

# SHEFFIELD EARLY YEARS SCHOOL READINESS REVIEW

Page 107

## Summary and recommendations

# 2022

Sheffield City Council

Sheffield  
City Council



# What is School Readiness?



In Sheffield, we believe all children should have a happy, safe and healthy early childhood which prepares them for achieving their potential in education and beyond. We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates, and our approaches need to take account of this.

Sheffield adopts UNICEF's and South Yorkshire Futures' definitions of school readiness.

UNICEF's description of the three aspects of school readiness:

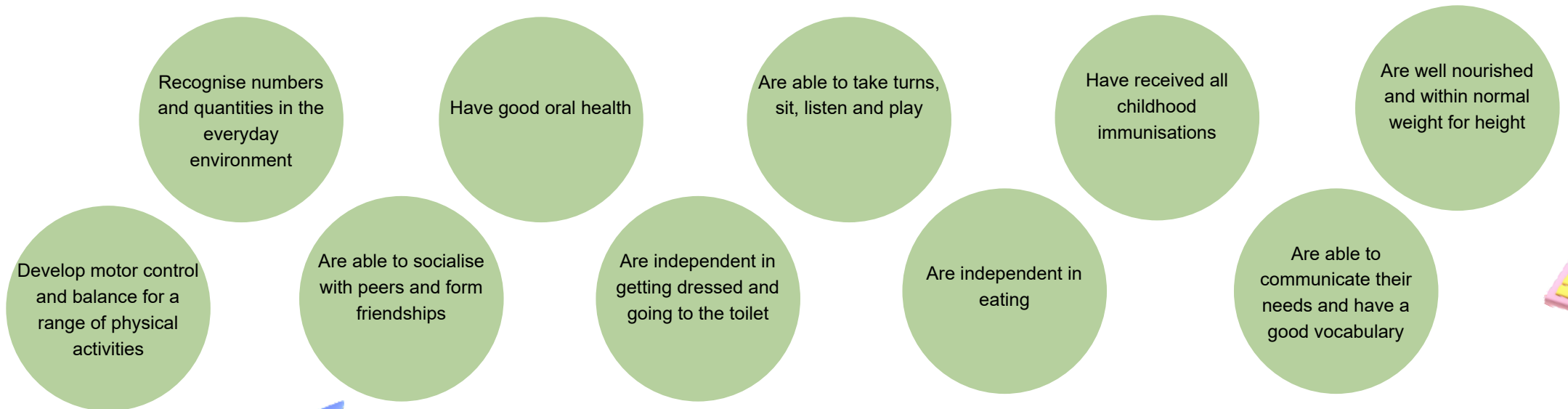
- Ready Children - focusing on Children's learning and development
- Families and communities' readiness for school - focusing on parents' and carers' attitudes and involvement in early learning and development and transition to school
- Ready schools - focusing on the school environment and practices that encourage and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children.

South Yorkshire Futures describes school ready children as

To be school ready, children need a nurturing and safe environment that enables them to be healthy, independent, emotionally secure and able to separate from their parent/carer, socially competent and able to learn. To achieve this, we need:

- Ready Children
- Ready Families
- Ready Schools

## What School-Ready Children Look Like



Unicef School Readiness; a conceptual framework Apr 2012

Milestones of normal child development aged about four years (based on the work of Mary Sheridan, From Birth to Five Years)

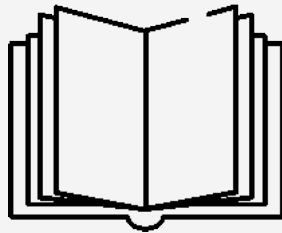
# The Importance of School Readiness

School readiness starts at birth with the support of parents and caregivers, when young children acquire the social and emotional skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and life. School readiness at age five has a strong impact on future educational attainment and life chances.

