



Warwickshire

Best Start Local Plan

2026 - 2028



Overview

This Best Start Local Plan sets out Warwickshire’s vision and priorities for giving every child the best start in life and explains how partners will work together to meet the 2028 Good Level of Development targets. It provides the strategic direction and ambition for improving early childhood development, supported by a detailed delivery plan and a clear, accessible offer for parents, carers, and families.

Vision

Why: Shared Best Start in Life priorities and goals for Warwickshire

Actions

What: Actions we will take together to support 0 –5-year-olds and their families

Model

How: Ways partners are going to work together to improve early childhood development



Introduction

This is a plan which sets the shared vision and ambition for improving early childhood development in Warwickshire to ensure every child is happy, heard, skilled, safe and healthy. This is a plan for all of us - aligning partners, services, communities and families around common priorities and strengthening working together to give every child the best start in life. With a particular focus on narrowing developmental gaps and improving outcomes for those who face the greatest disadvantages, it is a commitment to ensuring every child through pregnancy to age five has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Children's early experiences shape their future wellbeing, attainment and life chances. With rising levels of poverty, cost of living pressures and widening developmental gaps across some areas of the county, ensuring strong foundations in the early years is crucial to preventing long term disadvantage and supporting children to thrive.

Warwickshire's Best Start approach is child centred; prioritising prevention, relational practice, coproduction and high quality early education and care. This plan sets out the vision for working collaboratively across the system to ensure services are accessible, responsive and rooted in strengths.

Together with an evidence-based approach, feedback from engagement sessions, surveys and parent voice forums has shaped priorities, highlighted barriers, and identified what matters most to families.

Through early intervention, joint working and community approaches, this develops the early years system to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for babies, young children and families.



Vision

Warwickshire's Best Start Vision is to ensure every child aged 0-5 can thrive by creating a simple, joined up and accessible system that removes barriers, prioritises early intervention and supports families regardless of background.

Relationships are at the heart of this vision. Partners must strengthen relationships and collaborate across organisational boundaries to provide the most effective support. It is vital that services work with parents, carers and families to build warm and trusting relationships to ensure families feel heard, understood and supported.

Parents and Carers have told us they value clear, joined-up communication. This helps create a system based on trust and avoids confusion, duplication and potentially contradiction. This approach will create an environment where parents and families feel included and supported and where professionals have access to the right information so they can best provide tailored support. Best Start Family Hubs will be central to this, providing key support services in accessible community locations.

Child Friendly Warwickshire brings together children, families, communities and organisations to make Warwickshire the best place for children and young people to grow up and learn. It is based on five child focused outcomes. We want our babies and young children to:



BE HEALTHY

access to integrated health services, including health visiting, maternity, mental health support and oral health will support rapid brain and body development.



BE SAFE

early identification of need and coordinated responses that reduces risks will support secure, nurturing environments that can keep children safe from harm.



BE HAPPY

nurturing relationships, quality environments and experiences build confidence, curiosity, and a strong sense of belonging.



BE SKILLED

high quality learning experiences and trusted relationships will create positive dispositions for learning, resilience and self-regulation.

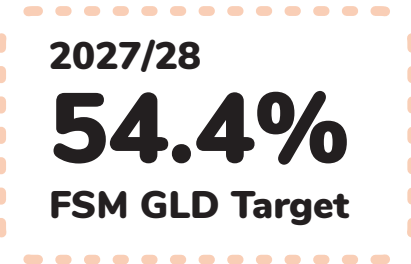
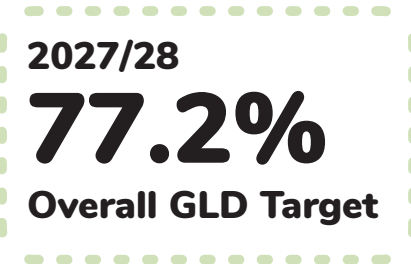
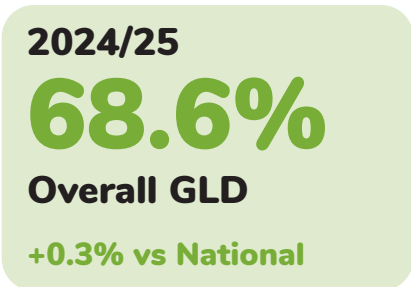


BE HEARD

children and families feel valued and understood, creating trusting and open relationships.

