

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 26 FEBRUARY 2026
REPORT OF THE CHILDREN & FAMILIES PARTNERSHIP
JOINT HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE
ON BEST START FOR LIFE

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of the report is to:
 - a) Provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) on progress in relation to the Best Start for Life priority of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) 2022-32.
 - b) Seek approval from the Health and Wellbeing Board for proposed changes to the current relationship between the Children and Families Partnership, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Recommendation

2. The Board is requested to:
 - a) Note the progress being made in relation to delivering against the Best Start for Life priority.
 - b) Note the progress being made in relation to delivering against the cross-cutting priorities.
 - c) Approve the proposed changes to the Operational Delivery Group of the Health and Wellbeing Board overseeing the Best Start for Life strategic priority.

Background

3. One of the statutory requirements of the HWB is to produce and deliver a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS). A Joint Strategic Needs assessment (JSNA) was carried out to provide the evidence base to identify the health and wellbeing needs of the local population. The JSNA along with contributions from key partners and stakeholders, helped to inform the JHWS priorities.
4. The ten-year JHWS was approved in February 2022 and aims to improve the health, wellbeing and equity outcomes of Leicestershire. The strategy follows a life course approach:
 - a. Best Start for Life;
 - b. Staying Healthy, Safe and Well;
 - c. Living and Supported Well;
 - d. Dying Well.

5. Three HWB Operational Delivery Groups deliver the priorities within each specific life course. A fourth Operational Delivery Group was established in January 2023 to specifically address the mental health needs across Leicestershire, recognising it cuts across all life courses and requires a greater focus.
6. Reducing health inequalities remains a cross-cutting theme and underpins the work of all four Operational Delivery Groups.
7. The Best Start for Life strategic priority is split into three priority areas. Each priority area includes a set of commitments.
 - a) First 1001 Critical Days;
 - b) School Readiness;
 - c) Preparing for Life.
8. The Children and Families Partnership (CFP) is the Operational Delivery Group that oversees the Best Start for Life strategic priority of the JHWS, contributing also towards cross-cutting priorities.
9. A report on progress was presented to HWB in February 2025:
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s188702/7%20HWB%20Report%20Best%20Start%20in%20Life%20Feb%202025%20002.pdf>
10. This report provides an update on progress since the last report, challenges that would benefit from input from the HWB, and plans for the next 12 months in continuing to deliver against the Best Start for Life strategic priority of the JHWS.

Progress against the Best Start for Life strategic priority of the JLHWS

11. The table below details the progress being made against each of the priority areas and commitments:

JHWS Priority 1: First 1001 Critical Days
Embedding the Government's vision for 'The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work continues to raise awareness of the importance of the first 1001 days for children's development across the children's workforce. Key messages were shared with newly qualified social workers and workshops continue to be delivered for midwifery students at De Montfort University. • The Children and Family Services (CFS) Family Help, along with Leicestershire Safeguarding Partnership, hosted its second 'Baby

Fortnight'/Start for Life campaign in 2025 aimed at practitioners, volunteers and families. Face to Face sessions were delivered in family hubs for families, with development and information sessions run for staff and volunteers on 1001 critical days, ICON (an evidence-based programme that delivers simple messages about infant crying and how to cope), working with Dads, choosing childcare and a range of other topics. The workshops were accessed by over 350 practitioners. 108 families and 126 children attended the sessions in hubs, which were based on 4 key topics; Tip Top Talkers, Little Senses, Let's get messy and Active Mums Club. Online social media messages during the fortnight had a total reach of 5,500.