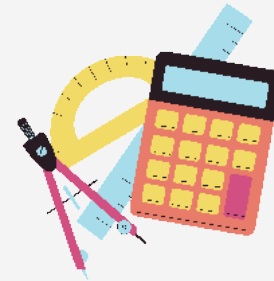
Children who do not achieve a good level of development by age 5 are more likely to struggle with:



Social Skills



Reading



Maths



Physical Skills

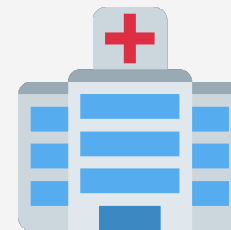
which impacts on outcomes in childhood and later life such as:



Educational Outcomes



Crime



Health

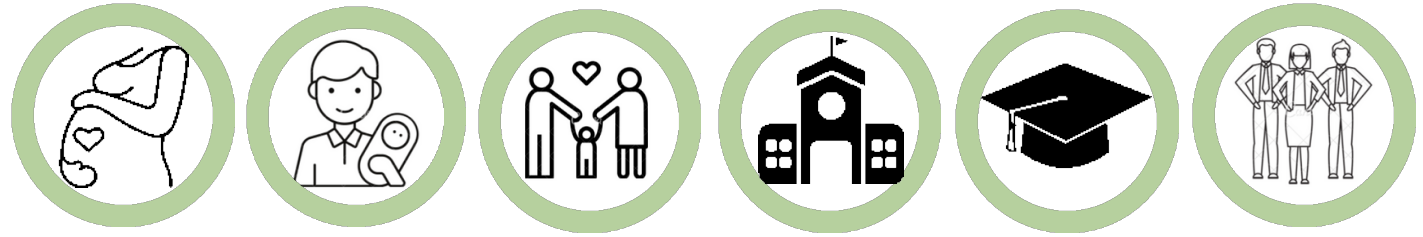


Life Expectancy



# Review Aims

Page 110



## Early Years School Readiness Review

We aimed to:

- Clarify the required outcomes to improve school readiness in the city.
- Agree what needs to change in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city.
- Develop and describe transformational, innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city.
- Identify short and long-term benefits of achieving our identified outcomes.
- Identify the infrastructure requirements for change in terms of systems and support.
- Develop outcome measures and monitoring requirements.
- Ensure that developments are aligned with the direction and ambitions of the current Early Help Review.

# Key Sheffield Strategies and Plans.

The activities and recommendations within this paper will contribute to the ambitions and Priorities related to Good Physical and Mental Health, Education and Economic Wellbeing within the Corporate Plan, the Inclusion Strategy, the Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Sheffield's Great Start in Life Strategy. Specifically :

## Corporate Plan

- *Communities and Neighbourhoods: focusing on our ambition for all communities to love and be proud of where they live, to have great facilities, to feel safe, live without discrimination and be healthier and happier*
- *Education, Health, and Care: our ambition is for every person in Sheffield to be able to achieve their full potential. We want to address educational inequalities and support people to stay fit and healthy, so fewer people reach crisis point and families can thrive*
- *Our Council: we want to lead boldly with purpose and decisiveness, putting the communities and people of Sheffield at the heart of everything and working hard to deliver excellence always*

## Inclusion strategy

Commitment 1 - Effective early identification of needs with appropriate assessments across Education, Health, and Care.

Commitment 2 - A wide range of Education, Health and Care services that meets the needs of our young people.

Commitment 3 - Smooth transition across Education, Health, and Care at every stage of a young person's life and particularly to adult life.

Commitment 4 - Excellent communication and engagement between young people, families, Education, Health, and Care services including schools.

## Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019 – 2024) Starting Well

- *Every child achieves a level of development in their early years for the best start in life.*
- *Every child is included in their education and can access their local school.*
- *Every child and young person has a successful transition to adulthood.*

## Great Start in Life Strategy

Outcome 1 : *Babies and young children are safe and have good health.*

Outcome 2 : *Parents are resilient and any mental health issues are addressed at the earliest opportunity.*

Outcome 3 : *Brain development in the early years is optimised by secure attachment and quality relationships.*

Outcome 4: *Children are ready for school and life.*



# Consultation.



- Focus Groups have taken place with Sheffield's Early Years Practitioners including Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses, Early Years providers, SCC Early Years Teams, Early Help and Children's Social Care staff, and parenting group leaders.
- Surveys were undertaken for parents and professionals using online platforms and through face to face activity in Family Centres.
- Parent's focus groups were held within Family Centres, in parenting groups and also via sessions hosted by Parent Carer Forum.