These outcomes form the foundations of the Best Start ambition and the vision for a transformed early years system in Warwickshire. By integrating services, prioritising early intervention and building relationships across partners and with families, more young children will achieve a good level of development.

Warwickshire's Best Start in Life targets are for the proportion of all children and those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the reception year. This is a measure of early childhood development including communication, physical, social skills, literacy and maths.



Warwickshire Data

The first five years are a period of rapid brain development. Nurturing relationships, stable environments and access to learning-rich experiences create the building blocks for cognitive, personal, social and emotional development. Inequalities formed early can persist into adulthood, making early intervention and support both impactful and cost effective.

Local intelligence shows variation in child development, with needs in speech, language and communication; higher vulnerabilities linked to deprivation; variable uptake of funded childcare; and differences in maternal health and early development across communities.

Families experience differing levels of poverty, housing insecurity, access to services, and opportunities for early learning.

Some communities need higher levels of support around Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), perinatal mental health or experience barriers related to language, transport, and digital access.

Bringing together an understanding of current successes and challenges for 0-5 year olds with an evaluation of existing services helps us understand and identify where to tailor support. This will have the greatest impact on a Good Level of Development, supporting those who need it most.



23 Lower Super Output Areas in Warwickshire are in the **20%** most deprived nationally

9 Lower Super Output Areas in Warwickshire are in the **10%** most deprived nationally



Warwickshire has **39,736** children aged 0-5

Which is expected to increase to **44,749** by 2043.



Warwickshire has **6** maintained nursery schools

In 2024/25 **259**

Reception aged children had an **Education Health and Care plan**



North Warwickshire (**3,400**) has the smallest population of 0-5s

There are **922** offers of childcare services in Warwickshire

Warwickshire is ranked **122** out of **153** local areas for deprivation, where 1 is most deprived.

In 2024/25

618 Reception aged children received SEND support



Nuneaton and Bedworth (**8,200**) have the largest number of 0-5s.



In 2024/25 the overall MMR vaccination rate at age 2 was

76.3%



In 2024/25 the overall MMR vaccination rate at age 5 (two doses) was

88.0%

91.5% of children received the **12-month health review** in Warwickshire in 2024/25



In 2024/25

55.5% of infants received their new birth visit within **14 days**



There are around **4,250** new births each year in Warwickshire

76.9% of children in Warwickshire received the **2-2.25 year health review** in 2024/25

76.3% of 4-5 year olds were a healthy weight in 2024/45



Working together for Warwickshire

Families in Warwickshire experience early years services as a whole system, not in isolation. It is therefore essential to understand the interdependencies and bring together everything the county offers for children aged 0–5. Best Start in Life will act as the golden thread, aligning existing strategies and commitments under one shared ambition.

The Best Start Local Plan builds on Warwickshire’s Early Years Integrated Delivery Plan, which brings multi-disciplinary partners together to facilitate the provision of effective support at the earliest opportunity. These partnerships will be strengthened through shared governance and clear accountability.

No one service can achieve Warwickshire’s Best Start ambitions alone. Outcomes are shaped by the system and change can only be achieved as a collective. Best Start will connect developments across the system including the Families First approach in Children’s Services and the Children’s Multi-disciplinary and Integrated

Neighbourhood Teams model in Health. The existing approaches, strategies and cross cutting themes, align on their commitment to integrating services, prioritising early intervention and working relationally with children and families.

Partners will work together around the needs of babies, young children and families, ensuring support is coordinated, inclusive and focused on what matters most to families.

