



Best Start Local Plan Royal Borough of Greenwich (Version 1 – April 2026)

Contents

Vision	4
Targets.....	5
Strategic Alignment	6
Understanding Local Needs in Greenwich.....	8
Home learning environment and parenting interventions.....	13
Early Childhood Education and Care access and quality.....	15
Transition to school and reception year.....	16
SEND support.....	17
Maternal and early years health services.....	18
Service integration & Best Start Family Hubs.....	20
Workforce capacity and capabilities	21
Family Involvement.....	22
Monitoring, evaluation and learning.....	23
Accountability and governance.....	24

Introduction

The Royal Borough of Greenwich Best Start in Life Local Plan sets out how we will work together to give every child the best possible start in life. Our goal is simple: to help children grow up healthy, confident and ready to learn, with families able to get the right support at the right time.

The plan builds on the [National Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life Strategy](#) and the [Best Start Family Hubs and Best Start Healthy Babies Guidance](#). It brings health, education and community services together so support is easier to find, better connected and shaped around the needs of local families.

We are focusing on early help and prevention supporting families as early as possible, removing barriers to opportunity and making sure services are welcoming, joined-up and accessible. By working in this way, we aim to improve children's development and school readiness. In line with national targets, Greenwich's ambition is that by 2028 79.1% of children, and 71% of children eligible for Free School Meals, will reach a Good Level of Development by the time they start school.

Children face inequalities in early child development and health that require a coordinated, place-based response. Embedding Best Start Family Hubs across the borough will improve early identification and support for families, increase access to evidence-based parenting and home learning environment programmes, and strengthen perinatal mental health and infant-parent relationship support to drive progress towards children achieving the best start in life.

Delivering a joined-up offer in community settings to support the shift from treatment to prevention and align with Neighbourhood Health planning for local population health improvement.

The Best Start Local Plan will build upon the already established children and family service infrastructure in Greenwich. To offer a fully integrated network of services for families that expand on the existing high-quality service offer, with any changes informed and developed by key partners and local families.

The existing Best Start Family Hub network to be easily accessible and available to all local communities across the borough. It will offer

appropriate universal and targeted support to prevent problems from escalating for parents and children aged 0 – 19 (or 0 – 25 with SEND). There will be clear pathways for anyone accessing support meaning families (parents/carers and children) will know where and how to access the exact support they need.

Greenwich will be a borough where every child can be supported to thrive from conception, with families able to access timely, trusted, and locally integrated support through Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme.

Greenwich's Best Start Family Hubs (BSFH) and Healthy Babies offer will:

- Narrow inequalities by prioritising priority areas while maintaining and enhancing existing hubs/children's centres.
- Deliver an integrated Healthy Babies offer (conception to age 2) across infant feeding, perinatal mental health and parent–infant relationships, with SEND early support.
- Embed a system of evidence-based parenting & home learning support for 3–4s to drive school readiness.
- Prioritise early identification, culturally competent and accessible outreach, health and learning integration with clear access to Healthy Babies support in areas with highest IDACI deprivation and lowest ASQ/GLD trajectories.

Vision

Greenwich will be a borough where every child is supported to thrive from conception through early childhood, with families able to access timely, trusted and locally integrated support.

Through Best Start Family Hubs and the Healthy Babies programme, we will work with families, communities and partners to reduce inequalities, strengthen early relationships, and ensure that every child enters school healthy, confident and ready to learn.

Our vision is grounded in prevention, inclusion and partnership. We will prioritise early identification and early help, deliver culturally competent and accessible services, and ensure that support is shaped around the lived experiences of Greenwich families. By working together across health, education, childcare, local authority and the voluntary, community sector, we will create a joined-up system that gives every child the best possible start in life.

Commented [DB1]: I'm not sure if we ever developed a vision?

Targets

Our ambitious target is to raise GLD outcomes for all children from 71.7% in 2024/25 to 74.2% in 2026, 76.6% in 2027, and 79.1% by 2028. This would mean that around 233 more children overall start school with the skills and confidence they need to thrive.

