the mandatory training and taking up the wider relevant training offer. • Year on year, more practitioners report feeling confident and able to deliver a relationship-centred approach to families, particularly those from under-served communities. • Year on year, increase in the percentage of families reporting satisfaction with their relationships with Bright Start professionals through the parent survey and the internal audit for UNICEF re-accreditation.

Priority 13: A workforce that reflects our local community

Why is this important for Islington?

Islington is home to a wonderful mix of children and their families, speaking over 80 languages and living in hugely varied circumstances. We know that some of these families feel more at home and find it easier to access our services than others. We want all families to see and connect with people providing services that reflect the diversity of our local communities, and to feel understood and welcome. Part of this commitment is to promote a workforce that reflects our local community and is from our local community, also supporting local employment.

Where are we now?

Local employment is a strategic priority across Islington, and we have good examples of it in voluntary roles, for example the parent champions. However, we do not have a full breakdown of the characteristics of our Bright Start staff, and so more work here is needed to understand what progress needs to be made. In the council, the Whittington and UCLH, there are equality and diversity procedures in place within recruitment practice, including a local employment statement.

Our commitments

- Develop a full understanding of our current workforce and whether it reflects our local population.
- Build on the success of apprenticeships, and the progression of parent champions.
- Share equality and diversity recruitment practice between organisations to see where improvements could be made.



Priority 14: An ambitious, integrated workforce with opportunities to progress

Why is this important for Islington?

We want our workforce to have the opportunity to develop and grow their skills within Bright Start wherever possible. We have wonderful integrated multi-agency services, and we want our staff to be able to work more flexibly across those boundaries. This will improve understanding of roles across the system and support seamless inter-agency delivery of services. We also want to “grow-our-own” staff: to give more opportunities for development and training and to keep staff in the borough. This will help to protect Bright Start from some of the recruitment and retention issues facing many areas of Inner London.

Where are we now?

We encourage career progression in our system and have good examples of those who have transitioned from volunteering to paid roles and a strong track record of apprentices within the early years team.

The council has an “Internal first” recruiting policy and the Solace Emerging Leaders programme aimed at developing talent in high-potential managers and emerging leaders. We also have a leadership development programme in place within the health visiting service, which aims to improve confidence in leading the Healthy Child Programme and develop leadership qualities.

We aim to draw on these examples and further develop opportunities for career progression and keep an ambitious workforce.

Our commitments

- Create opportunities for greater networking for staff across organisations, peer learning, and developing integrated early years roles.
- Develop better shared understanding of the skills, training, and role of discrete workforces and offer more opportunities for shared training.
- Introduce individual personal development plans to support staff on their career progression journey including access to qualifications through internal programmes and mentors.



Priority 15: A skilled and culturally competent workforce delivering a relationship-centred offer

Why is this important for Islington?

To achieve our vision of all children in Islington having the best start in life, our workforce must develop trusting and supportive relationships with families. Building on families' strengths to help develop trusting, respectful and meaningful relationships is at the heart of our collaborative approach to develop and deliver services and encourage successful engagement. The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme provides greater opportunity to develop a relationship-centred offer and skilled workforce. Through a deeper understanding of cultural practices and differences, a culturally competent workforce will be able to respond more effectively to the needs of communities.

Where are we now?

Bright Start uses a trauma-informed approach to shape the development and delivery of our services. Staff are suitably trained to have the knowledge and skills to have sensitive conversations and holistically support families to offer early help, support, and connect parents who may need it to specialist services.

There are also shared trainings in place, such as perinatal mental health and infant feeding and relationship building being delivered to all. Training can be integrated between teams including the voluntary and community sector.

Further understanding is needed of the training needs of our staff, particularly understanding what core and specialist training is needed. This will also help to understand personal and service development plans.

Our commitments

- Integrate and promote our training offer and share expertise and resources beyond health, early years and early help to wider stakeholders, such as the voluntary and community sector and the wider local workforce.
- Add to the current training offer with a health module in the parent champion training, ensure all staff complete core training for autism, learning disability and mental health, and further develop trauma-informed practice expertise within family hubs.
- Use opportunities through partnerships with community organisations to further develop cultural competency.

“All the workers have taken the time to get to know me and enable me to make my own decisions.”
Bright Start parent