All partners share responsibility for early identification of developmental, health, social and learning needs, ensuring families receive timely, proportionate support that improves Good Level of Development for children in Warwickshire.

Best Start in Warwickshire will work with communities and families by placing parent voice, lived experience and the strengths of communities at its core. The commitment to place-based working, as well as test, learn and grow, will ensure local needs and strengths shape tailored local delivery.

Interdependent Strategies

Children and Young People Strategy 2021-30

Education Strategy 2024-29

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026-31

**SEND and Inclusion
Strategy 2024-2029**

**Education
Sufficiency
Strategy 2024-29**

**Early Years
Integrated Delivery
Plan 2024-2029**

**Child Poverty
Strategy 2026-2031**

**Warwickshire
Families First**

**NHS
Neighbourhood
Health**

Cross-cutting themes

Creating Opportunities

**Community Powered
Warwickshire**

Health in All Policies

Healthy Child Programme

Good Level of Development in Warwickshire

Good Level of Development successes

Warwickshire's overall attainment in GLD (**68.6%**) is slightly (**+0.3%**) above national average.

The attainment gap is lowest in Nuneaton and Bedworth with **49% children eligible for FSM achieving GLD**, a **20%** gap in the borough with non-FSM eligible children.

Attainment with **SEN support (27.3%)** is slightly above national average (**26.4%**).

The performance of **Warwickshire boys (63.5%)** continues to improve and at a faster pace than boys nationally who on average achieved **61.6% GLD**.

The percentage of children attaining the expected standard in the areas of **Communication and Language (70.3%)** increased slightly and remains above the national average.

Good Level of Development Challenges

Attainment overall in the **Nuneaton and Bedworth (64%)** and **North Warwickshire (66%)** is lower than the county average.

Attainment for children who are eligible for **FSM (43.6%)** is well below national average (**51.2%**). Creating a **30%** gap between FSM eligible and non-FSM eligible children.

The **attainment gap is widest in the south** of the county with **38%** FSM eligible children in Stratford, and **37%** in Warwick achieving GLD, compared with **75%** for non-FSM eligible children in both districts.

Boys' attainment (63.5%) is consistently below that of **girls (74.1%)**.

Literacy (comprehension, word reading, and writing) is frequently the weakest area of learning. Of the **17 learning goals, writing is consistently the lowest scoring at 72.4% in 2025**.

Attainment for children with an EHCP, **2.3%** achieving GLD, is **below national average of 4.0%**.

60.6% summer born children achieve GLD compared with **77.4%** Autumn born.



Across Warwickshire, there are demographic and geographic differences in GLD outcomes. Within GLD there are also particular Early Learning Goals (ELGs) which require specific focus. Understanding how these differences interact can inform the tailoring of support, maximising the impact on Warwickshire's overall GLD.

Key areas are to:

Target early literacy for FSM eligible children countywide

Tailor support for FSM eligible pupils in Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon

Enhance support for boys' literacy in Nuneaton and Bedworth

Strengthen provision for pupils eligible for FSM and pupils with SEN Support



Our evaluation of existing services

Warwickshire benefits from committed multiagency early years partnerships, effective early years settings, engaged health and community services. Local voluntary sector organisations and Children and Family Centres provide support and are well placed to facilitate strong community networks.

An evaluation of current services has identified key areas for development across core services:



Home Learning Environment

Some families living in areas of disadvantage lack accessible materials, confidence or guidance to create rich home learning experiences.



Early Childhood Education and Care

Opportunities to access daycare and sessional provision across the county varies, particularly for children with SEND.



Transition to Reception year and school

Lack of a consistent approach in transition across Warwickshire can impact the quality of the process, particularly for children with SEND.



SEND Support

Advice and support for children who may have additional needs below the threshold for an Education, Health and Care Plan is inconsistent across the county.