# School Readiness in Sheffield



To date we have...

- Defined the current situation in Sheffield and described the barriers to good readiness for life and learning, through consultation and research.
- Clarified current projects and improvement activity in the city.
- Defined the benefits of change and improvement in integrated activity.
- Agreed what needs to change or improve in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city through conversations in the Multi-Agency Workstreams and based on the findings of the consultation.
- Developed action plans and activity for each workstream to identify and action innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city.
- Completed a significant number of actions from the plan which we will see beginning to have impact in the coming months.



# Vulnerability



Some Sheffield families face vulnerabilities relating to issues such as ACEs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), complex health, poverty, poor housing and parental substance misuse.

Page 114



Disadvantaged children arrive at school months behind their non-disadvantaged peers and this gap widens with secondary school leavers 2 years behind.



A stark social mobility postcode lottery exists within Britain, where successful life chances for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are dependent on where you live.



# Indicators of School Readiness in Sheffield

Eligible pupils in primary schools claiming FSM



21.60

%



30

%  
Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)



26.62

%

Under 18 conceptions per 1,000 females (2020)



13



14.8



16.5

PHE Fingertips

3- & 4-year-olds benefitting from funded early education (2021)



88

%



91

%  
Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)



91.20

%

Page 115

Low birth weight of term babies (2020)



2.86

%



3.31

%  
PHE Fingertips



3.01

%

Children under 16 living in relative poverty (2019/20)



19.1

%



25.4

%  
PHE Fingertips



25.1

%

Smoking status at the time of delivery (2020/21)



9.6

%



9.8

%  
PHE Fingertips



13.1

%



# Indicators of School Readiness in Sheffield

Prevalence of Breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks (2020)



48 %



52.30 %



48.55 %

Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)

Children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Foundation Stage Profile (2019)



71.8 %



70 %



70 %

Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)

5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay



23.4 %



41 %



28.7 %

PHE Fingertips

Page 116

Premature births (less than 37 weeks gestation - 2018/20)

Crude rate per 1,000



79.1



75.4



79.9

PHE Fingertips

Children in reception year who are overweight or obese (2020)



22.96 %



24.3 %



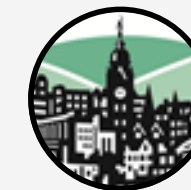
24.05 %

Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)

MMR for 1 dose at 2 years (2020/21)



90.3 %



93 %



92.3 %

PHE Fingertips



# South Yorkshire Futures



To be school ready children need a nurturing and safe environment that enables them to be healthy, independent, emotionally secure and able to separate from their parent / carer, socially competent and able to learn. To achieve this we need:

## **Ready Children** **Ready Families** **Ready Schools**

Together, these pillars maximise each child's likelihood of success as they progress through their time in school. Where these elements are not fully developed or do not work together they can become barriers.

Further information can be found at [School Readiness \(windows.net\)](https://www.schoolreadinesswindows.net)



# Key Findings: Professionals views on areas for development activity



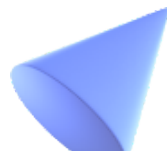
- Communication and collaboration at key points of transition and assessment can be much improved.
- SEND related issues have formed most of the concerns raised and areas for development.
- Speech Language and Communication needs to be recognised as an indicator and a focus for early activity.
- There is variation amongst professional's understanding of their own contribution to school readiness.
- A need to raise awareness in the city of the social and economic impact of inequality in terms of the child's whole life course, particularly in terms of vulnerable and seldom heard groups and the impact we can have by reducing inequalities across the Early Years and Early Help system.



## Key Findings: Professionals views continued..



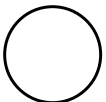
- There is good quality activity in the city, but we meet to be more connected in terms of making the most of resources to avoid overlap and support more families.
- Information sharing is a concern for many and is impacting negatively on good quality communication. This is an issue which contributors feel could be resolved.
- Across the system, we need to consider activity and input far much earlier in the child's journey and use key early contact points to the best advantage.



