



# Barking & Dagenham

Achieving a Good level of Development:  
Foundations for Transformation 2026-2028

## Best Start in Life Strategic Plan Executive Summary







# **Executive Summary**



## Our Vision & Mission

This Best Start in Life (BSiL) strategic plan sets out our vision and strategic objectives for the early years within the context of and informed by our local Best Chance Strategy, our corporate plan and the DfE Giving every child the Best Start in Life Strategy published in 2025.

### **Vision:**

**'Every child will arrive at school healthy, happy, curious, confident and ready to learn.'**



### **Mission:**

**We will create the conditions where children, regardless of background, achieve a Good Level of Development by the end of reception year with particular focus on speech, language & communication, physical development and emotional well-being. Children will thrive in safe, stable and loving homes, attend high quality early education and benefit from timely support when they need it. Families will be respected as partners, the workforce will be skilled and valued, and communities will be places where children play, connect and flourish.**

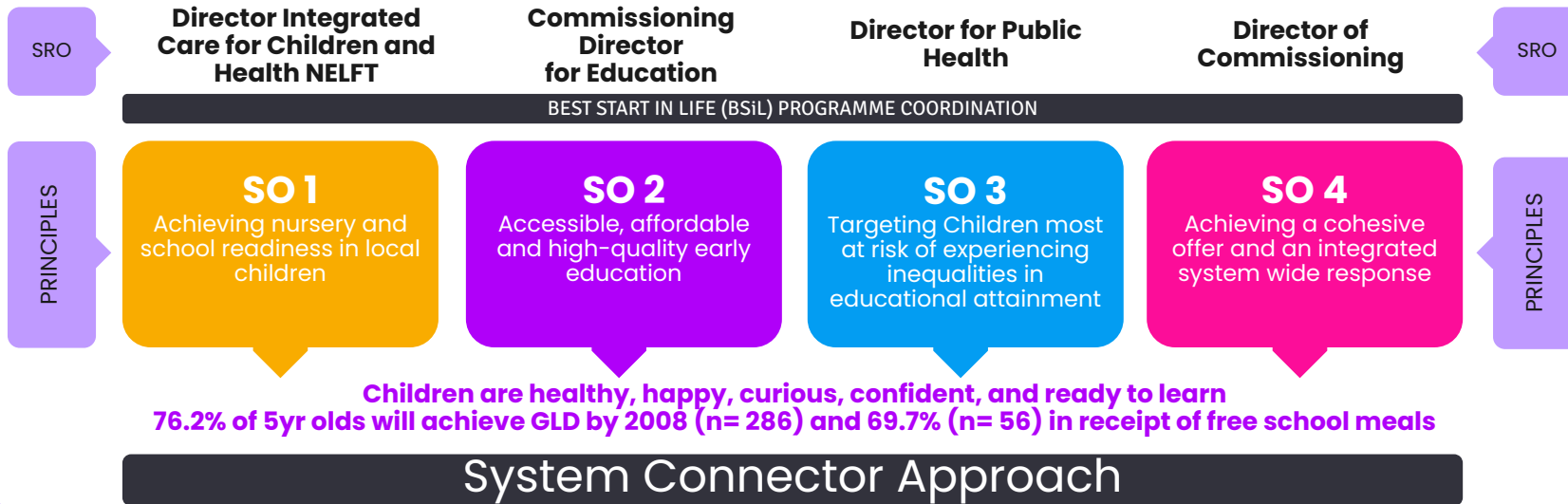
# The LBBD Best Start in Life Strategic Plan 2026-2028

## Vision

Every child - regardless of background - arrives at school healthy, happy, curious, confident, and ready to learn

## Mission

To give every child the best start in life by embracing a system connector approach





# Theory of Change

Resources 0–19 Healthy Child Programme, Early Years Workforce, EY Advisory Team, Baby Intervention Team, Family Help, SLC and Perinatal Services, VCSE, Commissioning, S4L and Family Hubs

Produced in Collaboration with our Research Partner



## Transformation Activities

## Short Term Outcomes

## Medium Term Outcomes

## Impact

### For Children

- 3 year old Health review
- Vulnerability Pathways (inc. neglect, atypical and probable SEND)
- Nursery Readiness Pilot scaled up

### For Parents/Carers

Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) and Solihull programmes

### Early Years System Transformation

- Transfer and Unexpected arrivals programme
- Parent/Infant Emotional Wellbeing (PIEW)
- Alignment of SEND early identification offer
- GLD briefings for non-education staff
- Digital front door integration project
- Speech, Language Communication Strategy Review