Reducing inequality is a key part of this ambition. For children eligible for free school meals, we are committed to increasing the proportion achieving GLD from 61.0% in 2024/25 to 64.3% in 2026, 67.7% in 2027, and 71% by 2028. In real terms, this represents around 65 more children from lower-income families reaching the expected level of development by the time they begin school.

These improvements will be driven by early and joined-up support for families, including strong pregnancy and early years services, high-quality early education, Family Hubs, and targeted help for children who need it most. By acting early, Greenwich aims to give every child the strongest possible start in life regardless of background.

Strategic Alignment

The Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) 2024–2029

[Children and Young People Plan 2024-2029](#) sets out Greenwich’s partnership vision for ensuring all children and young people experience a happy, healthy, and fulfilled childhood, and are supported to learn, grow, and achieve their potential.

The Best Start in Life Local Plan aligns closely with this strategy by:

- Focusing on early childhood as the foundation for positive lifelong outcomes.
- Targeting inequalities in development and health that disproportionately affect children growing up in poverty.
- Strengthening family support and early help so that challenges are addressed before they escalate.

The Royal Greenwich Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023–2028

[Royal Greenwich Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy | Royal Borough of Greenwich](#) sets out a shared ambition to tackle health inequalities and support residents to “start well, be well, feel well, stay well and age well.”

The Healthy Babies element of the Best Start in Life Local Plan directly contributes by:

- Strengthening perinatal and postnatal support, including infant feeding and parent–infant relationships.
- Improving access to preventative health services such as oral health.
- Addressing inequalities in early health outcomes linked to deprivation.

By integrating health and family support services within Family Hubs, the BSIL plan supports the Health and Wellbeing Strategy’s emphasis on prevention, place-based working, and reducing avoidable health inequalities.

Alignment with the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Strategy (2024–2029)

The [SEND and Inclusion Partnership Strategy 2024-2029 | Royal Borough of Greenwich](#), launched in March 2025, prioritises early identification, inclusive practice, and improved experiences for children and families with SEND.

The Best Start in Life Local Plan reinforces these priorities by:

- Strengthening early identification of emerging SEND, particularly speech, language and communication needs.
- Embedding SEND capability and clear referral pathways within Family Hubs.
- Supporting families earlier to reduce delays and escalation to more intensive statutory intervention.

Our Greenwich

The Best Start in Life Local Plan also aligns with, the borough's corporate plan [Our Greenwich](#) (2023 onwards), which sets a long-term vision for reducing inequality and improving life chances across the borough. This ensures coherence between strategic ambition and frontline delivery, supporting continuous improvement and sustainable change.

Understanding Local Needs in Greenwich

Greenwich is a diverse and vibrant borough, home to a growing number of young children and families. The Best Start in Life data profile helps us understand how babies, children and families are doing, where services are working well, and where more support is needed. This information sits alongside the voices and lived experiences of families to shape services that respond to local needs and reduce inequalities.

Greenwich enters the Best Start programme with well-established assets, above-average performance in key early years indicators, and strong system readiness. Solid Infrastructure and Community Assets Supporting Family Hub Delivery

The borough already benefits from a well-established set of community access points, including 4 Family Hubs and 13 libraries, which are situated across areas of varying deprivation and form a strong base for an expanded Best Start Family Hub network. These assets enable accessible, locality-based delivery of services and community outreach. Data is used alongside insight from families, practitioners and community partners to focus resources where they can have the greatest impact and to ensure services continue to reflect the needs and experiences of local communities.

Greenwich is entering the Best Start in Life programme with:

- Above-average child development outcomes
- Strong health visiting and early developmental assessment coverage
- Existing Family Hub infrastructure and community assets
- Robust SEND systems
- A diverse population offering co-design opportunities
- High programme readiness due to previous Family Hub experience
- A capable and active voluntary sector

Together, these strengths position Greenwich as a high-readiness local authority capable of accelerating progress toward improved child development, early intervention, and family outcomes under the Best Start in Life national mission.

Early Childhood Development Outcomes

Greenwich performs above the national average on several developmental measures. The 2024/25 Good Level of Development (GLD) rate stands at 71.7%, which is 3.4 percentage points higher than national performance

In the ASQ-3 developmental assessments, Greenwich children exceed national averages in communication (95.6%), problem-solving (98.8%), and fine motor skills (95.9%). These strengths demonstrate solid early years provision and positive home learning environments across the borough.