# Key Findings: Parental views on areas for development



- Parents tell us that they have difficulty getting professionals to listen to their concerns about their very young children and getting referral and diagnosis is a battle.
- We have heard from parents that children are being refused nursery places because of their Special Educational Needs: that settings feel unable to accommodate their child's needs.
- We have low take up of Disability Access Fund (DAF) funding and need to explore if this is related only to take up or if SEND Children are not accessing places
- Pathways to support remain unclear to both providers and parents.
- Parents tell us that the offer for non – breastfeeding mums is limited within our Family Hubs.
- There are limited opportunities for parents in coproduction to address a broad range of issues to which parents would bring subject expertise.



# What Works to Improve School Readiness

- Good maternal mental health.
- Learning activities, including speaking to your baby and reading with your child.
- Enhancing physical activity.
- Parenting support programmes.
- High-quality early education.

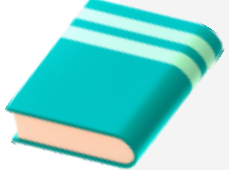
Page 121



# What's going well? Activity is underway to Support Good School Readiness in Sheffield

## Good School Readiness in Sheffield

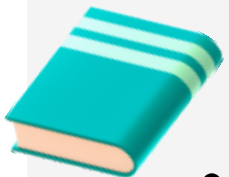
- Perinatal mental Health pathway development
- SENCO training
- Speech and Language Review / DLD review
- Save the Children Locality B work to support the Home Learning Environment project
- Successful DFE Family Hub bid resulting in 2 research projects.
- South Yorkshire Futures Partnership
- Family Centres “Start for Life”
- School Readiness Pathways
- MAST School Readiness Project
- Training for school and providers for brain architecture and trauma informed practice
- Review of Early Years SEND Funding
- A clear focus on transitions, highlighted more so by the recent Accelerated Progress Plan





# System, infrastructure and investment recommendations

- Development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years.
- Increased investment in Portage workers.
- Increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support.
- Early Years SEND Support integration into the wider Early Years System.
- Further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the developing Family Hubs.




# Development activity to support system level challenges.

- A new Early Years Strategy for 2023
- Family Hubs parent involvement in governance
- Partnership working within localities supported by the development of Local Area Committees
- Early Help Partnership Training Offer development.
- Information Sharing Agreements
- School Readiness predictive tool.
- Development of a social prescribing model for Early Years families and maternity
- Early Years element of an All-Phase Education Strategy to be consulted on this September.


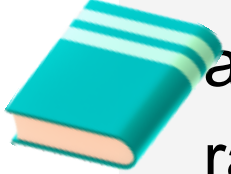

Page 124



# Local and national factors requiring Sheffield leadership voice and influence



Retention and recruitment of Early Years settings staff

- The national issue of setting closures and viability
  - 2-year-old Funded Early Learning criteria is excluding children who would benefit, and yet take up is low in the city
  - Toddler groups and support groups in the city are slow to recover and need support to do so.
  - Focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from BAME communities and the links to High Exclusion rates.
  - Support to improve educational outcomes for Roma children should build the good practice in place.
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# Sheffield's Early Years School Readiness Ambitions – How Will We Know If We Have Been Successful?



## Short Term

- Increased referrals to Early Help and Family Hub activity
- Increased referrals into Early Years Parenting support
- Increases in children in receipt of 2 year old integrated reviews and clear supportive outcomes

Page 126

## Longer Term

- To see positive movement in terms of Narrowing the Gap between Free School Meals (FSM) and non FSM outcomes
- Positive Feedback from Parents, Early Years Providers and Schools regarding their experiences on transition and with preparedness for learning
- Healthy weight at 5
- Improved oral health in the Early Years
- Increases in vaccination and immunisation take up
- Reduced referrals to Speech and Language Therapy
- We will see more children arriving at school with their needs identified and plans in place to support them to learn from their very first days
- Rebalancing and reduction of the proportion of children from BAME communities excluded from school.

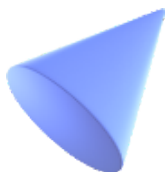


The Education, Children and Families Committee are asked to:



Page 127

- Endorse the recommendations within the report.
- Consider the findings of the report and the importance of Early Years in the long-term life chances of Sheffield Citizens within the wider context of planning and commissioning for Education Children and Families.





Marie.Mcgreavy@sheffield.gov.uk