Integrated Early Years Pathway

- Early years providers now complete an online questionnaire when concerns arise regarding a child's development within the setting. The purpose of this process is to strengthen communication between providers and health visitors. Health visitors are subsequently able to review the information shared and offer tailored advice and guidance for parents, ensuring timely and appropriate support for children.
- Training to support effective use of this system has been delivered to 130 early years providers. In addition, the relevant website has been updated with refreshed material, including a newly developed bitesize resource to support training for all staff.
- The CFS Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service (EYICS) receive developmental data from the Healthy Together service for children not meeting expected milestones at age two. This data informs planning for sector-wide training and ensures that children who have not met milestones in four or five developmental domains are prioritised for support from the Early Years SEND team.
- EYICS has implemented Nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs) reviewer training to strengthen inclusive practice across early years settings. This training supports providers to work effectively with their local Family Hubs and encourages consistent multiagency collaboration.
- As a result, providers are better equipped to create inclusive environments, and families benefit from improved support systems during their child's early years.
- To further enhance parental confidence and understanding, a new video resource has been produced. This video is designed to support parents of children with additional needs, helping them feel assured and informed about accessing Enhanced Resource provision within local mainstream schools.

Embedding additional checks into the public health nursing service

- A digital assessment for infants aged 3–4 months is now an established part of the 0–11 service. Parents receive essential information and guidance, along with clear signposting to relevant support services.
- The 3–3.5-year check was introduced on a pilot basis to understand whether an additional point of contact could strengthen readiness for school, add value for families and support early identification of need. Evaluation demonstrated that families with the highest levels of need had already received targeted support through the mandatory 2–2.5-year review and subsequent interventions. As a result, engagement with the 3–3.5-year review was lower than anticipated, with limited additional benefit identified for these families. This learning has been valuable, as it confirms that the existing 2–2.5-year offer is effectively identifying children requiring early support, and it helps ensure resources are directed where they have the greatest impact.

Breastfeeding support

- The LLR Infant feeding group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis, producing an action plan based on the recommendations from the Health Needs Assessment completed. There have been some further areas highlighted by the group which have been added into the action plan for consideration, which include universal colostrum collection and an increase in mothers with gestational diabetes mellitus. Alongside this the group has refreshed the terms of reference, reviewing membership and purpose of the group.

Childhood immunisation

- Coverage of childhood immunisations continues to exceed the national average. In line with the national trend, uptake continues to decline and is below the WHO target of 95% for many programmes.
- Timely vaccination remains an important priority, as does identifying and addressing inequalities in vaccination uptake.
- A multi-organisation project to improve childhood vaccination uptake in populations with historically low rates concluded that this was linked to access barriers and system factors. Best practice includes co-produced materials, flexible delivery, and trusted relationships- approaches we are scaling through the LLR multi-organisation project.
- Maternal vaccinations (Pertussis(Whooping Cough), RSV, and Seasonal Influenza) are available at selected community sites. Details can be found on the Integrated Care Board's vaccination hub. RSV vaccination is offered year-round and is recommended to pregnant women from 28 weeks gestation.

- Next steps include continuing the proactive MMR catch-up and to identify and address populations with lower vaccination uptake.

Empowering families to access the most appropriate health and wellbeing services

- In November 2025, Leicestershire County Council was awarded £3,919,300 by the Department for Education to deliver Best Start Family Hubs. This funding supports the government's Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life strategy, which reinforces its commitment to high-quality early years and family services. Integration of health services within Best Start Family Hubs is fundamental to achieving improved outcomes for babies, children, and families.
- Family Hubs remain a flagship national policy, now being scaled up with significant investment and updated guidance to deliver integrated, multi-agency support. Best Start Family Hubs provide a single access point for families, combining health, education, and social care services. They aim to reduce fragmentation, improve accessibility, and ensure families receive joined-up support at the earliest opportunity.
- The *Stable Homes, Built on Love* strategy sets out a clear ambition to shift from crisis intervention to prevention, embed family-led solutions and relational practice and deliver joined-up support through Family Help. Early parenting programmes are central to achieving these goals because they equip parents with practical skills and emotional resilience before challenges escalate and help prevent children entering care or child protection plans. They also strengthen family relationships, supporting Leicestershire's Relationships Matter pledge. Delivered through Best Start Family Hubs and community venues, evidence-based programmes such as, Triple P, PEEP, Making It Real and Solihull Approach will be an offer that spans from Targeted Early Help through to Child Protection Teams, strengthening our overall offer to families.
- General Practice Project – Data sharing agreement is now in the final stages of approval with LCC information governance meaning that if patients are seen in surgery a conversation with family hubs staff is agreed and understood by the patient meaning quicker support is reaching families. Briefings by the community and family navigators have been completed with 20 GP students this last quarter meaning a wide knowledge and understandings of Family Hubs is growing amongst the Primary Care Network.
- Libraries - Between July 2025-October 2025 libraries ran Wiggly Reader sessions. As many as 555 parents and 641 children engaged with these sessions, which also involved signposting to nearest Family Hubs. Parents and carers visiting the libraries have reported they feel more informed about the Hubs and about their local area, feeling more confident about which services are on offer.
 - Numbers of families spoken/ connected with at other library sessions – 137 parents and 185 children.
 - Parents and children booked onto Communication and Language sessions following speaking to family hubs staff in the libraries - 22 parents and 25 children.

