

# HARROW'S BEST START IN LIFE LOCAL PLAN

## APRIL 2026 – MARCH 2027

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## **HARROW BEST START IN LIFE LOCAL PLAN**

**April 2026 – March 2027**

### **Our shared vision**

Achieving the Best Start in Harrow means working as partners with families across communities and local services to improve outcomes for children from pre-birth and throughout their lives —ensuring support is accessible, inclusive and available at the earliest opportunity.

### **Our shared ambition**

In Harrow, we want every child to have the best start in life. When families need help, we will act early and make it easier to get the right support at the right time. We will work together so children can learn, develop and be cared for in safe, welcoming places. We will listen our children, parents and carers and respect and celebrate Harrow's diversity.

For children and young people, we will spot needs early, help families understand what support is available, and make sure children can take part fully in education, health and community life—so they feel valued and can grow in confidence for their future.

Our Best Start in Life programme will be linked to the work that is taking place across London through the Opportunity Mission coordinated by the Greater London Authority and London Councils. This will enable Harrow to ensure that there will be more consistency in the offer available to families and children across London.



### Our shared priorities:

- Support babies, children, parents and carers in Harrow to thrive from the very start, promoting positive attachment and relationships, healthy development, physical and emotional wellbeing from pre-birth and throughout their lives.
- Ensure Harrow families can easily access the right support, through welcoming, high-quality provision and services.
- Continue to develop our children's speech, language and communication skills, by supporting parents and carers and identifying needs early.
- Prepare Harrow children and families for a strong start to their education and learning journey.
- Promote fairness in Harrow by ensuring all children have equal opportunities to succeed in their learning.
- Improve transitions for Harrow's most vulnerable children, young people and families, ensuring joined-up support at key points of change in their lives.

### Our shared principles:

- **Early help, early action** — identifying needs and intervene early, taking a preventative approach and anticipating the issues we know children will face at different stages of their development and at the first sign of need.
- **Right support, right time** — clear pathways, early intervention and timely responses ensuring families do not face barriers to enable their child to develop and learn.
- **Inclusion and equity** — Harrow's diversity at the core; barriers removed and aspirations raised.
- **Partnership with families and the communities** — parents/carers, early years and education settings, health and community organisations collaborate together to deliver the best possible outcomes and experiences for our children and young people.
- **Driven by the voices** of parents, children, young people, professionals, communities and data to shape and guide our decisions.



**Success factors:**

- To baseline achieving a good level of development measured in Reception by the Early Years Foundation Stage profile.
- Develop improved monitoring mechanisms to demonstrate the programme is reaching the intended population and reducing unmet need.
- Develop a functioning “watch list” for children not meeting developmental milestones, including those not engaged with early years settings.
- An increase in engagement rates for families previously not accessing settings, through targeted outreach approaches.
- Completion of a test-and-scale phase of a new or enhanced parenting / intervention programme, with learning captured to inform longer term rollout decisions.
- Improved parental satisfaction with network of support programmes and services being delivered through services.



## BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT

### Harrow Good Level of Development: Performance and Targets

In 2024/25, 71.1% of children in Harrow achieved a GLD by the end of reception. The reset target by Government for Harrow is now 78.8% by 2028. **Based on the current cohort size, an additional 236 children would need to achieve GLD to meet this target.**

Outcomes for children eligible for free school meals remain a key area of challenge. In 2024/25, 48.7% of children eligible for free school meals achieved a GLD, compared with a target of 60% by 2028. **This equates to an additional 30 children needing to reach GLD to meet the target.**

Trend data indicates gradual improvement over time, but also highlights the scale of sustained improvement required, particularly for disadvantaged or harder to reach groups. These findings reinforce the importance of targeted early intervention and inclusive service design.