Appendix



Summary of all pledges, priorities, outcomes, measures, and commitments

Pledge one: we will focus on the areas that matter most			
What this means for a child:			
"I am healthy, happy, and supported by my family"			
"I am ready to learn"			
Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure them	Our commitments
1. Early relationships to support mental health and wellbeing	Families feel better equipped to manage their mental health, understand what is important for a child's wellbeing and know how to get further support.	• More children are achieving the expected level in personal-social skills at their two/two and six months review. • More parents are using the parenting support offer, including Journey to Parenthood, Family Kitchen, and Emotional Wellbeing Visits. • Scores from the Family Star wellbeing assessment and maternal mood assessments show improved family resilience. • More health visitors and wider partners are trained to do new-born observations.	• Promote our offer so that all families know where to get support for mental health and emotional wellbeing. • Deliver more training and increase awareness of perinatal mental health issues among a wider range of practitioners working with parents and carers. • Update the Islington Perinatal Mental Health Pathways so that all practitioners are confident in signposting families to the most suitable sources of support for their mental health.
2. Early language and the home learning environment	Parents, carers, and practitioners have the tools, knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively support children's speech, language, and communication development so that children are ready for school and make good progress from their starting points.	• Year on year, the number of children who score below the cut off for communication in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire decreases, and our scores for communication and language are in line with national and Inner London neighbours. • Increase in parent/carers and practitioner confidence in supporting children's speech, language, communication development. • Increase in take up of the free early learning childcare offer.	• Coordinate and strengthen the way we package, promote, and give access to home learning resources and support available for families, with a focus on reaching families most impacted by the pandemic. • Bring together universal and targeted services to better coordinate support for children's speech, language, and communication at every stage of development as needs emerge.
3. Infant feeding support and increasing breastfeeding rates	Parents and carers receive timely, consistent, evidence-based information about infant feeding that's relevant to them. They feel supported to start and continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish. More babies and children receive a greater proportion of breastmilk in their diet for a longer period of time.	• Increase in the percentage of exclusive and partial breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks. • Increase in the number of venues signed up to be "Breastfeeding Welcome". • More mothers report satisfaction with infant feeding support service. • Achieved 'gold standard' UNICEF Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative re-accreditation.	• Work with our peer supporters and parent champions to share high-quality information and consistent messaging about infant feeding with a diverse range of community groups. • Further embed Baby-Friendly standards across Bright Start and progress towards the Achieving Sustainability award. • Refresh and expand the Breastfeeding Welcome scheme to support mums' right to breastfeed throughout the borough.
4. Healthy weight and nutrition	Children are eating a balanced and nutritious diet and are more willing to try new food, with fewer children with excess weight at Reception age. Families have access to activities that promote a healthy lifestyle including physical activity, with opportunities for women to be physically active pre- and post-natally.	• Reduced percentage of children at Reception age with Body Mass Index (BMI) equating to overweight/obesity measure. • More children are willing to try new foods, as shown by the Families for Life Child Eating Behaviour Questionnaire. • Increase in the number of vitamins distributed to families, and number of qualified families signed up to the Healthy Start card.	• Train family health advisors and other early years staff to have the understanding, confidence, and opportunity to promote healthy weight in every conversation. • Promote the support available to all families and develop more programmes for families with babies between six and 18 months and children over three. • Support settings to provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks to children in their care.

Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure them	Our commitments
5. Oral health	Children have less oral health decay.	• Less hospital admissions for dental caries for 0–5s. • Increased dental visits by children aged 0–5.	• Increase the number of settings signed up to the supervised tooth brushing programme. • Make sure that the family hub offer includes oral health promotion and information about what’s on offer. • Support children and families to access dentists.
6. Immunisations	More children have all their recommended vaccinations before starting school.	• An increased percentage of children are fully vaccinated at age five.	• Carry out a survey of parental attitudes to understand what influences parental decisions around vaccinations. • Increase opportunities to promote vaccinations at mandated contacts, groups and entry to childcare or education. • Train all staff to feel confident to talk about vaccines.
7. Support for those impacted by economic instability	Parents and carers are better informed about what economic support is available and are accessing the benefits they’re entitled to. They feel that their economic needs are supported all in one place.	• Staff report knowledge and confidence of signposting through the bi-annual staff survey. • Increase in uptake of the Healthy Start scheme and universal vitamins distribution. • More parents are using the free early learning places.	• Train staff to understand the housing and benefits systems for better signposting. • Make sure families with disrupted housing have continuous support and access to Bright Start services when they need it. • Raise the profile of the help family support practitioners can offer families and destigmatise this more enhanced level of support.

Pledge two: we will increase accessibility, reach, and inclusion

What this means for a child:

“I feel welcome, included and see myself at Bright Start activities”
“Bright Start helped me and my family when we needed it”

Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure them	Our commitments
8. Reaching all families with an offer that meets their needs	More families, including the most vulnerable, know how to access the Bright Start offer, and experience high-quality services at the right time, in the right place, focused on their needs.	• Year on year, more families are accessing Bright Start, and report accessibility, awareness of and satisfaction with Bright Start services as measured by the annual Bright Start family survey and feedback through parent and carer panels and other forums. • Year on year, more families report that they receive the services they need, when they need them and where they can best access them.	• Develop and promote a Start for Life offer that is accessible, welcoming and friendly through knowledgeable staff and peers who are present in the family hub, children’s centre or local community such as family hub navigators and parent champions. • Use quarterly data to monitor and identify any gaps, under- or over-representation of specific communities to Bright Start services. • Continue to implement the recommendations of the Manor Gardens Welfare Trust equalities programme to improve access for under-served groups, for example through taking services to other community venues.
9. A welcoming hub of inclusive services accessible to diverse communities	Families from all diverse backgrounds and with SEND report that services are high-quality and make them feel welcome and included.	• Increase in the proportion of families from Somali, Turkish, Bangladeshi, and Caribbean communities who register for universal Bright Start services. • Increase in the proportion of families with SEND accessing Bright Start. • An increase in the proportion of families from all communities, reporting that the services are high-quality through the Bright Start family survey and feedback through parent and carer panels and other forums.	• Through co-production with parents and carers, work to better understand some of the barriers preventing families accessing services and develop targeted promotional materials that speak to specific groups who are less represented in Bright Start. • Train more staff to support families with SEND and use the SEND parent carer forums and our speech and language therapists to make sure all promotional materials are inclusive and welcoming for all children and families. • Develop a broader offer for children with more complex SEND that better reflects the universal offer for all families.