JHWS Priority 2: School Readiness

Narrowing the development gap affecting children who are at the greatest disadvantage

- EYICS has partnered with local libraries to deliver Bookstart book packs to children living in areas of disadvantage. Through these sessions, staff model effective shared reading strategies and provide practical tips to both providers and parents. EYICS also contributed to the countywide Early Years Festival hosted in libraries, supporting families' engagement with early learning.
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- Advisors attend the two-year pathway groups, Family Hubs, and Wiggly Readers library sessions to speak directly with parents about the benefits of early education and the processes for applying for funded entitlements.
- EYICS offers training to support providers in promoting children's personal, emotional, and social development, with an emphasis on encouraging positive behaviour. A suite of home-learning materials has also been produced to help providers and parents support children's development at home; these materials are available to download from the Council's website.
- EYICS distributes emails and postcards to families receiving additional forms of government support to raise awareness of, and encourage take-up of, funded early education entitlements.
- Termly data sharing with children's social care helps identify caseload children who are not accessing their funded entitlements, enabling targeted support and intervention.
- Using Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) take-up rates, EYICS has identified preschools where children eligible for free school meals are achieving below peers. Bespoke modelling sessions have been developed to support improvements in children's communication, physical, and social skills. Providers are encouraged to share best practice on the effective use of EYPP funding, and case studies will be disseminated through newsletters and web links.
- A new leaflet, *Choosing Quality Childcare*, has been produced to guide parents in selecting appropriate early education settings and to highlight the benefits of early learning. This resource is aligned with the *Best Start in Life* campaign.

Supporting families to get their children off to a good developmental start and Access to support early development of speech, language and communication.

(links also to JHSW Priority 1, Critical Days and Covid recovery)

- The 0-2 Pathway is currently undergoing a full review to align outcomes with new Department of Education guidelines from April 2026 in line with Best Start in Life expectations. The pathway will be entirely evidence based and will remain a targeted group for data driven cohorts.
- Plans are in place to create a new role called Best Start in Life Practitioners, and recruitment for this is planned from January 2026.
- The Maternity and Early Years partnership have identified that speech , language and communication skills remain low for Leicestershire children. Children with good communication skills are more likely to be school ready. A developmental roadmap has been created to help parents understand the importance of talking to their child from birth. Accompanying key messages have been produced to encourage parents to integrate communication - building activities into daily routines, promoting early language development.
- EYICS has prioritised communication and language training for early years providers working with children from nine months. Key elements include:
 - Collaboration with Stronger Practice Hubs, funded by the Department for Education, giving providers access to evidence-based approaches.
 - Training to help practitioners identify early signs of delay and apply effective strategies to support children's progress.
 - Opportunities for practitioners to share strategies with parents, ensuring consistent support across settings.
- Speech, language and communication training is delivered to the Early Years workforce to help identify children at risk of delay. 141 providers have received training for Summer and Autumn term 2025, co-ordinated by EYICS.
- The Early Language Support for Every Child Toolkit has been launched and shared with all providers. Training is offered through the Speech and Language Service for children who require additional support.
- EYICS has four trained Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) advisors. 53 local authority colleagues and early years providers have been trained to deliver evidenced based home learning interventions to families.
- Communication and Language Workers continue to deliver sessions to universal parent-child groups through Family Hubs. These sessions support the development of speech, language and communication in pre-school children. These are planned to continue through 2026-29 and will be jointly funded through Family Hubs and Public Health.
- 97% of early years childcare providers in Leicestershire are rated by Ofsted as good or better.