### Harrow's Key statistics for our young children:

- **Steady GLD Improvement:** Harrow's GLD rates have risen steadily to 71.1% in 2024/25, outperforming the national average of 68.3% and aligning with London at 70.7%.
- **Persistent Gender Gap:** Girls consistently outperform boys by approximately 10–13 percentage points in achieving GLD, a gap that remains large but narrower than national and London levels.
- **Significant FSM Disparities:** Children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) show substantially lower GLD rates, with a widening gap reaching -25.5% in 2024/25, marking FSM status as a strong predictor of lower attainment.
- **Deprivation Impact:** Income deprivation, measured by IDACI deciles, strongly predicts EYFSP outcomes, with children in more deprived areas showing lower GLD, underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

- **Language and Ethnicity Effects:** Children with English as a first language achieve higher GLD rates, though the gap with English as an Additional Language (EAL) is closing. Ethnic group outcomes vary widely, with some groups like Indian and Chinese performing above average and others such as Arab and Pashto/Pakhto below.
- **Birth Term and Mobility:** Autumn-born children outperform those born in spring and summer by 10–14 percentage points. Late school starters, comprising 6–7% of pupils, have significantly lower readiness and GLD outcomes.
- **Special Educational Needs (SEN):** SEN status is a strong predictor of lower outcomes, with children receiving SEN support or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) achieving markedly lower GLD percentages compared to peers without SEN.
- **Ward and School Variations:** Certain wards such as Greenhill and Harrow Weald show underperformance relative to national GLD averages, and several schools have consistently fallen below national GLD thresholds, particularly in Communication, Language, Literacy, and Mathematics.
- **Early Education Uptake:** Uptake of funded early education for 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds in Harrow is lower than London and national averages, suggesting that increasing participation could enhance school readiness.

### Outcomes for Children and Families

Developmental outcomes at the 2 to 2.5 year health review are strong. A high proportion of children are meeting or exceeding expected developmental milestones across all five ASQ-3 domains, with performance above national averages. This suggests a strong foundation in early development prior to entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Data on early childhood education and care (ECEC) entitlement uptake and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) provides additional context on access, inclusion, and emerging need. Speech, language and communication needs are the most common primary need among children with identified SEND, with implications for early identification and workforce capacity.

Health outcome data shows mixed performance. Healthy weight prevalence among children aged 4–5 is above the national average.



However, vaccination uptake at ages 2 and 5 is below national benchmarks, and rates of dental decay and dental admissions remain significantly higher than average. These indicators point to ongoing inequalities and the need for targeted public health and prevention approaches.

### **Population Characteristics and Need**

Harrow has a large and diverse population of children and young people, with over 19,000 children aged 0–5 and more than 64,000 aged 0–19. Population density varies across the borough, with clear geographic concentrations that are relevant for service planning.

Measures of deprivation highlight significant inequality. While Harrow is ranked around the national midpoint on the Index of Multiple Deprivation overall, child poverty indicators place the borough among the most deprived local authorities nationally. A proportion of children are eligible for free school meals, and homelessness data indicates pressure on families with dependent children.

SEND prevalence is notable, particularly for speech, language and communication needs, reinforcing the importance of early identification and integrated support.

Demographic data illustrates Harrow’s ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Nearly one third of residents speak a main language other than English at home. This has important implications for service accessibility, communication, and culturally responsive delivery.

### **Local Assets and Infrastructure**

Harrow currently has three Family Hubs and several satellite provisions, providing a core platform for integrated, community-based support. Mapping of these assets against deprivation data highlights opportunities to strengthen reach and targeting, particularly in areas of highest need. Understanding how these assets are used, accessed, and experienced by families is critical to maximising their strategic impact.



### **Harrow's Family Hub's Network and Provision**

The Harrow Best Start Family Hub Network sets out a borough-wide, integrated model to deliver joined-up support for families from pregnancy to age 19 (25 for SEND), with a strong Start for Life focus on 0–2s. The hubs act as a single, accessible front door, coordinating health, education, early help, SEND, youth, and voluntary sector services so families receive timely, preventative support and do not fall through gaps.

The model aligns with national Best Start Family Hub criteria and local priorities, embedding early intervention, whole-family working, outreach, and inclusion across all sites.

### **Network Model and Geography**

Harrow operates a networked hub-and-spoke model rather than stand-alone centres:

- Three main Family Hubs
  - East: Kenmore Park (**LEAD BEST START FAMILY HUB**)
  - West: Cedars
  - Central: Hillview
- Satellite and outreach sites aligned to each hub to maximise reach in communities with the highest need.
- Targeting is driven by LSOA deprivation data, combined with local intelligence, education data, and parental feedback, with action plans linked to the most deprived areas.

This structure supports place-based delivery while maintaining consistent standards and oversight across the borough.