### Quality Improvement Programmes

- 2.5 yr review inc ASQ-SE pathway
- GLD moderation
- Digital transformation (pupil pathways)
- Targeted Support through improved data

### For Children

- 85–90% of children achieve a good level of development at 2–2.5 years (24/25: 81%)
- Improved early language and communication
- Improved attachment and emotional regulation
- Increased school readiness behaviours
- Improved preventative health behaviours

### For Parents/Carers

- Increased parenting confidence and emotional wellbeing
- Improved understanding of child development
- Increased positive parent–child interaction
- Greater ability to navigate and access services

### For Children

- 76.2% of 5yr olds will achieve a GLD by 2028 (pre-pandemic baseline ~56%)
- Sustainable increase in children meeting a good level of development at 2–2.5 ASQ
- Improved inclusion of children with SEND in early education

### For Parents/Carers

- Strengthened caregiving capacity
- Reduced parental stress linked to unmanaged need
- Increased parental participation in employment or training

### Impact (Long-Term Impact – Population Level)

- Improved child wellbeing and life chances
- Reduction in health and developmental inequalities
- Lower incidence of neglect and adverse childhood experiences
- More equitable access to early education and support
- Stronger foundations for lifelong health, learning and family stability
- Reduced demand for high-cost crisis and intervention services
- Evidenced through system indicators (Early Years Dashboard)

### Enablers

- Neighbourhood Health hubs
- Family Hubs
- Family Help
- Family Navigators
- 0–5 BCYP Commissioning Strategy
- Early Years Pathway Project
- Integration SEN practitioner Offer

### Barriers

- High levels of poverty
- Housing instability and quality
- Population mobility and growth
- Fragmented information and referral routes
- Workforce capacity
- Language and cultural barriers

# Our Principles

## 1. Needs and Asset Led

We sought to understand the felt and expressed needs of our communities through a Participatory Needs, descriptive statistics, existing strategies and the impact of our early year's services through desktop evaluation.

## 2. Outcomes Focused

The impact of our plan will be measured by success criteria derived from national and local performance measures. We will take a phased approach to understanding success through the creation of a bespoke dashboard. We will also consider case studies, service reviews and parent carer voice alongside quantitative metrics.

## 3. Embracing Technology

To improve productivity and continuous improvement of services.

## 4. Partnership & Collaboration

Co producing our plan with parents and carers; partnership ownership of delivery and implantation.

## 5. Equity

Ensure fair service access, address root causes, offer targeted interventions.

## 6. Early intervention & prevention

Reduce inequalities through timely targeted action for groups at risk of poor developmental outcomes.

## 7. Transparency

Systemwide agreement and vision ownership.



## Our Strategic Objectives

**Best Start in Life (BSiL) partnership group representatives identified and agreed four strategic objectives based on the available evidence.**

**These objectives form the foundation of our plan for achieving a Good Level of Development across Barking and Dagenham.**

### SO 1

Achieving nursery and school readiness in local children

### SO 2

Accessible, affordable and high-quality early education

### SO 3

Targeting Children most at risk of experiencing inequalities in educational attainment

### SO 4

Achieving a cohesive offer and an integrated system wide response



# Our Partnership Approach

Our approach was designed by the Best Start in Life (BSiL) partnership group representatives which brings together the expertise of colleagues across Health, Education, NHS, Social Care and the Voluntary Sector. Our research partner is Dartington Service Design Lab and our plan was peer reviewed by Nesta.

## Iterative Development Process

### Rapid early years needs assessment (WHAT, WHO)

need identification, narrative exploration and priority synthesis

### Stakeholder Workshops (2)

Early Years System stakeholders – prioritisation, shared language and change opportunities (WHERE; HOW)

## Quality Assurance and Improvement

Critically reviewed by Nesta. LBBD is a member of the **BSiL community of practice for London** chaired by Regional Adviser for London Family Hubs. Our **Impact Assessment** has reviewed family and child experience and impact of current delivery.

## Governance

The delivery and monitoring of this plan will be carried out by the **Best Chance Delivery** Group, with Executive oversight provided by the Best Chance Executive. Each one of our strategic priorities is led by a **Senior Responsible Officer**.

## Community and Family Voice

A 3 part approach – including impact assessment of current delivery, focus groups and systemic peer research model to be established during implementation phase April – September 2026.



**Barking &  
Dagenham**