

# Prevention and Early Help Strategy

2026-2031



*Early Support, Endless Possibilities.*



Bradford District and Craven  
Health and Care Partnership



# Contents

Foreword .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Our Vision .....	5
Our Approach .....	5
National Context .....	6
Levels of Need and Support in Bradford .....	8
Bradford Context .....	10
Child of the North Highlights .....	12
Key Achievements .....	13
Our Connectivity .....	14
Principles .....	15
Our Commitments .....	16
Secure Relationships .....	17
Our Areas of Focus .....	18
Our Pledge .....	22



# Foreword

It is my privilege to introduce our new Prevention and Early Help Strategy that highlights the importance of working together to help children and families across the Bradford District.

This strategy is the culmination of multi-agency co-production and demonstrates our shared commitment to ensuring that every child and family in our District have the opportunity not just to cope, but to truly thrive.

We know that childhood shapes futures, and that children and families flourish when they are supported at the right time, in the right way. This strategy is built on a simple but powerful belief; that every child deserves the best start in life, every child has a right to enjoy and achieve in life, and every child and family across the district should feel valued as they are our greatest assets.

Over the next five years, we will focus on prevention, acting early to reduce challenges before they grow and on providing the support available to families when they need it. By working together across a wide range of services, schools, health partners, and communities, we will continue to build on an integrated system that is proactive, compassionate, and ambitious for our children.

This is not just a plan for services; it is a vision for our future. A future where children are safe, healthy, and inspired to achieve their full potential and a future where children and families feel empowered, connected, and supported.



**Charlotte Ramsden OBE**  
Chief Executive, Bradford Children & Families Trust

ACT as One Committee member  
Chair of Strategic Delivery Group Bradford (formerly Healthy Children & Families Board)



# Introduction

“Prevention and Early Help is about recognising the strengths in children and families, walking alongside them, and ensuring that they have the right help at the right time, so that they can thrive. The Prevention and Early Help System is not defined by a single service or department; it represents a **shared responsibility across our entire partnership.**”

**Susan Claydon** - Prevention and Early Help System Board Chair, Assistant Director Bradford Children & Families Trust

The Prevention and Early Help System Board is responsible for delivery of an effective and mature system. Together, we are committed to offering quality universal advice and support, as well as the early identification of additional needs, proactive engagement, and the coordinated delivery of a network of support services that respond as challenges begin to emerge. We will always work together to see the signs, listen with empathy, and act with purpose.

When a child and family needs help, we don't delay, we provide that help. We act collaboratively, ensuring that support is effective and tailored to each set of unique

circumstances. We know that early prevention and intervention can change the trajectory of a child's life, strengthen family bonds, and build resilience that lasts. By acting early, we don't just respond to challenges, we prevent them from escalating thus reducing the need for more children to be in care.

This strategy demonstrates our collective commitments, and outlines how together, we will build upon our strengths to enhance the maturity of the system, ensuring that every child in Bradford is given the opportunity to thrive.



# Our Vision

Our shared vision is to help to build communities where children and their families are supported early, where getting help is viewed as a strength and that challenges are met with compassion, not crisis intervention.

We are building a culture of prevention, where every interaction strengthens resilience, unlocks potential, and empowers families to thrive.

# Our Approach

Our approach is underpinned by the fact that children thrive best when they can grow up in the care of their own families, where love, identity, and belonging are deeply rooted. We are committed to supporting families to help their children thrive, and doing everything that we can to support families to stay together, wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.

We will work with care, and rigour to ensure that safety is never compromised, and that every child is protected while being nurtured in the environment and with the people who know them best. We will focus on prevention and work to empower families to overcome challenges, and build lasting resilience.



# National Context

The Government has set out a long-term plan to reform prevention in the early years and children's social care, aiming to create a more supportive, preventative system that better protects children and strengthens families.

The reforms focus on prevention and early help for children and families, greater accountability across services, and stronger safeguards to ensure that children's best interests are always at the heart of decisions. To understand how these ambitions will be delivered in practice, it's helpful to look at the key elements of the reforms and changes they will bring for children, families, and services.



## Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

The Government's plans to reform children's social care is underpinned by the introduction of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. The Bill prioritises keeping families together by mandating family group decision making, improving information sharing, and by developing and reinforcing multi-agency safeguarding teams.

## Families First

In response to a system wide review of safeguarding arrangements, the Department for Education proposed several pillars of reform:

1. Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families
2. A decisive multi-agency child protection system
3. Unlocking the potential of family networks
4. Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care
5. A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one
6. A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data

In March 2025, the Government published the Families First Partnership Programme guidance which supports organisations to begin to plan activity that will transform the whole system of help, support and protection. The programme emphasises early intervention, a transformation through developing Family Help, redesigning of multi-agency child protection, and making family group decision making an entitlement.