### **Core Offer and Service Scope**

Across the network, hubs deliver a comprehensive universal and targeted offer, aligned to the Public Health Family Hub Service Specification, including:

- Start for Life (0–2s): antenatal and postnatal support, infant feeding, early language, perinatal mental health, and parent-infant relationships.
- Early Years & School Readiness (0–5): development-focused learning groups, health checks, SEND identification, parenting and home learning support.
- Whole-Family Support (0–19/25 SEND): parenting programmes, emotional wellbeing, domestic abuse recovery, housing and financial advice, and relationship support.
- SEND: early identification, sensory and communication support, SLT/Ed Psych input, and inclusive access to all services.
- Youth Services: targeted youth programmes, wellbeing, engagement, and transition support.
- Outreach: delivery in parks, leisure centres, community venues, supermarkets and satellite sites to reach families less likely to attend hubs.

### **Operating and Staffing Model**

Staffing is deployed across the network supporting consistency, resilience, and scalability but requires ongoing review to ensure capacity matches demand and a comprehensive training is in place to ensure continuous learning and development of experience, skills and knowledge.

### **Compliance with Government Best Start Family Hub Criteria**

The network broadly meets national Best Start Family Hub requirements, including:

- Physical, welcoming hub sites
- Integrated health, education, and social care access



- SEND-trained professionals
- Evidence-based parenting and home learning programmes
- Outreach linked to hub sites
- Parent and VCFS involvement
- Consistent Best Start branding and identity

### **Financial Context**

- The service is operating within a challenging financial environment.
- Additional investment decisions will be required to sustain SEND, youth, outreach, and transformation priorities.

To achieve these priorities, the Local Plan includes six workstrands:

Ref	Action	Deadline	KPI / Success Measures	Service Lead / SRO	Lead Sub-Group
<b>Workstrand 1: Clear vision based on family centred approaches and outcomes</b> <b>Purpose: Provide strategic direction and system alignment around what matters most for children and families</b>					
1	Develop Best Start in Life Strategy outlining a longer term collective vision and understanding of the local system, identifying the priorities that will make the biggest difference to outcomes that matter most to our workforce, families and communities.  Align with key strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childrens Services Improvement Plan</li> <li>• SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy</li> <li>• Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy</li> <li>• Local NHS Plan</li> </ul>	Spring 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-produced Strategy completed and approved by governance structure by target date</li> <li>• Alignment completed with existing strategies (Children's Services Improvement Plan, SEND &amp; AP, Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy, NHS plans)</li> <li>• Stakeholders report clear understanding of the shared vision</li> </ul>	Director for Education	BSiL Working Group

2	Develop a multi-partnership governance strategy that brings together health, children and family services, nurseries, childminders, schools, community organisations, businesses (and more) representatives to connect across traditional boundaries	Spring 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance structure designed and approved by all partners</li> <li>• Frequency of governance meetings established and maintained</li> <li>• Partner satisfaction score with new governance arrangements</li> <li>• Decisions/actions implemented in a timely manner</li> </ul>	Director of Education	BSiL Working Group
<b>Workstrand 2: Integrated working and data sharing, including strengthened partnership with the voluntary sector</b> <b>Purpose: Strengthen evidence-led decision making and shared accountability across the system</b>					
3	Develop high level system data dashboard that brings together key outcomes and performance data to support the Best Start in Life Working Group to track delivery and outcomes	Summer 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dashboard completed and implemented by target date</li> <li>• Number of data sources integrated into dashboard</li> <li>• Monthly usage rate by partners</li> <li>• KPIs updated on schedule</li> </ul>	Childrens Reforms Programme Manager	Data and systems sub-group

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner feedback score on usefulness and accessibility</li> </ul>		
4	Data mapping and gap analysis - review available data sources available, identify and bridge gaps to support development a needs assessment, data dashboard and strategy	Spring 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data review completed by target date</li> <li>Number of data gaps identified and addressed</li> <li>Completion of needs assessment to inform strategy development</li> <li>Priority data sets incorporated into ongoing performance reporting</li> <li>Reduction in duplicated data collection activities</li> </ul>	Childrens Reforms Programme Manager	Data and systems sub-group
<p><b>Workstrand 3: Parental readiness, resilience and ability to support an effective home learning environment and evidence based interventions</b></p> <p><b>Purpose: Improve outcomes by strengthening parenting capacity and targeting support where it is most needed</b></p>					
5	Strengthen Harrow’s parenting programme offer for families making best use of local assets and expertise and to support with meeting reset GLD target	Summer 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in families accessing parenting support</li> </ul>	Early Help and Early Years service leads	Process mapping sub-group