Early Health and Development Checks

Greenwich shows consistently strong performance on Healthy Child Programme metrics. New birth visits within 14 days reach 93%, outperforming national figures by 7.9 percentage points, and the 12-month review (91.7%) and 2–2.5-year review (88.6%) also exceed England averages

Greenwich has very high coverage of universal health checks, with over 94% of children completing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3). This strong engagement with health visiting services supports early identification of need, but it also reinforces the importance of timely, accessible follow-on support when concerns are identified. However, identification alone is not sufficient. The data reinforces the need for timely access to perinatal mental health support, infant feeding support, and early intervention services, particularly for families facing multiple disadvantages.

Perinatal outcomes in Greenwich are closely linked to wider social inequalities. Areas with higher levels of deprivation, overcrowding, and income poverty are more likely to experience poorer maternal and infant outcomes. A significant proportion of households experiencing homelessness include dependent children, increasing stress during pregnancy and early parenthood.

The borough's diverse population, including families with English as an additional language, also shapes perinatal service needs. Culturally responsive care, accessible information, and trusted community relationships

are essential to improving engagement with antenatal appointments, vaccination, and postnatal support.

Understanding and Identification of SEND Needs

Greenwich supports a significant and growing number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Over 10,000 pupils across the borough are identified with SEND, with Speech, Language and Communication Needs being the most common primary need. These growing numbers mirror those seen nationally, with rising demand, growing complexity of need, workforce and financial constraints, and gaps in early identification and coordinated pathways. Although many families receive timely and appropriate support, our ambition is to ensure this is the case for all families, reducing variation and removing delays or barriers to accessing the right help at the right time. This also reinforces the importance of early language support, inclusive practice, and strong joint working between families, early years settings, health services and schools. Early identification and support for emerging needs are central to Greenwich's approach, helping children access the right help as early as possible and supporting families to navigate local pathways with confidence.

Diverse and Multilingual Communities Enhancing Reach and Co-Production

Greenwich is home to highly diverse communities. More than 18% of residents speak a main language other than English at home, and there are areas of high child population density alongside areas of significant deprivation. This diversity shapes how services are designed—placing emphasis on inclusive communication, cultural competence, and outreach into local communities.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Ecosystem

There is a strong VCS presence in Greenwich, enabling outreach to families who may not access formal services. Best Start guidance places significant emphasis on the role of VCFS partners, an area where Greenwich is well-positioned to deliver targeted, culturally appropriate engagement and flexible support models.

Gaps in provision and seldom heard Families:

Greenwich has strong foundations in universal services, including maternity care, health visiting, early years provision, and community assets such as Family Hubs and Children's Centres. However, the evidence also highlights gaps where services need to improve early, joined-up, and equitable support for all families during pregnancy and the earliest years of life.

A key ambition of the Healthy Babies programme is to support good maternal health, healthy pregnancies, and positive birth outcomes. While Greenwich benefits from established maternity and neonatal services, perinatal insights indicates areas of unmet need. Rates of premature birth are slightly higher than the national average, and infant hospital admissions in the first 14 days of life are significantly higher.

These patterns suggest a possible gap in continuity of support between maternity, neonatal, and community services for some families when they return home. Particularly those experiencing deprivation or social stress, early postnatal support may not be sufficiently joined-up to prevent escalating needs. Strengthening seamless pathways from pregnancy through birth and into early infancy is therefore central to meeting Healthy Babies ambitions.

Dental decay at age 5 affects 24.9% of children, higher than many comparator areas. This requires more targeted intervention for seldom heard groups, notably Free School Meals, children with emerging SEND, and children in more deprived areas.

Developmental outcomes at the 2 to 2½-year review are slightly below the national average, and speech, language and communication needs are the most common type of special educational need in the borough. This suggests a potential gap between identification and effective follow-on support. Families may experience delays or fragmented pathways when accessing speech and language support, infant mental health services, or targeted

parenting and early learning interventions. Addressing this gap is essential to prevent needs becoming more complex by the time children reach school. Increased preventive health initiatives, stronger cross-system pathways, and improved parental engagement on immunisations and oral health are needed.