There is a focus on maintaining relationships to avoid children, young people, and families telling their stories multiple times or being passed between teams and practitioners. As a result, more children will have the support they need to thrive at home, leading to a significant reduction in the numbers of looked after children.

## Giving every child the best start in life

The Best Start in Life Strategy was published by the Government in July 2025 and seeks to improve outcomes for babies, children and families through integrated early years support. It requires local areas to produce a delivery plan to support children's early development. It brings together universal early years services and early help parenting support to help more children reach a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028. The objectives of the Best Start in Life Strategy include: improving support for families from pregnancy to age 5, making early education and childcare more accessible, strengthening Family Hubs as central access points and improving data sharing and performance monitoring.

## Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023)

Working Together to Safeguard Children is statutory guidance that outlines how organisations and agencies should collaborate to protect children and families. It offers guidance for partnership working, information sharing across the system, early help, child protection, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The guidance is clear, successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners supporting them.

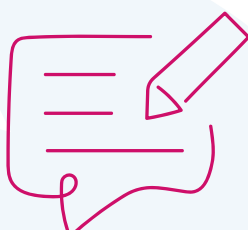
## NHS 10 Year Plan/Family Hub Model Framework

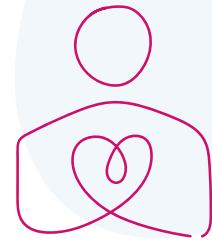
In line with the NHS 10 Year Plan's shift to neighbourhood services and halving health inequalities, our Family Hubs will be the anchor for delivery. We will build on co-location to include practitioners such as health visitors, school nurses, mental health practitioners, and SEND specialists, enabling seamless, preventative, and accessible care for families across all 1,001 days and beyond.

## What we will do to embed these reforms

- We will introduce Family Help Lead Practitioners
- We will improve our pathways and practice framework
- We will build on the existing offer and establish Best Start Family Hubs, deliver proportionate universal and targeted support from pregnancy to aged 5, integrate services across health, education, and children's social care, improve data-sharing and digital infrastructure to support joined up working, and focus on workforce development and training. The learning from Better Start Bradford and Born in Bradford has helped us to develop a theory of change
- We will co-produce a local delivery plan based on evidence of what works locally, to support children's early development, working with partners and parents to enhance children's development in the early years
- To effectively safeguard children, we will ensure a child-centred approach with a whole family focus

(Child Protection elements of the reforms will be overseen via the Families First Programme Board.)





# Levels of Need and Support in Bradford

Bradford's Continuum of Need document is important guidance for all agencies who, to varying degrees, have contact with children and families.

The guidance applies regardless of whether an organisation is statutory, public, voluntary, private or independent. The purpose of the guidance is to help agencies to identify a child's level of need and to respond appropriately – enabling children and families to access “the right help at the right time”.

The Continuum of Need is built around the Thrive Model: **Getting Advice, Getting Help, Getting More Help, Help to Address Harm**

The Prevention and Early Help Strategy is aligned to the Continuum of Need.

We will have a relentless focus on prevention and ensuring that we reduce pressure on families by enhancing our response at the Getting Advice stage, as we recognise that whilst some children and families will not need safeguarding support, pressure created by poverty, housing issues, employment and those families where children or adults have health conditions.



Our Prevention and Early Help system spans Getting Advice through to targeted services for getting help and beyond, and links partners, tools, and resources that are designed to improve outcomes for children and families across the Bradford District. A wide range of agencies make up the system and children and families are at the heart of this.

*“Our ambition is for all children to thrive.”*



# Bradford Context

The evidence set out in the Bradford Context highlights a small number of persistent and interconnected challenges affecting children and families, including inequalities in early health outcomes, rising mental health need, domestic abuse, poverty, and educational disengagement. In response, partners across Bradford have agreed a set of shared commitments that describe what we will achieve together as a system. These commitments are delivered through a focused set of priority areas, where prevention and early help can have the greatest impact.

The Prevention and Early Help Strategy is informed by the data from the Bradford 0-19 shared outcomes framework. This work - led by Born in Bradford in collaboration with the Act as

One collaborative - offers a way to understand the drivers of poor early development, and highlight solutions to reduce inequalities in children's outcomes.