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved parent satisfaction with programme quality</li> <li>• Improvement in targeted behavioural or developmental indicators</li> <li>• Contribution to GLD reset target</li> </ul>		
6	Cohort and place-based targeting - Identifying specific cohorts of children, with a focus on those most vulnerable, children facing disadvantage, and/or hard to reach, mapping geographic areas of deprivation and those with lower Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes, and reviewing the support packages across the partnership.	Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohorts identified and mapped by target date</li> <li>• Number of outreach activities delivered in priority areas</li> <li>• Increase in engagement from vulnerable or hard-to-reach cohorts</li> <li>• Improvement in GLD in targeted areas</li> </ul>	Early Years Service Lead	Process mapping sub-group
7	Accessible resource portal - Develop and publish easily accessible, up to date resource portal available to all families, professionals and organisations	Autumn 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portal launched and live by target date</li> <li>• Number of resources uploaded and maintained</li> <li>• Increase in 'site hits'</li> </ul>	Childrens Reforms Programme Manager	Data and systems / communications sub-groups

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of users reporting improved access to information</li> <li>• Portal updated quarterly</li> </ul>		
<b>Workstrand 4: Sufficient high-quality early years care offer and education, accessible to all</b> <b>Purpose: Ensure access, quality and equity in early years provision</b>					
8	Identify inequalities some babies, children and families face in terms of income, housing and health outcomes and access to support	Summer 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of inequalities report by target date</li> <li>• Number of inequality factors identified</li> <li>• Number of actions generated across partners to address inequalities</li> <li>• Reduction in gap between most and least advantaged children</li> <li>• Increase in families receiving earlier or more effective support</li> </ul>	Early Help and Early Years Service Leads	Data and systems sub-group
<b>Workstrand 5: Highly experienced, multi skilled workforce</b> <b>Purpose: Build a confident, learning workforce able to deliver evidence-based, inclusive practice</b>					

9	Learning culture and continuous improvement cycle - create a learning culture that brings together evidence on 'what works' alongside the experiences of children and families, and the knowledge of people working with them, to adapt and improve .	Winter 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target met in number of learning sessions delivered per quarter</li> <li>• Increased workforce participation across services</li> <li>• Staff reporting increased confidence and additional learning / skills</li> <li>• Timely completion of improvement actions implemented per cycle</li> <li>• Evidence of practice changes informed by family voice and data</li> </ul>	Childrens Reforms Programme Manager	Workforce Development sub-group
10	Work with local Stronger Practice Hub to shared evidence-based, best practice to support with continued learning and development of staff	Summer / Autumn 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practice resources shared with Harrow workforce</li> <li>• Number of cross-organisational learning collaborations</li> <li>• Reduction in practice variability across settings</li> <li>• Increased number of staff accredited or trained in evidence-based approaches</li> </ul>	Early Years Service Lead	Workforce Development sub-group

<b>Workstrand 6: Communication and engagement</b> <b>Purpose: Increase awareness, transparency and coproduction with families, communities, faith groups and professionals</b>					
11	Develop communications and engagement plan to support the BSiL plan and enhance service visibility and awareness with a strong focus on assertive outreach	Spring 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications plan completed and launched by target date</li> <li>• Timely communication outputs delivered via portal</li> <li>• Increased awareness of BSiL among families and professionals</li> <li>• Number of assertive outreach engagements completed</li> </ul>	Childrens Reforms Programme Manager	Communications sub-group
12	Establish a range of engagement channels for all stakeholders to access to keep informed on services and feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous service and support improvement cycle, eg:  Dedicated staff intranet page	Summer 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff intranet page launched and updated monthly</li> <li>• Series of family engagement sessions delivered in community spaces</li> <li>• Series of strategy workshops delivered with good level of attendance</li> </ul>	Childrens Reforms Programme Manager	Communications sub-group

	<p>Create dedicated BSIL newsletter or feed into current newsletters in place ie GOLD Bulletin, EY Newsletter</p> <p>Direct sessions with families to enable parents to shape current services and contribute to delivery to be held in community spaces</p> <p>Strategy development workshops with professionals and communities</p> <p>Creation of a digital bulletin board for public feedback</p> <p>Gather feedback via established networks including local Parent/Carer Forum</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum and community feedback themes collected, analysed, and actioned</li> </ul>		
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