Pledge three: we will strengthen the bright start partnership

What this means for a child:

“I have a voice and feel listened to”
“As I grow and develop, someone from Bright Start is always there to support me and my family”

Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure them	Our commitments
10. Designing services with families	Families feel that they can shape how services are designed and delivered and can give feedback that is valued.	- Parent and carer panels are set up and representative of the local community, and there is an increase in the number of parent champions. - Year on year, more parents and carers report they feel involved in Bright Start design, planning, delivery, and monitoring.	- Set up a parent and carer panel through building on the work of parent champions. Work with voluntary sector partners to make sure it is representative of the diverse communities we serve and reflects the child’s journey – antenatal to school. - Take a systematic approach to capturing, analysing, and sharing child and family feedback across the family hub network. This will inform the shaping of local services and make sure that parents see the value and impact of their feedback.
11. Seamless support for families through maternity and early childhood	Families have seamless support through maternity and early childhood, trust the professionals and volunteers supporting them throughout their journey, and don’t have to tell their story more than once.	- Increase in satisfaction rates of families about moving between services and practitioners. - Frontline professionals report better integration during the EIF self-assessment.	- Coordinate shared training and joint pathways between Bright Start core staff and midwifery to make sure consistent messaging is being taught in antenatal education and infant feeding support. - Create a model for Whittington safeguarding meetings to include Bright Start representation. - Adapt children’s centres to work better for midwifery teams, such as improving IT systems.
12. Strong strategic partnerships between maternity and early years	Bright Start and midwifery staff and wider partners report the strength of integration, have shared outcomes and effective referral pathways.	- Staff report improved integration and understanding of pathways through the bi-annual survey, and there is an increased number of joint networking events. - Integrated quality assurance activity demonstrates consistency of approach, shared language and seamless support for families.	- Regularly evaluate progress towards recommendations from the EIF Review and take action to address gaps. - Strengthen the wider strategic and operational partnership in planning the delivery of family hubs using multi-agency data to better inform decision-making at a strategic and local level. - Formalise and build on the multi-agency meetings which happen at locality level. - Further develop opportunities for integrated quality assurance activities to evaluate how well the early help system and whole family approach is embedded across the wider partnership.

Pledge four: we will develop an empowered, skilled, and effective workforce

What this means for a child:

“I know and am comfortable with Bright Start staff. They know me and understand my needs, and help others understand my needs too”

Priority	Outcomes	How we will measure them	Our commitments
13. A workforce that reflects our local community	Parents and carers feel represented and can relate to Bright Start staff.	- Reported protected characteristics of staff at all levels are broadly reflective of the local population. - Increase in trust and satisfaction rates reported through the parent and carer panels. - Increase in the number of parent champions moving into employment.	- Develop a full understanding of our current workforce and whether it reflects our local population. - Build on the success of apprenticeships, and the progression of parent champions. - Share equality and diversity recruitment practice between organisations to see where improvements could be made.
14. An ambitious, integrated workforce with opportunities to progress	Staff understand the range of roles delivering Bright Start and opportunities to advance, and there is increased staff retention and progression of the workforce.	- Year on year, a decrease in staff turnover within Bright Start. - Increase in the number, and good attendance of events for networking, shadowing, peer learning. - Improved staff feedback on training and development opportunities and events.	- Create opportunities for greater networking for staff across organisations, peer learning, and developing integrated early years roles. - Develop better shared understanding of the skills, training, and role of discrete workforces and offer more opportunities for shared training. - Introduce individual personal development plans to support staff on their career progression journey including access to qualifications through internal programmes and mentors.
15. A skilled and culturally competent workforce delivering a relationship-centred offer	Families feel supported by a knowledgeable, culturally competent, skilled, and confident workforce.	- More staff are completing the mandatory training and taking up the wider relevant training offer. - Year on year, more practitioners report feeling confident and able to deliver a relationship-centred approach to families, particularly those from under-served communities. - Year on year, increase in the percentage of families reporting satisfaction with their relationships with Bright Start professionals through the parent survey and the internal audit for UNICEF re-accreditation.	- Integrate and promote our training offer and share expertise and resources beyond health, early years and early help to wider stakeholders, such as the voluntary and community sector and the wider local workforce. - Add to the current training offer with a health module in the parent champion training, ensuring all staff complete core training for autism, learning disability and mental health, and further develop trauma-informed practice expertise within family hubs. - Use opportunities through partnerships with community organisations to further develop cultural competency.

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