- 75.9% percentage of Leicestershire children are reaching their age-appropriate milestones and achieving a good level of development at the 2-year health review.
- 121 children have not reached their milestone in 4 or more domains. These children are more likely to be referred to the Early Years SEND advisors and remain on their caseload until school and likely to need specialist support in the future.
- More children are achieving a good level of development at the end of their foundation stage than last year. Data has been released for 2024/25 cohort, 70.4% of Leicestershire children have achieved a good level of development which is above National (68.3%).

Embedding physical activity into children's lives

- National Child Measurement Programme dashboards are now live to identify areas/schools which may need to be targeted.
- Working with LCC Sport and Exercise Medicine Registrar and the School Sport and Physical Activity Network to review the offer for those Children and Young People with long-term health conditions.
- School Sport and Physical Activity Networks funded to deliver against the following priorities: fundamental movement, targeted physical activity programmes and active travel.
- Early Years Physical Activity Continuing Professional Development programme in place, with the next conference date set for March 2026
- Supported the development of a national children and young people physical activity training programme

Access to high-quality, inclusive and accessible childcare and early education

- A robust and sustained communications campaign is in place to promote the range of funded childcare offers available to families. This includes:
 - Funded childcare hours for two-year-olds whose parents receive additional government support.
 - Universal and extended funded entitlements for three- and four-year-olds.
 - The working parents' entitlement for children from nine months to school age.
- Since September 2025, eligible working parents have been able to access up to 30 hours of funded childcare for children aged nine months and above. A termly promotional campaign encourages parents to obtain their HMRC codes to secure their entitlements with their chosen childcare provider. Campaign messaging is disseminated through the Family Hubs website and Family Hubs Facebook pages.
- Significant progress has been made in expanding places for children aged two and under, enabling parents to return to work or training. During the Autumn 2025 period:
 - 4,903 two-year-olds accessed places under the new entitlement.

- 3,978 children aged under two accessed the new entitlement for working parents.
- Termly partnership meetings continue to be held with colleagues from: Family Hubs, Health services and Early Years Information and Childcare Service (EYICS). These meetings provide opportunities to share key messages, promote mutual understanding of services, and reinforce the benefits of early education as part of the Best Start in Life Plan.
- A number of parent-facing initiatives support awareness and uptake of early education:
 - Birth registrars distribute postcards to new parents outlining funded entitlements and guidance on choosing quality childcare.
 - A promotional video highlighting the benefits of early education has been developed and is now in circulation.
 - A new autumn-term postcard encourages parents to access early education prior to starting school.
- The EYICS uses data from school admissions, and contacts parents who have given permission, to encourage them to take up a childcare place in an early years setting prior to starting school. Parents are encouraged to understand the benefits of early education so that they will be ready for school.

Improving maternal mental health and physical activity

- Active Mums Club continues to engage and empower pre-and post-natal women to be active
 - Year 3 Impact Report (July 2024 – June 2025) has been developed. Some key headlines:
 - Outcomes for women were positive: 67% increased physical activity levels, 47% achieved strength guidelines, 39% reported improved general health, 64% increased life satisfaction, 51% reduced anxiety.
 - 308 Buggy Walks delivered, supported by 22 trained walk leaders
 - The Active Mums Club website recorded 10,880 page views with 2,878 unique users
 - Social media reach was recorded as: 105,754 people on Facebook and 22,942 on Instagram
- www.activemumsclub.org
Funding has been secured for Year 4 of programme delivery

JHWS Priority 3: Preparing for Life

Increase Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination uptake

- HPV Coverage and trend:

- In 2023/24 (latest trend data available), Leicestershire's HPV one-dose coverage is 80.9% for females and 73.4% for males, both above the England average (72.9% females; 67.7% males).
- In East Midlands: For males, Leicestershire performs better than all areas apart from Rutland and North Northants. For females Leicestershire performs better than all others across East Mids. However, coverage remains below the 90% ambition, and longer-term declines from pre-pandemic levels have not fully recovered
- The adolescent programme moved to a one-dose schedule in September 2023, improving simplicity and catch-up potential. The ICB-led LLR HPV Project Group has a system-wide action plan across SAIS (School Aged Immunisation Service), schools, primary care and community outreach, aligned to the national cervical cancer elimination ambition.

Reducing levels of children in care

- There are key pathways to support reducing the levels of children in care. Right Support, Right Time implementation of Family Safeguarding and Family Help enabling intensive early intervention, and Families Together focus on working with children at risk of being looked after, offering intensive intervention.
- Authorisation levels and processes for children entering care is consistently used and children's care plans are considered by Independent Reviewing Officers.
- The focus on supporting children who are out of care continues, with the number of Special Guardianship Orders being achieved exceeding predicted numbers.
- There is also specific focus on supporting return home for children and achieving revocation of Care Orders when this is the best option for the child. A new CFS approach is in draft and being considered by the senior management team. If approved, CFS will take this into implementation in 2026.

Opportunities for 16-17 year olds to gain education, employment and training

- The CFS Care Leavers team have established a partnership with Leicestershire Cares and REED who are offering care leavers employment support and work experience. The development of a study support programme has also given further opportunity for care leavers who are not yet work ready to have work experience and support. The first cohort has supported 3 care leavers, and this will be rolled out again. Work needs to be undertaken with the Districts and all departments in LCC to increase the opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships. The care leaver service and virtual school are leading on this work.

Develop the public health offer for schools, to build informed, healthy and resilient young people

- In addition to being fully operational in all mainstream secondary schools, in Leicestershire, the Teen Health Service has expanded into 6th Form Colleges over the past year. There are 3 Health and Wellbeing Officers supporting post 16 age group with a weekly presence (1 day) at several further education colleges and post 16 school settings.
- Regular quarterly pop-ups and events are held at additional further education colleges. Work has just begun with events lined up starting this term. An online wellbeing group for post 16 is being piloted in the evenings to address engagement and logistical barriers, with evaluation scheduled for May.
- The Health Related Behaviour Survey of 2025 has been completed by 5,032 children and young people across 37 schools in Leicestershire. Insights from this on topics such as emotional health & wellbeing, substance use & alcohol, relationships, and physical activity have been shared with partners across the system to help inform their work.
- Public Health are mapping the offers and services available to schools by the department, and will be working with CFS on how best to communicate our support options with education settings.

Access to emotional and mental health support for children and young people

- Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Five Year Plan - MHST have a target of achieving 100% coverage by 2029/30. We have submitted and agreed a trajectory to achieve 100% coverage, we are expecting an additional 8 teams which will support a staggered expansion into all Leicestershire County and Rutland education settings. We are on track to meet the national medium term planning expectations in relation to coverage. There remains strong system commitment to the Government mandate of achieving 100% MHST coverage by 2029, which will equate to 25 funded teams across LLR.
- Current LLR position - Approximately 69% CYP population coverage and 49% of education settings covered. Against the Medium-Term Planning Framework targets (77% by 26/27 and 94% by 28/29), LLR remains on track.
- Whole School College Approach across Leicestershire and Rutland:
 - 2024/25 Whole School/College Approach number of activities: 317
 - 2024/25 Whole School/College Approach number of CYP/ Parents/ Carers: 17,034
- Current Coverage across Leicestershire and Rutland:
 - 143 Education settings - 40.6% of Leicestershire County and Rutland total coverage
 - 70,426 CYP - 53.7% based on total school capacity within Leicestershire County and Rutland. Please note this includes the Harborough district that is being onboarded in the new year 2026. This will ensure service provision in all Leicestershire County and Rutland localities/districts, at the current coverage detailed.

