

## Developing a 'Best Start in Life' Plan for York

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This briefing paper is to give Health and wellbeing Board members early sight on a developing and ambitious opportunity to significantly enhance how partners in the city give children the **Best Start in Life**.

Background- why is this important?

"Giving every child the Best Start in Life" is the first of the Marmot policy objectives<sup>1</sup>, which emphasizes the lifelong impact of early childhood development. Giving every child the best start in life, through good quality interventions from the antenatal period until age 5, is a crucial effective evidenced-based strategy to reduce health inequalities and improve well-being across the entire life course.

The Strategic Context

Giving Children the "Best Start in Life" features as one of the Four big Communities, "Making Health more Equal" and "Start Good Health and wellbeing Young" are two of the six ambitions in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032. Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, has long been a political priority in York across multiple administrations, is a key priority in York's Children and Young People Plan 2024-2027. One City for All, the City of York Council's plan (2023 to 2027), sets a strong ambition to increase opportunities for everyone living in York to live healthy and fulfilling lives. We have committed York to be the best place for children and young people to live and grow up, to work together to make sure children and young people have the building blocks needed to be happy, healthy, safe, and ready for the future.

The National Strategy

In July 2025 the Department for Education published [Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life](#).<sup>2</sup> Mission centred government sets a clear ambition with this strategy, which aligns with Marmot's policy objective. The National Strategy outlines several key changes and reforms. Progress will be measured using a target of 75% of children reaching a good level of development by 2028, with an additional target focused on addressing the disadvantage gap. The plan has a focus on three key areas: -

- i- better support for families drawing on the Family Hubs model (locally given the name of 'Raise York') to join up support, including public health and strengthening health services with a particular emphasis on parenting support and the Home Learning Environment.
- ii- increasing access to affordable good quality early years childcare and
- iii- education for all children and their families, targeted at those that can benefit the most.

Our local ambition

Whilst the national strategy gives a helpful indication of the government's intention, locally the focus is about developing an ambitious and innovative partnership response. Our Best Start Local Plan will focus on influencing the factors that we know has greatest impact on children's

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<sup>1</sup> Marmot Review, (2010). *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: The Marmot Review*. London: The Marmot Review. Available at: <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review> [Accessed 27 October 2025].

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education (2025) Giving every child the best start in life. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life> (Accessed: 20 October 2025)

development. Improved outcomes can only be realised through a full collaborative approach and will require commitment across the system, from all partners that support children and families. In York the commitment to our ambition is to use this national driver to activate York as a leading area in this space. We have a unique opportunity to work with Ebor Multi-academy Trust and partners to create a centre of excellence that connects the system in a way that is currently quite fragmented across the country. This ambition will secure better outcomes for children, by enabling York to go further by attracting new resource into the city.

Who is responsible for delivering this?

Within the Local Authority, the development, delivery and evaluation of the Best Start in Life plan will be a joint accountability of Children's Services and Education and Public Health. However, the ambitions around this agenda will only be fully realised through a full and proactive collaborative approach of all partners. As an important forum for strengthening joined-up working locally to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in York, the Health and Wellbeing Board can play a valuable role in leading action to ensure the ambition is realised in York to "Give Every Child has the Best Start in Life."

Next Steps – How will this be delivered?

Work is currently underway to develop a plan in partnership. Recognising an important step is how we engage parents, carers and providers as well as partners to ensure the strategy is coproduced, providing insight and local understanding. Proposals for the Best Start Local Plan will go to the City of York's Council Executive meeting in February/ March ahead of a high level plan being published. The high level plan can be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board, providing more detail on York's commitment and ambition to "Giving Every Children the Best Start in life."