This data was initially linked across organisations at the ward level to protect anonymity and data sharing challenges. Using this data, the framework highlighted:

1. Stark inequalities hidden by district averages: For example, while Bradford's average rate of school readiness (62%) is close to the national average (68%), outcomes vary dramatically by ward from 47% to 81%.
2. The needs of children are different across distinct areas. This helps to identify what support is needed, and where, to help families.



## Key issues in Bradford Context

Infant mortality, low breast feed  
Poor school readiness, Mental health prevalence, Domestic abuse, Poverty & inequality

## System Commitments

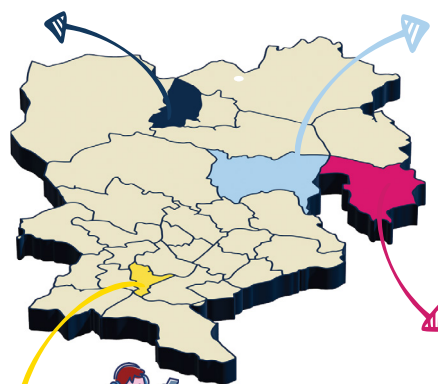
Improve life chances, Enjoy & achieve in education, Improve health & wellbeing, Healthy relationships, Equity & inclusion

## Focus Areas

1001 Days; Parent-Infant MH; Early Child Development; Play; Mental Health; Adolescence; Secure Relationships; Family Hubs; Data & Evidence

**Eliza is born in KEIGHLEY WEST**

- 9 in 1000 of her friends will die in infancy
- 27% of her friends will be breastfed at 6-8 weeks
- 45 in 1000 of her friends will see domestic violence
- 15% of her friends won't be fully immunised at age 2
- 60% of her friends will take up their 2yr nursery place
- 79% of her friends have an expected level of development (ASQ age 2)
- 69% of Eliza's friends will be school ready (EYFS GLD)



**Zac is born in BINGLEY**

- 2 in 1000 of his friends will die in infancy
- 43% of his friends will be breastfed at 6-8 weeks
- 19 in 1000 of his friends will see domestic violence
- 10% of his friends won't be fully immunised at age 2
- 57% of his friends will take up their 2yr nursery place
- 89% of his friends have an expected level of development (ASQ age 2)
- 77% of Zac's friends will be school ready (EYFS GLD)

**Adam is born in LITTLE HORTON**

- 5 in 1000 of his friends will die in infancy
- 50% of his friends will be breastfed at 6-8 weeks
- 43 in 1000 of his friends will see domestic violence
- 26% of his friends won't be fully immunised at age 2
- 56% of his friends will take up their 2yr nursery place
- 69% of his friends have an expected level of development (ASQ age 2)
- 64% of Adam's friends will be school ready (EYFS GLD)

**Aliya is born in WHARFEDALE**

- Less than 1 of her friends will die in infancy
- 75% of her friends will be breastfed at 6-8 weeks
- 11 in 1000 of her friends will see domestic violence
- 4% of her friends won't be fully immunised at age 2
- 91% of her friends will take up their 2yr nursery place
- 90% of her friends have an expected level of development (ASQ age 2)
- 83% of Aliya's friends will be school ready (EYFS GLD)



**1255** families and **2842** children are being supported via an Early Help Assessment (as at end November 2025)

**29%** of under 16-year-olds live in absolute low income families



In June 2025 **8063** children had an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

**23,472** children and young people were identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) at the end of June 2025

This is a **4.2%** increase on June 2024

There are an estimated **18,010** children and young people with a probable mental health diagnosis in Bradford District in 2020

**28.3%** of the Bradford population is under the age of 20 (Office of National Statistics 2021)

At September 2025, there was **2.9%** severe absence

In 2024 - 2025,

**62%**



of children achieved a good level of development (GLD) in reception year

At ward level this ranged from **52%** to **86%**

Up to **40%**

of women in pregnancy report low mood, but very few are reported in our current data systems (Born in Bradford, 2019)



In the 12 months to the end of August 2025, there were

**18,518**

domestic abuse incidents in Bradford, with

**25.2%** of incidents having a child recorded as present

At September 2025, there was a **16.8%** persistent absence

At Autumn term 2024 - 25, the overall absence rate for secondary schools in Bradford was

**7.3%** and **5.3%** for primary



Of the 0-19 year olds in Bradford,

**42%** are White British, **4%** are White Other (Irish, Roma, Gypsy or Irish Traveller),

**36%** are Asian: Pakistani, **3%** are Asian: Bangladeshi, and **2%** are Asian: Indian

(Census 2021)

Between April 2022 - March 2023, a total of **11,315** referrals were received by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Mental Health Support Team (MHST).