Maternal and Early Years Health

Reduced Health Visitor contact and variation in how the 2-year integrated review is carried out can limit early identification. Vaccination uptake has declined across the county.

Who are our priority families?

By combining early years data and feedback from parents, carers and families the following have been identified as priority groups:

Families in areas of higher deprivation, those with limited transport access and children eligible for Free School Meals

Families with children with SEND or emerging SEND

Children with delayed communication and children with English as an additional language

First-time, young and working parents want help with routines, boundaries, dysregulation and age two behaviours

Working families unable to access service provision during the working day and those with limited close family networks



Actions - Our priorities for under 5s

These are the priorities for delivering our shared vision of happy, heard, skilled, safe and healthy babies and young children. Our work to improve a Good Level of Development and achieve the 2028 targets will focus:



1 Enhancing family support to build parenting skills and promote early learning in the home.



2 Strengthening the quality and accessibility of early years education and care, particularly in disadvantaged areas and for children eligible for Free school meals.



3 Developing transition processes to ensure children are well supported as they start Reception.



4 Identifying emerging SEND needs early and providing timely support for children and their families.



5 Promoting healthy early development by improving access to integrated health services.



Home Learning Environment and Parenting Support

Our ambition is to promote family wellbeing and empower parents with the confidence, skills and accessible guidance to create rich, nurturing home learning experiences that support early child development.

Where are we now?

- Families can access universal and targeted support, with a range of in-person and digital opportunities to ensure timely, flexible and appropriate help. Sometime families are unsure about what support is available and how to access it.

What do we want to achieve?

- Increase the number of families completing the Incredible Years and Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) programmes to strengthen parenting skills and support early learning at home
- Increase take-up of the universal service offer to improve GLD outcomes

Priority actions

- Expand the delivery of the Incredible Years Preschool Parenting programme to strengthen positive parent-child interactions and attachment, supporting children's social, emotional and language development
- Extend Making it REAL to support more children to achieve a Good Level of Development in literacy
- Broaden the universal offer to ensure families are able to access information about early development, language, play and routines to notice emerging needs sooner, enabling further tailored support to be timelier and more effective. Ensure, through a robust communications system, that families are fully informed about the targeted and universal offers and understand how to access these in a way that best suits their needs



Access and Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care

Our ambition is for every child to access high quality, inclusive early education and care that nurtures their learning, wellbeing and curiosity, reduces inequalities, and lays strong foundations for lifelong success.

Where are we now?

- **95%** of 3 – 4 year olds take up funded places (above national average).
- **75.1%** take up 2Help Early Learning places for 2-year-olds.
- **96.8%** of eligible families take up the working families entitlement (above national average)

What do we want to achieve?

- Increase take-up and access of funded early years places, particularly in disadvantaged areas
- Increase the number of practitioners accessing high-quality training so more children benefit from strong, inclusive learning experiences, especially in areas of disadvantage

Priority actions

- Continue to map and monitor place sufficiency, identifying gaps especially in disadvantaged areas and in communities experiencing changing housing density
- Ensure children facing disadvantage benefit from skilled staff, evidence-based early language and social-emotional programmes, and high-quality, inclusive early years environments that promote consistent attendance, belonging and early learning rooted in effective early years pedagogy
- Equip Reception teachers with the right tools and tailored support, including the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) offer, to strengthen early years pedagogy in communication, language, literacy and maths -to support GLD outcomes, particularly for children eligible for Free School Meals and living in areas of disadvantage

Transition to School and Reception year

Our ambition is to ensure every child experiences a smooth, nurturing transition into school, with inclusive support that strengthens learning, wellbeing, and confidence, enabling all children, particularly those with additional needs, to thrive.

Where are we now?

- Transition into school for some children can be inconsistent, due to variation in practice between early years settings and schools particularly for children with SEND. This can result in limited or delayed sharing of developmental or SEND information.

What do we want to achieve?

