



Early Childhood Strategy 2020 - 2024

"From pregnancy to the end of the foundation stage"

National Context

It is acknowledged that early childhood experiences provide a platform on which future development and learning is built upon. A smooth transition into school enhances a child's ability to learn and this has a fundamental impact on their life chances in adulthood. This is referenced across a number of key documents nationally.

Unlocking Talent: A Plan for Social Mobility

A good early years education is the cornerstone of improving social mobility and is therefore the focus of our first life -stage ambition in this plan. These key years are the opportunity to make sure that all children develop the strong cognitive, social and emotional foundations on which future success is built. Best quality early years settings are proof that prevention is better than cure, putting children from all backgrounds on the right track from the very beginning and enabling them to begin school in a position to thrive. The report can be read [here](#).

The 1001 Critical Days manifesto

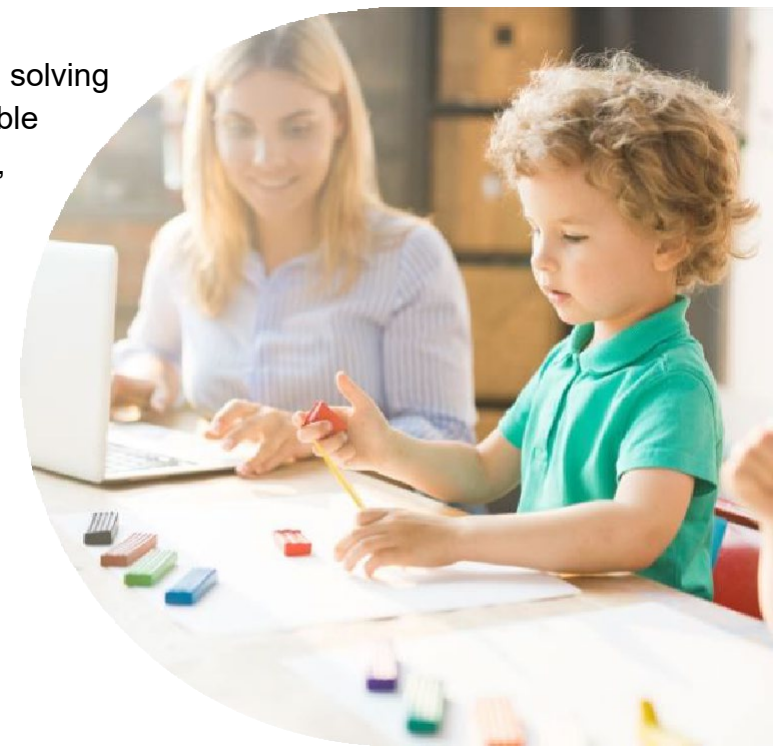
This highlights the period between conception and a child's second birthday as a critical time. During this time of rapid growth, babies' brains are shaped by their experiences, particularly the interactions they have with their parents and other caregivers. What happens during this time lays the foundations for future development. Pregnancy and the birth of a baby is a critical 'window of opportunity' when parents are especially receptive to offers of advice and support. The Manifesto (2016) and Committee Report (2019) can be read [here](#) and [here](#).

Early Intervention Foundation

Parents and care givers lay the foundations for emotional regulation, communication, and problem solving as well as strengthening their self-esteem. Young children thrive in environments that are predictable and responsive to their needs. Children can struggle, however, where environments are neglectful, unpredictable or overwhelming. It is important therefore that the health and wellbeing of parents and carers is considered when looking to improve outcomes for young children, and not just during pregnancy. The report can be read [here](#).

Early Years Foundation Stage

A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. The framework can be read [here](#).



Introduction

Lincolnshire children performed well in comparison to both national and regional outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data from 2013-16 however this pattern changed and by 2017 the outcomes for Lincolnshire dipped below national. By 2019 Lincolnshire were performing least well in comparison with their eleven statistical neighbours.

In response to this Lincolnshire has been collaborating with a range of stakeholders to identify how we can collectively address this gap. This includes participating in a Local Government Association Peer Challenge with a focus on communication and language which took place in November 2019.