Family Hubs offer to embed outreach, and digital access is targeted towards the most deprived communities. Greenwich's digital offer must be multilingual, mobile-friendly, and designed with accessibility in mind.

Home learning environment and parenting interventions

To expand our parenting and home learning environment particularly for families with young children aged 3-4 embracing families with children 0-5. Offer to include evidence-based programmes and use outreach models and family feedback to improve implementation and access for our priority families.

Priority actions:

1. *Commissioned parenting programmes focused on developmental outcomes.*
2. *Prioritise outreach and engagement for children not attending formal early learning, children with emerging SEND and families in LSOA areas with direct work with parents in the community through VCS.*
3. *Strengthening links with independent nursery schools, schools via professional route or directly to parents.*
4. *Using Family Hubs as delivery points for parenting programmes, peer support, and informal guidance, reducing stigma and improving access.*
5. *Strengthening links between parenting support, health visiting, early years education, and SEND services to ensure a joined-up experience for families.*
6. *Create an accessible and easy to understand innovative digital offer.*

Measures of progress:

- Enrolment and completion rates of parenting programmes and digital offers family feedback.
- Uptake and completion rates for programmes, disaggregated by locality, demographic group, and targeted developmental needs.
- Increase in engagement rates for targeted groups (e.g., number of families contacted, registered, or taking up early learning) compared with baseline.
- Number and frequency of VCS-led community outreach sessions delivered, with evidence of improved access for families in priority LSOAs and those with emerging SEND needs.
- Number of formalised partnerships, information-sharing arrangements, or joint activity plans established with independent nursery schools and schools.

- Increase in referrals, cross-sector consultations, or professional training exchanges between schools, nurseries, and early years partners.
- User engagement analytics including number of unique users, return visits, and time spent on priority content.

Early Childhood Education and Care access and quality

We will make the best use of existing early education and childcare provision, focusing on improving access and raising quality in communities with the greatest need. By working closely with providers, we will monitor standards and support continuous improvement so that more children benefit from high-quality early learning.

Priority actions:

1. *Review mapping and childcare sufficiency assessment, involving parent panel/voice.*
2. *Use statutory support high-quality settings and school-based nurseries in high need neighbourhoods.*
3. *Proactively identify and engage families eligible for funded early education (including 2-year-old entitlements) through Family Hubs, health visitors and early years settings.*
4. *Provide face-to-face support for parents to understand eligibility, apply for places and navigate provision options.*
5. *Strengthen outreach in priority neighbourhoods where take-up is lowest, working with voluntary and community partners.*

Measures of progress:

- Take-up of childcare entitlements; number of ECEC spaces in target areas of high need,
- High quality training offer and take up for early years practitioners
- Use of Best Start Family Hubs as bridges into early education, particularly for families new to the system or facing barriers.
- Increase of early years settings to act as network sites within the Best Start Family Hub model, strengthening collaboration and access.

Transition to school and reception year

We will cultivate multiagency working to improve transition pathways for children and families into reception year, and support teachers to offer the learning and support children need.

Priority actions:

1. *Establish how information about a child's strengths and needs is shared between Early years settings and schools.*
2. *With local workforce improvement teams, help strengthen underperforming schools.*
3. *Meet the families where they are at through comprehensive outreach and direct work with parents in community settings with the aim to make the offer as flexible as possible responding to feedback and insights.*

Measures of progress:

- Child and parent feedback (particularly from priority families), settings, practitioner and school feedback with evaluation.
- Through workforce training and upskilling practitioners feel more confident to support families in a smooth transition.

SEND support

We have put processes in place to help ensure that families can access high-quality, joined-up care when special educational needs and disabilities are identified. Every Best Start Family Hub in Greenwich will provide access to early SEND support, including through designated practitioners who work with families, early years settings and health professionals. Hubs will act as trusted entry points, offering practical guidance, inclusive stay-and-play sessions, and short-term interventions that support children's development and build parental confidence.