Bradford has higher rates of children and young people with characteristics that make them more likely to have poorer mental health outcomes and/or higher prevalence of mental health conditions.



# Child of the North Key Findings

Research in 2022 found that Children in the North of England are more likely to live in poverty

Research in 2022 found that, in the North, there were larger learning losses during the pandemic.

Research in 2022 found that cuts to children's services (e.g. Sure Start children's centres) have been more severe in the North

Research in 2024 showed that vulnerability multiply and highlighted the need for effective integration across public services (including health, education, and social care)

Girls of Pakistani heritage are 11 times less likely to receive autism diagnosis than White British boys

Children born into the poorest fifth of families are 13 times more likely to experience poor outcomes by 17 years.

For children with Special Educational Needs, school suspensions are 3 times higher and permanent suspensions are 5 times higher

48.5% of children on Free School Meals (FSM) are not "school ready" when they start school.

# Key Achievements



Over the past year, the number of families supported through the Early Help Assessment has tripled across the partnership

In **March 2025**, there were:  
**1119** CiN **467** CPP  
**2441** CiC **1055** families were supported through an EHA

In **November 2025**, there were:  
**1111** CiN **470** CPP  
**2842** CiC **1255** families supported through an EHA

**August 2025**  
The Prevention and Early Help System Board has agreed shared use of evidence-based tools to demonstrate the collective difference we make across the system

**2025**  
We commenced an innovation journey with Education Alliance for Life Chances which is ongoing.

**June 2025**  
We developed a more focused Family Group Conferencing service which we are now expanding.

**July 2024**  
A revised Early Help Assessment and simplified consent was launched in response to the voice of families.

**September 2024**  
We expanded our digital offer with an evidence-based support for parents to complement our face-to-face offer of evidence-based parenting programmes.

A comprehensive Prevention and Early Help Scorecard was launched in that displays how much we do, how well we do it, and the difference it makes.

**May 2024**  
Prevention and Early Help System Board was established.

Introduced new ways of working in Early Help that removed waiting lists and improved responsibility for children and families.

In **October 2024**, there were:  
**1199** CiN **479** CPP  
**2027** CiC **855** families were supported through an EHA

**February 2024**  
We reviewed and analysed the Prevention and Early Help service and how the wider system connected.

In **March 2024**, there were:  
**1346** CiN **719** CPP  
**1484** CiC **295** families were supported through an EHA (730 children)





# Our Connectivity

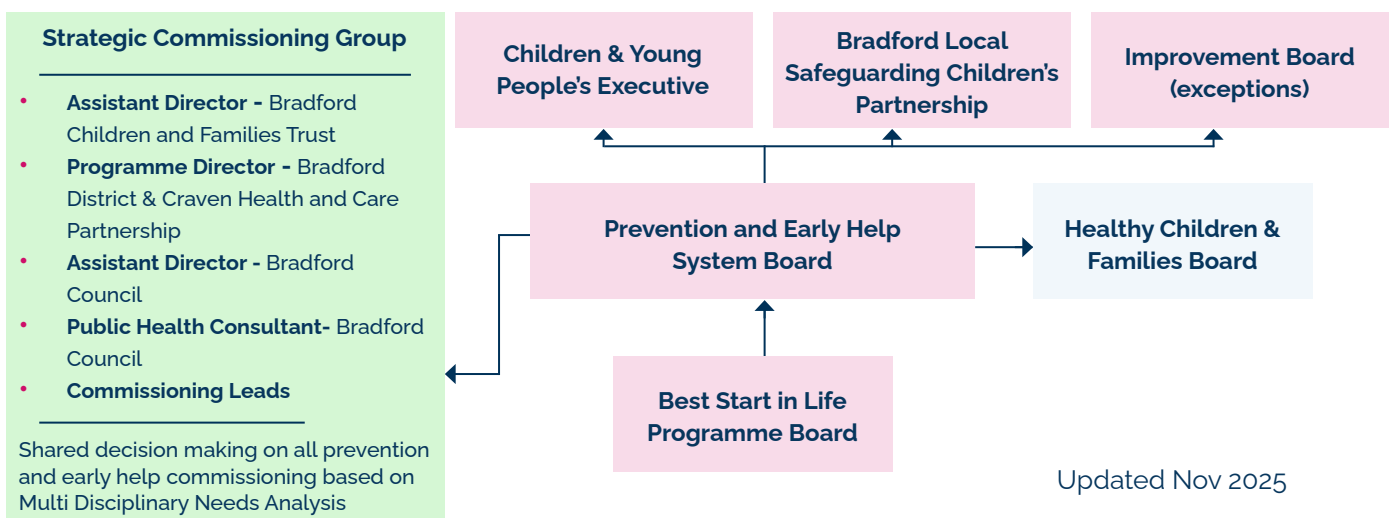
## The Prevention and Early Help system:

- Enables a safe space for collaborative approaches in the provision of prevention and early help across the region
- Promotes a collective ethos that recognises the normality of problems and difficulties that affect all families
- Helps us to create safe spaces to talk sensitively and confidently to children about their bodies, consent and relationships in an age appropriate way
- Are critical friends that support each other, work together and find solutions together
- Shares learning, good practice, and celebrate achievement
- Enables consistent pathways that reduce confusion and duplication as well as supporting integrated working
- Enables consistent approaches to commissioning across the profile of children and family help and support. This will be carried out by a sub-group to the Board that has key decision-making leads

The Prevention and Early Help System Board is the key delivery assurance vehicle for prevention and early help activity for children and families and contributes directly to the overarching Children and Young People's (CYP) Executive Strategy. The Board provides collective leadership, oversight and coordination of prevention and early help priorities for children and families across the district. It will ensure that activity aligned to the CYP Executive Strategy, monitor progress against shared outcomes, and champion innovation and collaboration in service delivery. By embedding accountability and fostering a culture of joint working, the Board will translate strategic ambitions into tangible improvements for children and families, ensuring prevention and early help remain central to achieving the district's vision for all CYP to thrive.

The Prevention and Early Help System Board will provide assurance related to the early help system to the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership, recognising that strong multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are underpinned by a mature early help system.

## Prevention and Early Help Governance

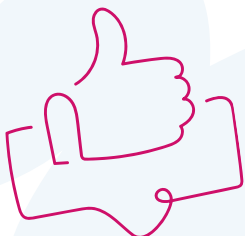


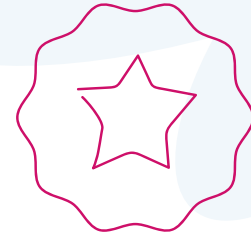
Updated Nov 2025

# Principles

We will take a whole system approach to Prevention and Early Help; this means services from Getting Advice through to targeted help, children's social care, policy, health, education, and voluntary services will work together to support children and strengthen families. By identifying needs early and providing timely, coordinated support to families, escalation will reduce and outcomes for children will improve. Family Hubs are central to this vision, acting as a single, trusted access point for universal and targeted services.

1. Enable families to access high quality proportionate universal services
2. Drive system change, to create joined up pathways, services, and commissioning that is able to identify families early and offer impactful support when problems emerge
3. Help children and families thrive, building their resilience by providing effective whole family support
4. Share information across services effectively to help children thrive
5. Take a data-driven approach using the 0-19 shared outcomes framework to understand local trends and predict emerging need effectively in Bradford to enhance early identification and respond to those needing extra help
6. Take an evidence-based approach and enable strong links between practice and the rich research available locally through Born in Bradford and more widely
7. Embed a restorative approach in our work with children and families. We will "work with" rather than doing to or for which will enable a rebalancing of power and fosters genuine collaboration, trust, and empowerment. By focusing on relationships and shared responsibility, restorative practice builds stronger, more resilient children, families, and communities where individuals feel heard, valued, and capable to make lasting change





# Our Commitments

These commitments are delivered through the priority focus areas set out in the next section, which reflect the evidence of need in Bradford and where early intervention can make the biggest difference. We are committed to:

1.

## Improving children's life chances

By working together to develop a rigorous best start in life plan so we make a difference from pregnancy and beyond

4.

## Supporting children and families through an Early Help Assessment

A shared commitment to early identification of need and when children and families need help, we will provide without delay

2.

## Helping children enjoy and achieve in education and gain skills for life

By supporting families and services to enhance children's early development opportunities, ensuring more children go to school ready to learn

5.

## Supporting families to develop healthy, positive relationships

By embedding relational approaches to all that we do across the sector

3.

## Supporting children and families to have positive involvement in their communities

Listen to our children and families and understand what help they need to get involved in their community

6.

## Improving physical and emotional health and wellbeing for children and families

By supporting parents/carers to improve their own physical and emotional health and provide parenting programmes so that they can support their children's health and socio-emotional development

# Secure Relationships

Good quality relationships not only give our lives meaning, but they are fundamental to wellbeing throughout our lives.