This strategy has been developed to capture our collective ambitions for our children and to outline our direction of travel for our improvement journey. This will enable all stakeholders and professionals to consider how they invest time and resources to best prioritise the areas that will have greatest impact on improving educational outcomes for all children and their families-

The emphasis of the strategy is to establish a shared responsibility amongst all professionals to ensure they play a part in supporting all children to thrive. This will enable the key steps to be in place supporting positive experiences for both children and their parents. This will lead on to a smooth transition in to school in order that they are ready to learn and are able to reach their expected level of development at the end of their foundation stage.

To reflect this and to give us a strong set of data to inform planning and delivery of services, Lincolnshire has dedicated a chapter of the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) to early years. This will provide a clear picture of the local trends and highlight areas of need. This will be reviewed annually each autumn to ensure the information and data remains current, relevant and accurate.



Strategic Aim

Our primary aim is to increase the Good Level of Development (GLD) of children across Lincolnshire and to improve our outcomes when compared to our statistical neighbours.

The key to ensure our success will be to:

- embed a shared understanding across the wider workforce as to the importance of the work with families in their earliest years and the positive impact this has on their outcomes at the end of the foundation stage
- ensure all professionals working with parents and children through their journey from pregnancy to end of the foundation stage deliver effective and consistent messages
- encourage all stakeholders and agencies to target resources effectively by using the data and information provided in the early years chapter of JSNA to inform their work
- enable a skilled multi agency workforce to deliver evidenced based interventions which respond to changing local needs
- empower representatives of the early years, school sector and key professionals from across the system, to come together to be a fundamental driving force for this strategy, with responsibility for the delivery of our ambitions

To enable a multi disciplinary workforce to share key messages and understand their role in the system this strategy sets out Lincolnshire's approach to supporting families on this journey and will enable all services to meet need in a consistent way. Utilising the principles of UNICEF, the next page sets out our approach.



Putting Children First

All children should be well supported to be ready for school. Our aim is that across Lincolnshire:

Children will be given every opportunity to:

- grow, develop and be healthy
- play, have fun, socialise and access their early years entitlement
- embrace learning and get the most out of going to school
- have their needs met at the right time in the right way

Parents and care-givers will be supported to:

- be healthy and well before, during and after pregnancy
- positively embrace parenthood and bond with their child
- enable their child to grow, play and learn
- know how and when to access services and support, to meet their own and their child's needs

Services will be enabled and equipped to:

- use evidence informed practice
- have well trained and supported staff
- work collaboratively to ensure children, their parents and care-givers are at the heart of how we plan and deliver services
- maintain a key professional wherever possible

This approach reflects the UNICEF principles that school readiness is achieved by communities and services working together for all our children giving them the best opportunity to thrive.



Local Position

Over the past 6 years the percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Lincolnshire has increased from 65% to 70%, with a dip to 69.9% in 2017. In 2019 Lincolnshire was in the lowest position in comparison to our statistical neighbours.

Since 2019 outcomes have unsurprisingly dropped across all areas of England and the national average therefore dropped as a result. In 2022 Lincolnshire narrowed the gap in outcomes for the Good Level of Development measure with National to 1%.

Lincolnshire is showing an improvement in the year-on-year gap to national for each of the measures (% achieving GLD, % achieving across all early learning goals, and % achieving in Communication & Language and Literacy AOLs).

Two districts of Lincolnshire exceed national averages with 5 areas adrift from national.

Key Outcomes

- Increase the number of children achieving a GLD.
- To reduce the gap in outcomes for children eligible for Pupil Premium and the rest.
- To reduce the gap in outcomes for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and those for whom English is their first language.
- Increase the number of vulnerable children and families that have a sustained attendance at our children centres.
- Increase the number of children taking up the integrated 2-year review.

District Level Data

District	% achieving GLD 2019	% achieving GLD 2022
Lincolnshire	69.6%	64.1%
Boston	65.5 %	60.4%
East Lindsey	68.9 %	60.8%
Lincoln	66.5 %	58.5%
North Kesteven	76.2 %	69.6%
South Holland	65.5%	61.4%
South Kesteven	71.7 %	69.8%
West Lindsey	69.5 %	64.4%

Regional and National Data Comparison

The GLD is the measurement which is children achieving expected through Observational assessment at the end of the reception year/Foundation stage in school in all Prime goals and the literacy and mathematical goals.