Priority actions:

1. *Specialist SEND offer and/or practitioners for every Best Start Family Hub.*
2. *Establish clear referral routes to wider community health, education and wellbeing support for those identified during early detection screenings.*
3. *Evidence of improved coordination between Family Hubs, early years settings, health and SEND services.*
4. *Support families to access early education entitlements for children with SEND, including flexible or graduated entry where needed.*

Measures of progress:

- Family feedback on ability to access quality SEND advice.
- Through workforce training and upskilling practitioners feel more confident to support or direct or handhold families to appropriate and impactful services available to them in the network.
- Evidence of improved coordination between Family Hubs, early years settings, health and SEND services.
- Improved transition support for children with SEND.
- Practitioner feedback showing increased confidence and shared understanding of roles.
- Regular review of SEND activities and outcomes through data, practitioner insight and family feedback (Feedback Built into Sessions.)
- Use of evaluation to refine interventions and improve reach and impact.
- Accessible Surveys - Paper surveys, QR codes linking to mobile-friendly surveys, translated versions and easy-read formats.

- Build on existing Parent Carer Forums and Family Hub parent groups to create regular listening opportunities.

Maternal and early years health services

Greenwich to strengthen maternal and early years health outcomes by ensuring families can access high-quality, joined-up support from pregnancy through the early years. We will track progress using both lived experience and measurable health indicators, recognising that improved outcomes depend on families feeling supported as well as services performing effectively.

Priority actions:

1. *Greenwich to strengthen early oral health prevention by embedding oral health promotion into Family Hub services, early years settings and Healthy Babies activity. This will include advice for parents on toothbrushing and dental attendance from the first year of life, alongside practical support such as distribution of dental packs where appropriate.*
2. *To prioritise outreach in communities with higher levels of deprivation, where children are more likely to experience dental decay, and work with partners to ensure oral health messages are consistent and accessible.*
3. *Increase peer supporters recruited and trained to reflect local communities.*
4. *Targeted postnatal follow-up for families experiencing feeding difficulties.*
5. *Consistent, inclusive messaging across maternity, health visiting and Best Start Family Hubs.*
6. *Early identification through routine contact, not crisis referral.*
7. *Relationship-based support activities (group sessions, reflective support).*
8. *Father- and co-parent-inclusive wellbeing and attachment support.*
9. *Safe, welcoming spaces in Family Hubs for conversations about wellbeing.*

Measures of progress:

- Healthy Start take-up rates.
- Breastfeeding initiation rates - Breastfeeding prevalence at 6–8 weeks.
- Number of families accessing infant feeding support through Family Hubs.
- Parents reporting their improved experience in accessing services.

Service integration & Best Start Family Hubs

Greenwich will build a **joined-up, prevention-focused early years system** that makes it easier for families to get the right support at the right time. Through Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies, we will strengthen the way services work together so families experience support as a single, coordinated journey rather than a collection of separate services.

Priority actions:

1. *Clear governance bringing together children's services, public health, NHS partners, early years, SEND and the voluntary and community sector.*
2. *A shared vision for improving outcomes in pregnancy and early childhood, aligned to Best Start in Life priorities and GLD ambitions.*
3. *Coordinated planning and commissioning so funding is used to enhance and reshape services, not duplicate existing provision*
4. *Prioritise outreach and engagement for XYZ groups*
5. *Co-locate specialists, including SEND practitioners*
6. *Establish routines and training to enable smooth transitions between Best Start Family Hub(s), health settings, childcare settings and schools that enable a 'no wrong door' approach*

Measures of progress:

- *Best Start Family Hubs acting as neighbourhood anchors, bringing parenting, early education, SEND support and Healthy Babies services together.*
- *Network sites (such as early years settings, schools, libraries and community venues) extending reach beyond hub buildings.*
- *Family Navigators supporting warm introductions and helping families move smoothly between services.*
- *Family feedback on join-up between services, monitoring data about referrals and waiting times for key services.*

Workforce capacity and capabilities

Greenwich aims to develop a workforce that delivers high-quality practice across services. This is one that is sufficiency in capacity to deliver universal and targeted Best Start Services and has the right skills to support families in the year years. This will be underpinned through support for our workforce's wellbeing and resilience.