- Challenges - All MHSTs nationally are experiencing recruitment challenges, we have an ongoing advert and are implementing a pathway to support Education Mental Health Practitioners who have completed the training course an opportunity to register with the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) or British Psychological Society (BPS), this will increase our potential pool of candidates.

We have experienced some challenge with a very small pool of education settings declining our offer when we have attempted onboarding, the rationale for this is school leadership capacity to facilitate. A smaller number have also not responded to repeated contact, telephone/email. We will attempt to onboard all of them again in the next wave of expansion/onboarding.

- Domestic abuse and sexual violence support for children and young people continues to be a high priority across our domestic abuse services through our specialised commissioned service offer. This support includes therapeutic support for children and families across a variety of settings as well as the development of survivor voice through project Echo whereby CYP voices are heard and utilised to adapt services dependent on feedback and need. To ensure the learning from Project Echo is carried forward a survivor group will be established to feed into the Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, a representative from the group will sit on the Board.
- Reducing parental conflict training and information on the Family Hubs, alongside the Teen Health offer in schools, have been prioritised for DA services, particularly where working with children and young people on healthy relationships is a priority.
- Additionally, young people are supported by Health and Wellbeing officers within the Teen Health service with specific remit around promoting healthy relationships and emotional wellbeing, liaising closely with integrated sexual Health provider and system partners.
- youHQ Mental Health and Wellbeing App has embedded across 25 secondary schools across Leicestershire. There is an event planned for February 2026 to help promote and recruit secondary schools to sign up for the App. The youHQ App provides opportunities for young people to explore their emotions, access support, and develop self-management skills. YouHQ provides:
 - Track and support student health and emotional wellbeing.
 - Allow young people to set 'value-based goals'
 - Enable authorised staff such as class tutor, Safeguarding lead and Head of school to view children's wellbeing scores.
 - Provide safeguarding 'flags' and alerts to designated staff i.e. Class Tutor and Safeguarding leads.
 - Provide insight to young people's behaviours i.e. mental health and wellbeing in order to improve pastoral support.

- Provides support and signposts to local resources, including integration of Tellmi.

Access to appropriate support for children and young people to maintain an active lifestyle and healthy weight

- The Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight, Food and Nutrition is progressing, with the initial priority themes identified through stakeholder engagement now being tested with community groups and residents. Education has emerged as one of the key themes, encompassing school food provision and individuals' confidence and skills in preparing healthy meals. Leicestershire has also recently launched its ambition to achieve Gold Sustainable Food Place status. Several workstreams will begin over the coming months to support delivery of this aspiration which also takes a life course approach.
- HENRY workshops (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) continues to be delivered successfully within Family Hubs, with excellent uptake and retention figures.
- The Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) is a DfE funded national programme that supports school age children receiving free school meals (FSM) to access free holiday activity sessions with a meal during Easter, Summer, and Winter school holidays. The aims of the HAF programme include supporting children to receive healthy and nutritious meals and maintain a healthy level of physical activity. CFS, with support from Active Together, continue to co-ordinate the delivery of Leicestershire's HAF programme. DfE have confirmed funding for the national programme for 2026-29.

Support the workforce to embed a Trauma Informed Approach

- A Trauma Informed practice toolkit was developed for Health Visitors and Midwifery by Barnardo's and was circulated across both services. This is hosted on the County Council website. Midwifery have developed training offers and have Trauma Informed Champions within the workforce. Changes have been made to practice including additional documents such as a body map to help explain trauma and how it can affect individuals, and that birth plans can change dependent on needs/ emergencies. University Hospitals Leicester and Public Health work closely around new developments, including participating in the Reducing Parental Conflict work.
- The Early Help Competency Framework has recently been rebranded as Early Help Practice Guidance to ensure it is more user-friendly and accessible to practitioners.
- Further work is underway across the local authorities and Safeguarding Partnership to develop the learning offer for the partnership. This will result in a shared learning and resource platform being developed across LLR to support external lead practitioners, offering access to guidance, tools, and learning opportunities.