2022 was the first year of this assessment following 2 years of no assessment due to the pandemic, it is also the first year of the assessment following the 2021 EYFS reforms.

The prime reason of the reforms was to reduce paperwork to allow staff more time to spend with the children in their classrooms and therefore improve outcomes. Since 2019, outcomes have unsurprisingly dropped across all areas of England and the national average therefore dropped as a result. However, whilst Lincolnshire also dropped, the drop was not as significant and therefore as you can see Lincolnshire GLD has narrowed against national.

Lincolnshire is showing an improvement in the year-on-year gap to national for each of the measures (% achieving GLD, % achieving across all early learning goals, and % achieving in Communication & Language and Literacy AOLs).

	GLD	Average Point Score	Prime Goals	Specific Goals	All Goals
NCER National	65.20%	31	74.2	64.9	63.4
East Midlands	64.50%	31	74.2	63.8	62.4
Lincolnshire	64.10%	31.1	74.6	64.4	63
Gap between Lincs and National 2022	-1.1	0.1	0.4	-0.5	-0.4
Gap between Lincs and National 2019	-2.2	-0.3	-1.8	-1.6	-1.7

The data picture above shows that we have narrowed all gaps between LA and National since 2019. We will continue to look at Lit and Mat particularly in agreement trialling offers throughout 2023-2024.

2022 % ACHIEVED EXPECTED BY DISTRICT	COM		PSE			PHY		LIT			MAT	
	LAU	Spe	SR	MS	BR	GMS	FMS	Com	WRe	Wri	Num	NP
National	82.2%	82.6%	85.1%	87.1%	88.6%	92.1%	85.8%	80.3%	74.7%	69.5%	77.8%	77.2%
Boston	81.4	80.5	84.3	87.4	88.0	93.8	87.2	78.5	71.4	63.7	75.1	73.6
City of Lincoln	77.4	79.1	80.8	81.7	85.2	89.1	82.5	75.3	68.8	62.7	72.9	70.1
East Lindsey	81.2	81.4	84.1	86.1	86.6	91.0	84.8	76.6	70.1	65.4	74.1	71.7
North Kesteven	85.9	86.6	87.5	89.3	90.7	95.1	90.8	85.8	80.9	74.9	82.8	81.9
South Holland	80.7	81.4	84.0	87.0	88.1	93.2	85.3	80.1	74.6	65.4	76.7	74.2
South Kesteven	87.2	87.3	88.2	90.6	91.9	94.4	90.0	83.9	79.4	73.9	81.8	80.5
West Lindsey	80.8	84.2	83.6	86.0	88.8	93.0	85.3	81.0	75.4	67.1	76.8	75.5

Local Context

Lincolnshire is a large rural county and the needs of our communities differ therefore both statutory, and non-statutory services and stakeholders must be able to respond to this to ensure professionals work collaboratively with children and their families to meet their needs.

One of the greatest challenges for Lincolnshire is the size, scale and complexity of the environment in which all services operate.

- Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in the country.
- With one of the best performing children services.
- Clear vision for the work with children and families.
- Integrated locality delivery across four areas.
- Strength in our strategic partnership with schools.
- Diverse good quality childcare sector.
- Strong sufficiency position.
- Approximately 45,000 children from birth to reception year (inclusive).
- Almost 930 providers registered to deliver childcare and funded early education places.
- 306 schools for primary aged children.
- 48 children centres (7 maternity hubs).

You can read about how we meet the needs of our children who are looked after by the Local Authority if you click [here](#).

School Readiness in Lincolnshire

Most children will thrive within the family environment and may only ever need support via routine contacts i.e. Midwives, Health Visitors, GPs, children centres, early years, childcare settings and services; having a smooth transition into school and going on to achieve their expected outcomes or above at the end of the foundation stage. A small number of children and families will require access to targeted or specialist support services, in addition to our universal offer set out below.

The [Lincolnshire Better Births](#) strategy which takes a systems approach to pregnancy and beyond.

Lincolnshire's integrated offer to families has been strengthened by our Health Visiting services which have been provided by the Local Authority, since October 2017 delivering the [Healthy Child Programme](#).

To support this there are a range of services available locally through our [network of Children's Centres](#) with outreach provided to meet the needs of families living in our most rural communities.