## Relationships within families

Couple, family, and social relationships hold the key to good parenting, educational attainment, mental and physical wellbeing and quality of life in our later years. The quality of relationships affects how much alcohol we drink, fundamental aspects of our physical health and our mental health. People who are positively connected to family, friends, colleagues, and their community are happier, physically healthier and live longer, with fewer mental and physical health problems than people who are less well connected. Our professional curiosity about the quality of family relationships is important in understanding the needs of children and families.

## Relationships across our partnership

Strong relationships across multi-agency services are essential for delivering a mature early help system that truly meets the needs of children and families. When professionals from health, education, social care, and community organisations collaborate effectively, they can share information, coordinate interventions, and respond swiftly to emerging concerns. This joined-up approach reduces duplication, builds trust with families, and ensures that support is timely, targeted, and holistic. A mature early help system thrives on mutual respect, clear communication, and shared accountability, creating a safety net that catches issues early and prevents escalation into

crisis. Without strong inter-agency relationships, the system risks fragmentation and missed opportunities to make a lasting difference.

## Relationships between practitioners

When professionals from different disciplines, such as education, health, early help, and community services work collaboratively, they create a unified support network around children and families. This collaboration fosters shared understanding, consistent messaging, and timely interventions, reducing the risk of gaps or duplication in service delivery. Practitioners who trust and respect each other are more likely to share information, challenge constructively, and coproduce solutions that reflect the complexity of family needs. A mature early help system depends not just on structures, services and processes, but on the quality of relationships between those delivering it.

## Relationships within organisations

Within large organisations that house multiple services, strong internal relationships and clearly defined pathways are critical to delivering a mature early help system. When teams operate in silos, opportunities for early intervention can be missed, and families may experience fragmented or inconsistent support. By fostering a culture of collaboration, transparency, and shared responsibility, departments can work together to identify needs early, coordinate responses, and ensure that children and families receive seamless, joined-up care.

The commitments set out above describe our shared ambition for children and families in Bradford and how we will work together as a system.

To turn these commitments into meaningful and measurable change, we have identified a focused set of priority areas where prevention and early help can have the greatest impact.

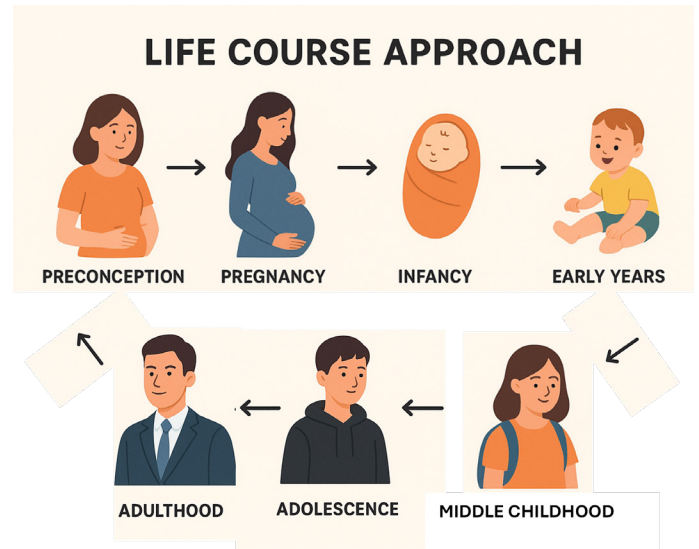
# Our Areas of Focus

We will take a life course approach to our support, working to prevent issues from developing by supporting families through pregnancy and the critical early years. Alongside this we will provide additional support to families whenever it is needed.

These Areas of Focus are grounded in the evidence of need in Bradford and reflect the points in the life course where timely support can most effectively improve outcomes, reduce inequalities and prevent issues from escalating into crisis. Together, they provide a clear line of sight between our commitments, our delivery plans, and the outcomes we want to achieve for children and families. Each focus area is informed by local data, national evidence of what works, and the voices of children and families.

## A Focus on Prevention in the Critical First 1001 Days (pregnancy to age 2)

The first 1001 days of a child's life is critical to their health and development. A child's experiences from pregnancy to age 2 will shape their physical and mental health, their educational attainment and employment opportunities for the rest of their life. "This is a priority because Bradford



has higher than average infant mortality, lower breastfeeding rates, and significant inequalities in early development." We will provide a proportionate universal offer to all families ensuring they are able to receive good quality care from universal services and additional support whenever needed.

During the perinatal period, alongside midwifery and the healthy child programme there will be support for – infant feeding, the parent infant relationship, and perinatal mental health.