- Quick Thinking Plan Early Help Assessment (QTP) - Following approval of the new centrally based Partnership team, recruitment has been completed for a new Team Leader who will lead the team of Early Help Facilitators and is in due to start in January 2026. Ongoing recruitment is currently taking place to fill 3 Early Help Facilitators post with interviews taking place later this month. 4 schools are now using SharePoint to log Quick Thinking Plans (QTPs) with a further 2 currently planning to become part of phase 1. We have received our first QTP which averted a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) being completed, and appropriate support was given to school and signposting provided. We have taken benchmarks for comparative data to ensure we can measure the reduction of MARFS received by these schools each term to measure impact.
- The Families First Partnership Programme is the name given to the national programme of reform for children's social care. Working with partners including police, health and education, work is underway to respond to national guidance, build on existing strengths, and ensure services and processes meet the needs of Leicestershire families. Building on a strengths based, trauma informed approach, the programme will help to ensure that wherever possible, preventative approaches will ensure children are supported to remain safe and thrive with their families.

Ensure that children with SEND and learning disabilities have access to support, including a seamless transition into adult services

- ICB LLR Continuing Care policy review group concluded work on the new local policy, with legal services oversight. CFS introduced a new role to support implementation, focusing on an improved process, providing quality information to inform the Continuing Care threshold decision and nurse assessor assessment.
- Work has been undertaken to develop an LLR joint protocol between Local Authorities and Health for packages for children in care and other children who are eligible under Section 117 to receive funding support.
- Improved processes for the early identification of children for consideration under the Continuing Care Framework and Section 117 have been implemented, improving timeliness of early discussions and consideration.

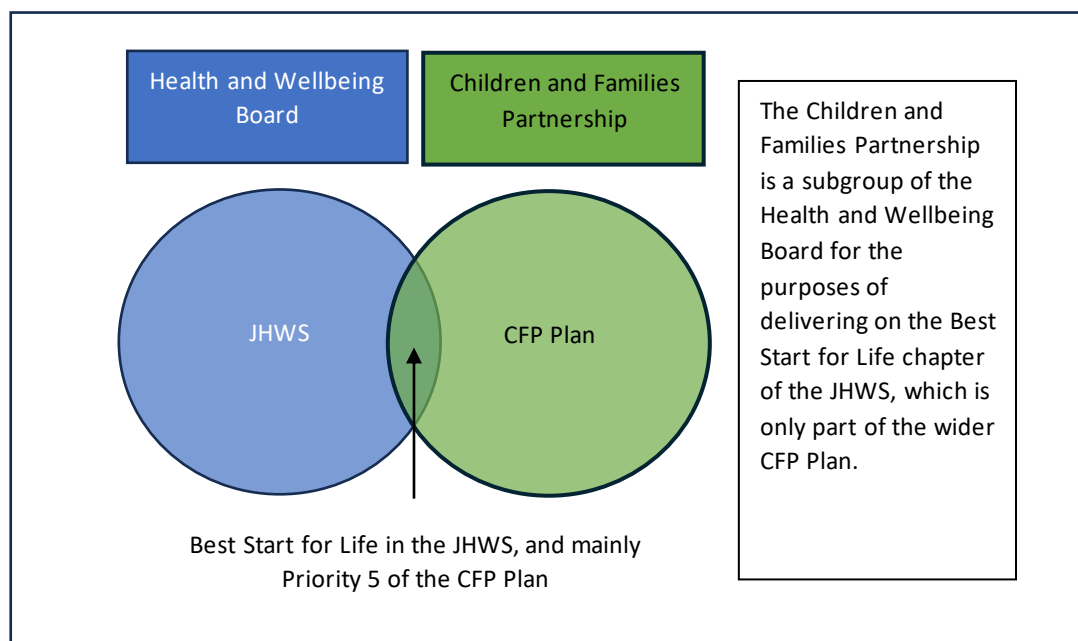
Proposal for the Year Ahead

Current Governance Structures

12. With the recognition that so many outcomes for children and young people other than health are also reliant on effective multi-agency working, the Children & Families Partnership (CFP) additionally works towards the delivery of the CFP Plan.