Children's Services are proud of the support we provide to families through our integrated locality teams. However, we want to build upon this further by ensuring the wider workforce is engaged in supporting children and families to be ready for school in order that they have the best chance to reach or exceed their expected level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

It is expected that all professionals that work with early years children and their families promote the use of resources available that underpin and promote their learning and development including:

- [Hungry little minds](#)— Simple hints and activities to do with your children
- [Tiny happy people](#)— A BBC resource to support parents to develop their children's language and communication skills.
- [What to expect when](#)—A booklet to help parents/carers find out more about how their child is learning and developing during their first five years, in relation to the EYFS

Five key steps have been set out to ensure all professionals understand how they can play a part in improving the educational outcomes of the children and families they work with.



Key Steps / Milestones

From pregnancy to the end of the child's reception year at school, all parents should receive consistent messages from the professionals they meet. Parents should be encouraged and supported to access services at key points. Lincolnshire has set out a five step pathway of services that are universally available to all families to ensure support is accessible. Engagement should be encouraged consistently across the workforce, giving all children the greatest opportunity of reaching or exceeding the expected level of development at the end of their reception year.

Step 1

- Parents access effective antenatal and postnatal care as set out within the Better Births strategy

Step 2

- Each child to attend all mandated health checks as set out in the healthy child programme

Step 3

- Parents and their children access quality, age appropriate play and learning experiences at the earliest opportunity that best meet their needs

Step 4

- All children take up their three and four year old early years entitlement in high quality early years provision

Step 5

- Parents and professionals work together to ensure transition arrangements meet the needs of the child to better prepare children for school and to make the most out of the reception year.



To encourage a shared understanding across all professionals and families, Lincolnshire's approach to School Readiness has been set out on the next page.

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. EYFS2017 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>)

The United Nations World Fit for Children (WFFC) mission statement (2002) states **a good start in life, in a nurturing and safe environment enables children to survive and be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.** It highlights the importance of a caring, safe and stimulating environment for the holistic development of young children. Lincolnshire County Council has adopted Unicef's 2012 'School Readiness' conceptual framework ([https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/Child2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/Child2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf)).

Ready children focusing on children's learning and development

All children are born learners; exploring the world as babies long before they start school, continuing to learn; beyond the classroom in their everyday lives. Through:

- Learned behaviours – showing an interest in the world around them, sharing their ideas
- Attitude and emotional competence – resilience, listening to others, be interested to learn, being motivated to find out and discover and behaving in an appropriate manner
- Developmental maturation – fine and gross motor development

A child who is ready for school has the early skills and knowledge that will enable them to be successful in school including motivation to learn, curiosity, self-regulation, the ability to create their own ideas, work well with other children and engage in learning activities through playful experiences. Ready children are those who are able to learn in a range of ways:

- Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Ready schools and early years provision focusing on the learning environment, and smooth transition to primary school

Schools and early years provision must guide the development of children's capabilities with a view to ensuring that children in their care complete the Foundation Stage ready to benefit fully from the opportunities ahead of them. Their readiness for children is defined in terms of environments that support a smooth transition for children and families:

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development.

Creating continuity and maintaining learning expectations for children between early learning and primary school environments is a defining characteristic of ready settings; the greater the gap, the greater the challenge to transition.

Ready settings seek to involve the child, their family and community through:

- High-quality learning environments that are safe, secure, inclusive and inspire awe and wonder
- Responsive, respectful and reflective teaching
- Child-centred practices focused on holistic development and learning
- Inclusive practices, that are fair, transparent and non-discriminatory

Ready families focusing on parents' and caregivers' experience and involvement in early learning/development

There will always be stresses and strains to deal with in life, particularly when you have young children. Stress can get in the way of relationships and disrupt a calm home atmosphere. It is important to manage worries and stresses and not let them build up. All professionals working with families have the responsibility to encourage:

- Loving safe caring homes that help children to develop Adults in their life to play an active role in their learning
- Awareness of what individual children need to grow and develop

- Steps to ensure positive maternal mental health
- Early intervention directly increases the wellbeing of families and their communities and that increase in wellbeing can have a positive effect on a range of other indicators, from children's educational progress to their parents' ability to get into work.

Why is school readiness important?