## A Focus on Parent-Infant Mental Health.

The parent-infant relationship forms the foundation for early intervention and prevention, with attuned, sensitive parenting serving as the cornerstone for giving children the best possible start in life. Our earliest relationships profoundly shape our sense of who we are, our understanding of others and the world around us (Bowlby 1969). Parent-infant relationships affect neurodevelopment, and the architecture of babies' brains and foundational relationships influence how children regulate emotions as well as engage socially and emotionally. This focus responds to high prevalence of mental health need, long waiting times, and the impact of parental mental health on children's outcomes.



## A Focus on Early Child Development

In the early years, our focus will be on improving school readiness for children, guided by the UK Government's "Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life" Strategy, 2025. Our aims are to ensure families receive the universal support they are entitled to (the healthy child programme and early child education and care) and that parents are able to support their children's socio-emotional development, their language development and the home learning environment.

We will expand our existing Start for Life offer through the Best Start Family hubs, increasing the availability of access to high-quality parenting support and evidence-based programmes, and high quality funded early education and childcare, with a focus on achieving the Department for Education target of 75% of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development by 2028.

## A Focus on Play

This focus aligns with Bradford's Start for Life offer, the 50 Things To Do Before You're Five programme and wider place-based play and leisure strategies, recognising play as central to healthy development and school readiness. This focus recognises the role of play in supporting children's physical, social and emotional development, particularly for those growing up in areas of our district with limited access to safe and inclusive play spaces. Through play, children naturally build key skills such as communication, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and social interaction; all of which underpin school readiness. Play supports cognitive growth by encouraging curiosity and exploration, whilst also strengthening physical coordination and fine motor skills. Importantly, play allows children to make sense of the world around them, express themselves creatively, and develop resilience.

When adults value and facilitate play, they are not just entertaining children, they are laying



the foundation for confident, capable learners who are ready to engage with the challenges and opportunities of formal education. We will work across the system to develop safe and accessible spaces for children and families to play, and to deliver evidence-based programmes that improve children and families opportunities for play, including the "50 Things To Do Before You're Five" offer. We will also work in partnership across the system.

## A Focus on School Attendance

Tackling poor school attendance is a critical priority for ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Working in partnership allows us to work together to address the underlying causes of absence, such as family stress, mental health challenges, or housing instability, before they escalate. Applying a collaborative approach ensures that support is holistic and timely, reducing the risk of long-term disengagement and educational disadvantage. By embedding attendance within a wider early help strategy, local systems can move beyond punitive measures and instead foster trust, resilience, and sustained engagement with learning. The Early Help Assessment and Family plan is essential for families where a child has persistent and severe absence from school.

## A Focus on Mental Health

Mental and emotional wellbeing are central to helping children, young people and their families feel confident, connected and able to thrive. Wellbeing is shaped by many influences - including family stress, parental mental illness and key developmental transitions - so our support must be flexible, relational and responsive. Using the Thrive framework, we will ensure families can move seamlessly between levels of help as needs change, with consistent, trauma-informed support that strengthens relationships, keeps children engaged in education and promotes mentally healthy family environments.

Within this whole-family approach, two life stages require particular focus. In the earliest years, the parent–infant relationship is foundational, shaping brain development, emotional regulation and children's long-term mental health. We will work with partners across maternity, health and early years services to strengthen these early relationships and support parental wellbeing.

Adolescence is another critical period, with young people facing rapid change and increased pressures at home, at school and socially. We will ensure timely, coordinated support that helps adolescents stay connected to education, develop healthy coping strategies and move positively towards adulthood. Together, these commitments will promote resilience, strengthen family relationships and support positive mental health across the lifecourse.

We are committed to working together to improve access to effective mental health and emotional wellbeing support which meets the needs of local children, young people and their families. We will focus on making access to support easier; bringing support closer to home, in our schools and communities; and listening to the voices of children and young people to improve and develop services.



## A Focus on Data and Evidence

To be effective, interventions need to address the needs of the community, be acceptable to families, be deliverable within the local context and have an impact on key outcomes. We will use the Bradford 0-19 outcomes framework to take a data driven approach to identify need and to find the right evidence-based solutions for delivery. We will use the Bradford Evaluation Framework to monitor and evaluate all interventions to ensure that they:

- reach the right families
- are delivered with fidelity
- have impacts on key outcomes

Needs analyses will be updated on an annual basis, and monitoring and evaluation undertaken within commissioning timelines. These key areas of focus in the Prevention and Early Help Strategy aim to ensure that all children have the opportunity to be healthy, happy and safe and develop into thriving, successful young adults.