Priority actions:

1. *Work with partners to strengthen recruitment and retention in key services.*
2. *Deliver a coordinated programme of professional development that promotes shared understanding of Best Start priorities and ways of working; strengthens skills in [e.g. trauma-informed practice] and supports leadership development.*
3. *Supporting integrated working through shared learning opportunities, clarifying roles and responsibilities across services, and embedding a strengths-based, family centred approach across the workforce.*
4. *Support co-location, joint sessions and regular multi-disciplinary meetings in Family Hubs*
5. *Regularly review workforce capacity, skills and wellbeing through Best Start governance arrangements. Data on recruitment, retention, training uptake and staff feedback will inform continuous improvement and future workforce planning.*

Measures of progress:

- Increased staffing capacity across Family Hubs and Healthy Babies services.
- Reduced waiting times for early health and family support.
- Increased availability of sessions delivered in priority neighbourhoods.
- Families reporting improved timeliness and continuity of support.
- Uptake of shared training across early years, health, SEND and family support.

Family Involvement

To expand our current methods of family involvement (e.g. parent panels) and commit to regular, diverse methods of obtaining parents' views and preferences. We will recruit parent champions and continue to improve our ways of working with voluntary and community sector organisations and other partners to ensure views shared with trusted partners translate to the local authority.

Priority actions:

1. *Build on existing Parent Carer Panels (Parent Voice, Little Voice and community groups to ensure families influence decision-making at both service and system level.*
2. *Establish regular feedback sessions with voluntary and community sector organisations to share knowledge about family needs and priorities.*
3. *Provide multiple, accessible routes for families to share feedback, including face-to-face conversations, short surveys, digital tools and informal session-based feedback.*
4. *Use parent insight to shape how parenting support, SEND services, Healthy Babies and early education advice are delivered locally.*
5. *Build feedback into everyday interactions so families can share views without needing to attend meetings.*

Measures of progress:

- Number of parent panel members recruited.
- Diversity of parent champions compared to local demographics.
- Evidence of service changes in response to parental feedback, parental engagement with services.
- Increased parental awareness of available services and support.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Robust monitoring, evaluation and learning using data, evidence and lived experience to understand what is working, for whom, and where change is needed. Monitoring and evaluation will be used not just for assurance, but to continuously improve services so they better meet the needs of babies, children and families.

Priority actions:

1. *Establish a shared outcomes framework across services.*
2. *Quarterly dashboards to inform management information for GLD pathway.*
3. *Standardise information sharing across health visiting, family hubs, early education settings and schools.*
4. *Embed quarterly collection of parent and practitioner feedback regularly.*
5. *Governance and parent oversight at all levels of evaluation and sharing learning*
6. *Ensure outcomes are meaningful to families and practitioners, not just performance measures.*
7. *Use data to identify gaps in access and adjust outreach or delivery accordingly.*

Measures of progress:

- Outcomes framework signed off by partners.
- 80% of priority actions with defined success measures; routine collection of parent and practitioner feedback; decisions made in response to insights.

Accountability and governance

Effective governance is central to the successful delivery of the Plan and to ensuring that strategic intent translates into meaningful and measurable improvement for children, families, and communities. To achieve this, robust structures must be in place that provide clear leadership, accountability, and strong partnership working across strategic and operational levels. The following priority actions focus on strengthening governance arrangements, improving alignment between strategic and operational activity, and embedding effective communication and oversight. The accompanying measures of progress outline how improvement will be evidenced, ensuring transparency, shared ownership, and the meaningful inclusion of partner, parent, and child voices in decision-making.

Priority actions:

- 1. Strengthen strategic governance by reviewing the membership and remit of the strategic board responsible for overall delivery of the Plan, ensuring clear alignment and formalised links with the Early Help Partnership Board.*
- 2. Enhance operational oversight by establishing clear and consistent mechanisms for communication and accountability between the strategic board and operational delivery managers.*

Measures of progress:

- Clear and formally documented roles and responsibilities for all partners.
- Strategic Board meetings, Locality Steering Groups, and Workstream meetings are convened as scheduled, with timely distribution of summaries demonstrating how partnership decisions are informed by evidence and insight.
- Demonstrable multi-agency engagement in governance, evidenced through attendance, meaningful contribution, and shared decision-making.
- Parent Voice and Little Voice forums are formally embedded within governance structures, ensuring that parent and child perspectives directly inform oversight and improvement.