It has direct gains for children, families and schools including the positive impact on educational achievement, children's development and learning, school completion and success in adulthood.

It supports social equity and economic development: improving equity in access to education and in learning outcomes, with increased access to higher education and greater earnings benefits.

Health, education and development are intimately linked at several levels. Since child health is one of the main predictors of school readiness, investment in children's health improves education outcomes. In turn, investment in education improves health outcomes, developing basic health skills and the future health workforce.

What are the potential outcomes from positive action

Having a strong early years strategy, high quality services and a well trained workforce leads to better outcomes for children. Good antenatal care can help reduce poor nutrition, low birth weight and lack of routine immunisations. This can help support children to keep up with their friends. Parents will know how and when to best support their child to ensure they are ready to learn and ready for life

Access to a holistic approach to school readiness helps all adults to champion learning and foster curiosity. Working in partnership with other settings, other professional and with individual groups in the community positively supports children's development and progress.

Effective Transition from Early Years into School

To ensure transition is to be successful from pre-school to school, preparation should begin early so that all stakeholders involved are focused on the needs of the child. This will enable strong communication between leaders who will decide how best to support the transition process and parents/families who best know the child so they can feel confident that the needs and interests of their child will be understood and valued.

Children with Additional Needs

Supporting children with particular needs to adjust to school environments, routines and expectations can bring further challenge to ensure it is met with success.

“Early Years Providers should know precisely where children and young people with SEN are in their learning and development. They should ensure decisions are informed by the insights of parents and those of children themselves”.

DfE and DH (2015) SEN and disability code of practice: 0-25 years, para 1.25.

Early Years and Childcare support have collaborated with a range of service providers to ensure that children with specific needs are supported to achieve a successful transition into school through early identification and timely referrals so that the right services are in place to meet need.

For more information see the [local offer](#).

Greater consistency across the county is required going forward and this will be a priority.

Effective Transition from Early Years into School

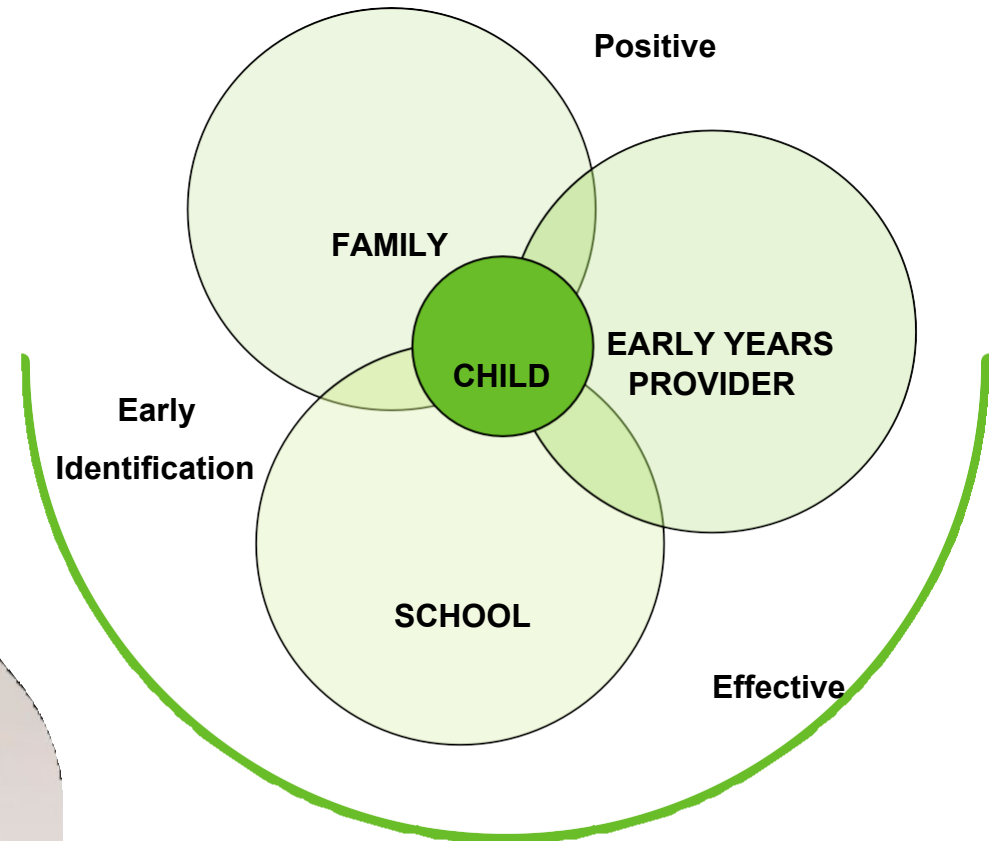
Starting school is often seen as an exciting time for a child, however this can also be a time of uncertainty and change. Getting transition right for every child is vital and for it to be successful all key stakeholders should be involved. Transition should always be viewed as a journey which does not end on the day that the child starts school, rather it continues until that particular change has been adjusted to.