- Timely, effective information-sharing between settings and schools
- Families reporting smooth transitions, with children feeling supported and ready for their next stage of learning

Priority actions

- Strengthen transition practice through a consistent, child-centred Warwickshire transition pathway focused on:
 - **Planning:** staff training, inclusive enabling environments and a clear transition audit process
 - **Profile:** a one-page Best Start transition profile and an annual transition plan used across settings and schools
 - **Play:** relationship-building and offering effective induction activities
- Parents, carers and families will play an active role in the transition process to support readiness and confidence.



SEND Support

Our ambition is to ensure every child with SEND in the early years receives timely identification and inclusive support, enabling them to thrive, learn confidently, and achieve their fullest potential.

Where are we now?

- Children with complex needs follow a clear pathway and identified integrated support. Information and guidance for families of children with emerging SEND is not always easily available.

What do we want to achieve?

- Earlier identification of SEND needs and timely, effective and tailored support
- An increase in the % of children on SEN Support achieving GLD, remaining above national averages
- Children with EHCPs achieving at or above national averages
- Families reporting, they feel listened to and support is timely and informative
- More practitioners accessing SEND training, leading to more inclusive, high-quality environments

Priority actions

- Provide consistent, high-quality family support and clear information from pregnancy to 5 years, using common language across multi-agencies to ensure families feel valued and heard
- Strengthen early identification by recruiting SEND specialists into Best Start Family Hubs, upskilling the workforce, and expanding inclusive provision



Maternal and Early Years Health Services

Our ambition is to ensure every parent, baby and young child receives timely, high quality health support from pregnancy through the early years, thereby strengthening early development, reducing inequalities, and improving physical and emotional wellbeing across all communities.

Where are we now?

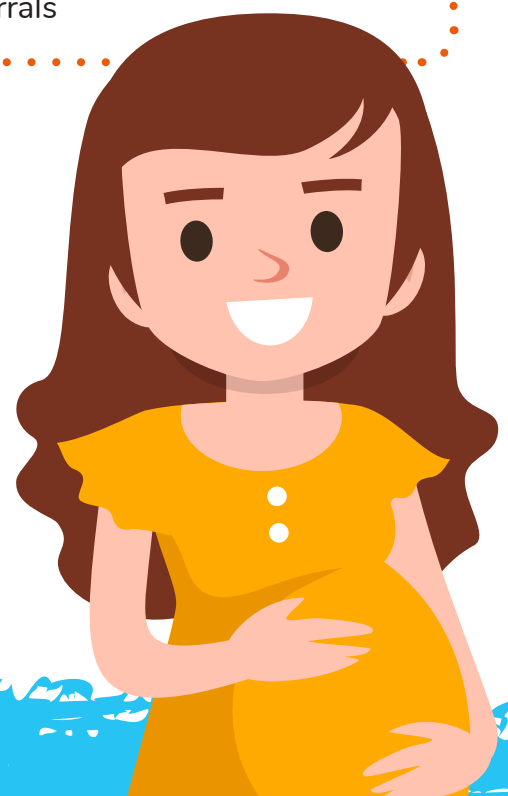
- Feeding and nutrition support, immunisations, oral health and maternal wellbeing services are available countywide, but uptake varies significantly, with the lowest participation in communities experiencing disadvantages.

What do we want to achieve?

- Targeted maternity, perinatal mental health and early years health support that is easy to access through clear signposting and referral
- Increased childhood vaccination rates
- More integrated two-year reviews to support earlier identification of needs and timely referral

Priority actions

- Through stronger integration between health and family support services, we will:
 - Target pregnancy and neonatal support to communities with the highest needs
 - Increase uptake of childhood vaccinations
 - Further develop the integrated two-year check to identify developmental concerns early and ensure effective guidance, support and referrals



Model - Joint principles and commitment for change

Services across education, health, social care, and the voluntary and community sector will work as one connected system, improving communication, sharing information and reducing duplication. This will create a simpler, more consistent and joined-up experience for families.