## A Focus on Adolescence

Adolescence is a pivotal stage of development, marked by rapid physical, emotional and social change. It is a period where young people begin to form their identity, establish independence, and navigate new pressures from peers, education and wider society. Prevention and early help during adolescence is critical to reducing vulnerability and promoting resilience. We will provide a proportionate offer to all

children moving through adolescence, ensuring access to high-quality universal services such as schools, youth provision and health services, alongside 'getting help' support when problems begin to emerge.

Our focus will be on strengthening protective factors, positive relationships, safe environments, and opportunities for achievement, whilst reducing exposure to risks such as exploitation, poor mental health, and disengagement from education. Our children will be supported to develop coping strategies, emotional regulation, and a sense of belonging, enabling them to transition successfully into adulthood.

### **A Focus on Sport and Physical Activity**

Sport and physical activity are powerful tools for prevention and early help, offering young people safe spaces to build confidence, learn teamwork, and develop healthy lifestyles. Participation in sport reduces vulnerability by fostering resilience, improving mental health, and creating positive peer networks. It provides structure, purpose and opportunities for achievement, which are particularly important during adolescence when risks of disengagement and negative influences are heightened. Our approach will emphasise the dual benefits of sport: promoting physical health and wellbeing, while also serving as a protective factor against risks such as isolation, anti-social behaviour and poor mental health. By embedding sport and physical activity into our prevention and early help strategy, we will strengthen resilience across the Bradford district and enable young people to thrive.

### **A Focus on Young Carers**

Young carers play a vital but often hidden role in supporting parents, siblings or relatives with illness, disability, or other needs. Whilst many show remarkable resilience, being a young carer can impact their education, social life, and mental health. The prevention and early help system needs to recognise young carers early,

ensuring that they are identified in schools, health services and communities, and provided with tailored support. By offering practical help, emotional support, and opportunities to participate in leisure and peer activities, we can reduce the risks of isolation, disadvantage, and enable young carers to thrive alongside their peers.

### **Our Shared Plan**

This Prevention and Early Help Strategy sets out our shared ambition to build a system that prevent issues where possible and identifies and responds to needs at the earliest opportunity, supporting children and families to thrive. However, ambition alone is not enough. The real impact will come through delivery, and an accompanying Prevention and Early Help Delivery Plan will be driven by the Prevention and Early Help System Board that has the clear actions, milestones, timelines and performance monitoring required to turn this strategy into action. The priority focus areas of the strategy provide the foundation for our Plan, and this will be overseen by the Prevention and Early Help System Board and aligned to the Bradford JSNA, the 0-19 Outcomes Framework and commissioning cycles, ensuring that activity is targeted, evidence-based and responsive to emerging need. It is through this plan and our collective commitment to implementation, that we will embed a truly shared approach to prevention and early help across Bradford District, to ensure that families receive the right help and support to thrive.





# Our Pledge

*We, the partners across Bradford District, pledge to work together to ensure that every child and family has the right support at the right time, from pregnancy through to the transition to adulthood.*

**Shared Responsibility:** We commit to collective ownership of prevention and early help, recognising that no single agency can meet the needs of children and families alone.

**Early Intervention:** We will act early to identify emerging needs, reduce risks, and strengthen protective factors, ensuring families receive support before difficulties escalate.

**Whole Family Approach:** We will work with families as partners, valuing their voice and strengths and designing support that addresses the needs of children, parents, and carers together.

**Life Course Commitment:** From pregnancy and the early years, through school age and adolescence, we will provide consistent, coordinated support that promotes wellbeing, and resilience.

**Equity & Inclusion:** We will challenge inequalities, remove barriers to access, and ensure that services are culturally competent and responsive to the diverse communities of Bradford.

**Collaboration & Integration:** We will share information appropriately, align resources, and coordinate services across early help, health, education, children's social care, voluntary and community sectors to deliver seamless support.

## *How we will know that we are making a difference:*

- Reduction in the number of children requiring a social worker
- Supporting more children to live at home with their family safely
- Increased number of families supported via the Early Help Assessment and Plan
- More children in early years education and school with good attendance
- Children are reception ready because they have a good level of development (GLD)

### **Charlotte Ramsden**

Chief Executive, Bradford Children & Families Trust

### **Richard Padwell**

Chief Superintendent, West Yorkshire Police

### **Phillipa Hubbard**

Director of Nursing & Quality, Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership

### **Rachel Egan**

Independent Scrutineer, Bradford District Childrens Safeguarding Partnership

### **Craig Blundred**

Director of Public Health, Bradford Council

### **Richard Crane**

Acting Strategic Director of Children's Services, Bradford Council

### **Sam Keighley**

Chief Executive, Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise Alliance