Good transition should focus on:

- the child at the centre
- parents valued and supported
- strong relationships with all professionals involved

All stakeholders should have sound knowledge and understanding of:

- each child's interests and specific learning styles
- providing support and opportunities at the child's own pace to meet their needs
- providing the right support for parents, carers and families



	Lincolnshire's Next Steps
Governance	Development of an early childhood strategy group empowered to deliver our ambitions for all our children within their earliest years. To better engage all stakeholders in the early years and school readiness agenda.
Data Sharing	Development of further indicators to assess progress before Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) at end of reception.
	Production and analysis of 2.5 year (ASQ) developmental data, outlining cohorts and thematic areas where children are at risk of not being ready for school and use to inform service delivery
	Develop a phased implementation plan for analysis of data at other (ASQ) assessment stages.
	Information and updates to be provided to all children's services senior managers at the QA board to ensure collective awareness.
	Work with Early Years Alliance to identify any potential themes from the data collected on tapestry to inform future priorities and workstreams.
High Quality Workforce	Undertake an audit of the children's workforce in its widest sense, to understand, workforce skill base and challenges with specific reference to child development, early communication of need for Speech Language and Communication.
	Produce an Early Years Childrens Workforce Strategy.
	Continually review learning, share regularly and widely key messages with the workforce in one minute style briefings
	Provide workshops for children's services staff and partners to attend, to promote collective ownership
	Increase number of practitioners qualified to deliver evidenced based parenting programmes and interventions.
Integrate Services around the Child and Family at a locality level	Audit and review each stage of Early Years Delivery Model building on 1,001 days pathway. Initially focus on Stages 1-5.
	Development of an Integrated School Readiness offer as a core element of locality delivery model, with access to specialist services.
	Undertake and utilise consultation with families to inform service design.
	Increase the number of children engaged with Children's Centres from our most vulnerable groups including children on a plan.
Parenting Support	Review and strengthen referral pathways into parenting support.
Support Schools to be System Leaders	Develop proposals to raise awareness within schools leadership teams of the strategy and the delivery model .
Implement evidence based approaches to Developing Speech, Language and Communication	Review all current evidence and non-evidence based programmes for speech, language and communication 0 – 5 years.
	Identify gaps in provision and any potential duplication to inform de-commissioning and commissioning proposals to ensure a consistent early years communication and language pathway.
	Increase the number of practitioners trained in the key speech and language programme and interventions.
	Increase number of children accessing Early Help language and communication programmes.
Develop the Best Possible Services to Support Parent and Infant Mental Health	Progress reports to be provided to the early childhood strategy group 6 monthly regarding the work in this area.
	Implement a Perinatal and Infant Mental Health action plan/pathway.

Key Partners

- [Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)
- [Education Psychology Team](#)
- [Childrens Centres](#)
- [EduIncs](#)
- [Range of Independent Training Providers](#)
- [Health Visiting Team](#)
- [Better Births Lincolnshire](#)
- [Early Support Care Co-ordination \(ESCO\)](#)
- [Adult Learning—2aspire](#)
- [LCC SEND Team](#)
- [Working Together Team](#)
- [Portage](#)
- [Virtual School](#)
- [Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team](#)
- [LCC Performance Team](#)
- [LCC School Admissions Team](#)
- [Bookstart](#)



Early Years & Childcare Support
Lincolnshire County Council

County Offices

Newland

Lincolnshire County Council

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<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk>



Go to <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/> for simple hints and activities to do with your children