Relational working, service integration, and early intervention will underpin how partners work together in Warwickshire to improve GLD and meet the 2028 targets.



Relational working

Building trusting relationships is essential to transforming early childhood development in Warwickshire. Working together across services will provide families with joined-up, consistent support. By working with parents and carers, services will build trust, so families feel understood, valued and supported.

Service integration

Integrating early years services across education, health and social care will ensure families access simple, joined-up support. This requires integrated leadership that shares the same vision and outcomes, driving practical steps towards information-sharing, joint commissioning, and co-located services.

Early intervention

Prioritising early identification ensures children with emerging developmental or SEND needs to receive timely, effective support. This improves signposting and referrals, gives families greater confidence, and leads to better outcomes for children, helping to reduce inequalities.

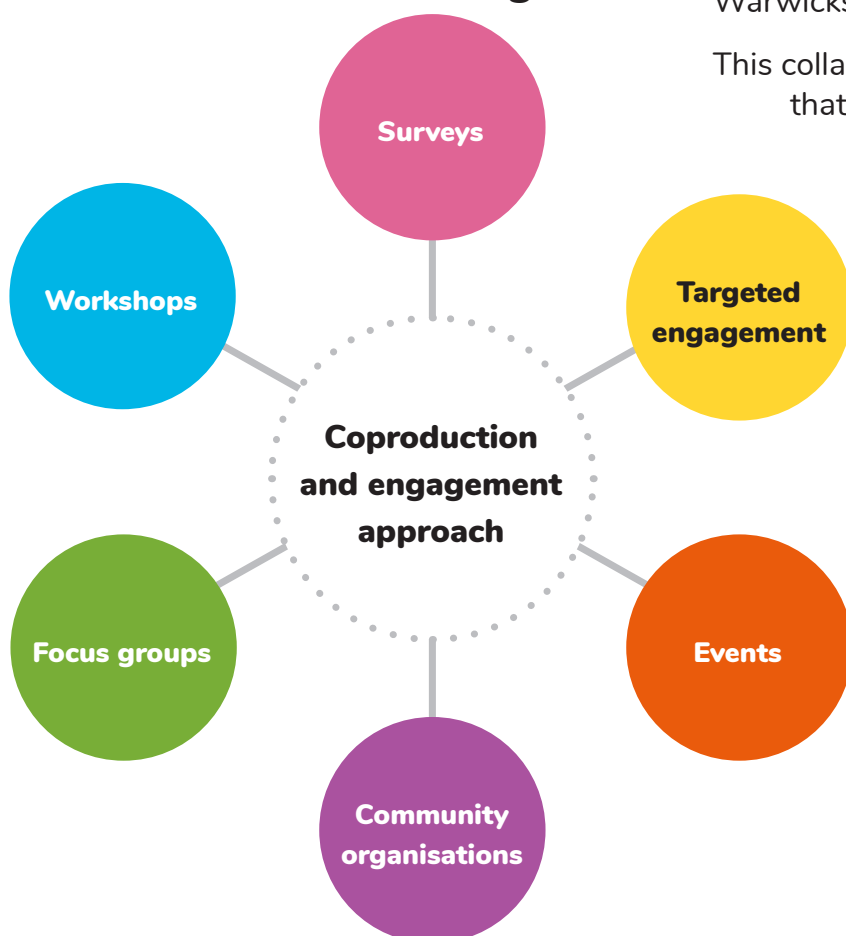
Participation - working with families

This local plan has been shaped through meaningful engagement with families, parents and carers, ensuring their lived experiences directly informs the vision. Insights from early years services across education, health and social care have identified priorities to improve GLD outcomes and support progress towards Warwickshire’s 2028 targets.

Warwickshire’s Best Start offer will be codesigned, monitored and evaluated through a strong partnership approach.