13. To coordinate the work across both the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) and the CFP Plan, the group has 5 priority areas:
 - a) Ensure the best start for life (Early Years);
 - b) Safe and free from harm;
 - c) Support families to be self-sufficient and resilient (Early Help);
 - d) Ensure vulnerable families receive personalised, integrated care and support;
 - e) Ensure good physical, emotional and mental health.
14. Priority area 5 (“Ensure good physical, emotional, and mental health”) contains the majority of JHWS commitments, whilst most of priority areas 1-4 align instead to the wider CFP Plan.

Figure 1: Relationship between Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children and Families Partnership, and their respective strategies



15. The review of the JHWS (approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 4 December 2025) has seen the Best Start for Life chapter have a greater health-related focus than previously. As part of this review, the JHWS has also been renamed the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) as per the Health and Care Act 2022.
16. Under the current governance structure, the greater health focus would mean that oversight of the Best Start for Life chapter sits even more firmly within the Priority 5 subgroup as opposed to being distributed across the whole CFP.

Proposed Change

17. It is proposed that a new Operational Delivery Group of the Health and Wellbeing Board is created. This new group (provisionally named the “Children and Young People (CYP) Place Based Group”) would oversee the Best Start for Life commitments.
18. We suggest that the newly formed CYP Place Based Group will:
 - Be chaired jointly by representatives from Leicestershire County Council Public Health, and the Integrated Care Board.
 - Consist of a broad range of partners from teams that include (but are not limited to) Public Health, Children & Family Services, Districts, the LLR Integrated Care Board, University Hospitals of Leicester, Leicestershire Partnership Trust, and primary care.
19. The CFP meanwhile would become independent of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It would retain ownership of the wider CFP Plan, focusing on those priorities requiring partnership working that are not directly related to health (broadly priorities 1-4 of the current CFP Plan).
20. There will, however, still be areas of overlap between the two groups. For example, having a higher proportion of children achieve Good Levels of Development is a key success measure of the JLHWS and is being delivered through the Priority 1 group of the CFP. In cases such as these, it would be appropriate for oversight of the work to remain with CFP (this would minimise disruption in areas where excellent work is already taking place) but for updates to be shared with the CYP Place Based Group. These updates will in turn be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board through the CYP Place Based Group’s annual update report.
21. To ensure that both groups are aligned and properly sighted on one another’s work, there would need to be ‘dotted lines’ of communication between the two groups. It is proposed that senior leads of each group attend as members of the other, and that each group receive a minimum of one written progress report a year.

Benefits of the Proposed Change

22. Under the current structures, reporting is largely from the Priority 5 group, via the CFP, to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The proposed changes would mean that the group overseeing Best Start for Life commitments would now be able to instead report directly into the Health and Wellbeing Board.
23. By separating out health and non-health related issues into separate groups, membership can be more effectively tailored to the priorities and commitments

of each group. This will help ensure focussed discussions and further promote partner engagement.

Next Steps

24. These proposals for changes to the CFP governance were approved by the CFP on 22 January 2026. If the Health and Wellbeing Board approve these proposals today, the following actions will be taken:
- New Terms of Reference will be drafted for both the CFP and CYP Place Based Group, working with Democratic Services to ensure accuracy in describing the new relationships to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - The new CYP Place-Based Group will develop a new delivery plan to ensure the commitments within the JLHWS Best Start for Life priority are delivered effectively.
 - The CFP will refresh the existing CFP Plan and it will be cross-referenced and aligned to the new delivery plan for the CYP Place Based Group, ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities.
 - The updated governance arrangements will be implemented during March 2026.

Background Papers -

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s188702/7%20HWP%20Report%20Best%20Start%20in%20Life%20Feb%202025%20002.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix - Children and Families Partnership Terms of Reference

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Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality Implications

25. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Human Rights Implications

26. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.