Parents, carers and families will shape the Warwickshire Best Start offer with regular opportunities to share their views and experiences through surveys, focus groups and events. Participation and engagement will be guided by strategic partners Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice, Coventry and Warwickshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership and Healthwatch Warwickshire.

This collaboration will be built on principles that ensure families feel welcomed and cared for, that their contributions are valued and included, and that communication remains clear, open and accessible. Their voices and lived experience will play a central role in shaping decisions and driving improvement across the early years system, ensuring that the Best Start offer reflects the needs and priorities of Warwickshire families.



Service integration and Best Start Family Hubs

Best Start Family Hubs will be key pillars of Warwickshire’s joined up, accessible support for families from pregnancy through the early years and beyond. By bringing together health, education and family support services, they will be welcoming, inclusive spaces where families can access the support through visible, accessible one stop hubs.

With friendly, knowledgeable staff and a single point of access to a wide range of support, the hubs will make it easier for families to understand what services are available, reduce frustration and ensure more families receive holistic, whole family support when they need it. The first hub will open at Hatters Space in Nuneaton in April 2026 with more planned across the county to reach the communities that will benefit most, helping every child in Warwickshire to thrive.

Best Start Family Hubs will be integrated into a network of services, activities and support delivered in communities across the county, expanding access by offering support in places families already use - such as libraries, parks and community venues - alongside flexible digital options.



Workforce and Funding

Workforce capacity and capabilities

We will strengthen workforce capacity through high quality professional development and integrated working, creating a shared understanding of local priorities and consistent Best Start practice.

What we will see

- A confident, skilled early years workforce that have a shared understanding, use common language and work confidently and collaboratively.

Priority actions

- Provide joint core training for Education, Health, Best Start Family Hub and SEND practitioners to build shared language and understanding of local priorities
- Strengthen integrated working through regular multi agency meetings, shared tools and clear pathways



Funding

Funding will be targeted to support high quality delivery, strengthen early help and support and improve outcomes for babies, young children and families, especially in areas of higher need.

What we will see

- Resources focused where they are most needed and have the greatest impact, with services working together to test, learn and grow effective approaches so children receive the best possible support.

Priority actions

- Allocate resources to support areas of higher need and priority groups
- Explore joint commissioning to reduce duplication and maximise the impact of shared resources
- Use data and evaluation to guide future spending and adapt investment based on what works in practice



Measuring Success

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

We will embed a continuous cycle of monitoring, evaluation and learning to track progress, understand impact and strengthen practice across the early years system.

The Child Friendly Warwickshire outcomes will provide a shared framework for services to ensure more children achieve a Good Level of Development GLD. Best Start in Life will align with the Local Outcomes Framework to ensure local priorities are consistent with national expectations.

What we will see

- Stronger alignment between family needs and service delivery
- Families feeling heard and involved in shaping support
- Clear evidence of changes made in response to feedback

Priority actions

- Capture family and practitioner voice regularly
- Develop a multi agency dashboard



Accountability and governance

Robust governance and shared accountability will drive high quality delivery of the Best Start Local Plan, ensuring partners align decisions, monitor and evaluate progress collectively, and take joint responsibility for improved outcomes.

What we will see

- A governance group representing all key partners, with balanced decision making informed by lived experience and early years expertise.

Priority actions

- Identify the most suitable partnership board to oversee and support Best Start in Life in Warwickshire



Test - Learn - Grow



Test, Learn and Grow is about learning by doing; rapidly testing ideas, understanding what works, and growing the most effective approaches.

Warwickshire’s communities have different strengths and challenges; therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach cannot deliver the improvements needed. The Test, Learn and Grow approach enables flexible and iterative development, testing different approaches that best fit their unique needs and strengths in line with the Community Powered Warwickshire approach.

Partners will use data and digital tools more effectively to support families. Better data

sharing and assessments of current services will strengthen communication, tailor services to local needs, and create a more joined up experience for families.

This approach will improve support for families and increase the number of children achieving a Good Level of Development and help close attainment gaps.

