

HALTON BEST START IN LIFE STRATEGY (2025-2030)

**Giving every child in
Halton the best start in life**

Halton Borough Council

Produced April 2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** [Foreword](#)
- 3** [Wider context](#)
- 4** [Local needs analysis](#)
- 6** [Cradle to Career](#)
- 7** [Libraries](#)
- 8** [Strategic pillars and priorities](#)
- 9** [Approach to priority cohorts](#)
- 10** [How we will deliver](#)
- 11** [Pillar 1: Better Support for Families](#)
- 13** [Pillar 2: More Accessible Early Education and Childcare](#)
- 14** [Pillar 3: Improving Quality in Early Years including Reception](#)
- 15** [Governance and leadership](#)
- 16** [Outcomes framework](#)
- 17** [Delivering the Best Start in Life: Our Next Steps](#)



FOREWORD

The earliest years of a child's life – from pregnancy to age five – shape their future health, learning, and wellbeing more profoundly than any other stage. During this period, children's brains develop at an extraordinary pace, forming the foundations for relationships, curiosity, resilience, and lifelong opportunity.

When families experience stable relationships, accessible support, and safe, nurturing environments, children thrive. When support is harder to reach or challenges go unrecognised, the impact can last well beyond the early years.

That is why giving every child the best start in life is central both to the Government's Opportunity Mission ^[1] and to our shared vision in Halton.

Nationally, the ambition is clear: to increase the proportion of children starting school ready to learn, reaching 75% school readiness by 2028.^[2] Locally, this aligns strongly with our commitment to ensure every child enters school healthy, confident, curious, and ready to learn – and that families feel supported every step of the way.

Here in Halton, we are proud of our strong and trusting partnerships across health, early education, family services, voluntary and community organisations, and our local communities. We will build on this strength by deepening our shared language, shared responsibility, and shared leadership.

Our approach is guided by three principles that sit at the heart of all early years work in Halton:

- **Access** to support that is easy to find and simple to navigate.
- **Connection** so families experience a joined-up system that works together around their needs
- **Relationships**, because warm, consistent, respectful interactions create the conditions for children and families to flourish.



This local plan sets out how we will work as one system to improve early outcomes, reduce inequalities, and strengthen family resilience. It reflects the experiences, insights, and aspirations of families and practitioners across Halton, who shaped this vision through honest conversation and shared learning. Their voices have ensured this plan is grounded in real journeys, real strengths, and real needs.

Together, we will ensure every family knows where to turn, every professional understands the full offer, and every child experiences a connected system designed around their needs.

By working as a unified partnership, we will create an early years system that gives every child – especially those facing disadvantage or additional needs – the strongest possible start. This plan marks our collective promise to Halton's children: to champion their potential, nurture their development, and build the foundations for brighter futures.



[1] [Break Down Barriers to Opportunity](#) – GOV.UK
[2] [Giving every child the best start in life](#) – GOV.UK

FOREWORD

VISION:

Halton's vision is to give every child the best start in life by building a fully connected early years system where families experience seamless support from pregnancy to school, delivered through strong relationships, easy access, and joined-up pathways.

In line with the Government's ambition to increase school readiness^[3] to 70.2% by 2028, we will work as one partnership to reduce inequalities, strengthen family resilience, and ensure children grow up safe, nurtured, confident, and ready to learn.

Together, we will ensure every family knows where to turn, every professional understands the full offer, and every child experiences a system designed around their needs.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

The following needs analysis (Appendix A) sets out in detail the local picture for Halton's children aged 0–5, highlighting the inequalities, developmental gaps and system pressures that shape our priorities and actions.

Early childhood lays the foundations for lifelong health, learning, and wellbeing. In Halton, the current Good Level of Development (GLD) is 62.2%, compared with the national ambition of 75% by 2028.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face the greatest barriers to achieving a strong start.

Improving early outcomes now will help reduce inequalities, strengthen family and community resilience, and support children to achieve their potential throughout school and life.



OUR LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

The Childcare Act^[4] sets out the legal duties for local authorities across three key areas:

- **Early years outcomes duties:** requiring the provision of early years services and joint working between agencies to reduce inequalities, improve outcomes, and narrow gaps in development.
- **Sufficiency duties:** requiring the local authority to secure enough early education and childcare places for children aged 0–14 (or 0–18 for children with disabilities), including funded early education for two-, three-, and four-year-olds, and to support parents to work or take part in training.
- **Information duties:** requiring the local authority to ensure families and providers have clear, accessible information to meet these childcare duties.



^[3] School readiness – Best Start in Life

^[4] Childcare Act 2006

BEST START IN LIFE STRATEGY - PART OF THE WIDER HALTON CONTEXT

This strategy draws on our other corporate plans and strategies, including:

- [Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029](#)
- [Our Halton Children and Young People’s Partnership Plan 2024-2027](#)
- [The Perinatal Mental Health and Parent–Infant Relationship Strategy](#)
- [Developing Father Inclusive Practice Strategy](#)
- [Halton Starting Well Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#)
- [Halton JSNA Special Education Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Profile 2024](#)

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION

Our understanding of local need – drawn from data, lived experience, and professional insight [5] – sits at the heart of our shared purpose. Families, practitioners, and community partners have all shaped the priorities and outcomes within this plan.

Partners took part in workshops, reflective sessions, and open conversations to explore:

- What families experience when navigating services
- Where the system creates friction or confusion
- What helps, what gets in the way, and what needs to change
- How professionals can better align pathways around family journeys

These discussions involved honest, sometimes challenging conversations about duplication, gaps, and how well services join up in practice. The insights gathered directly informed the priorities, outcomes, and actions set out in this Local Plan.

The strategy runs from 2025 to 2030, with a midpoint review in 2027 and a refresh in 2028 to ensure continued relevance and impact.

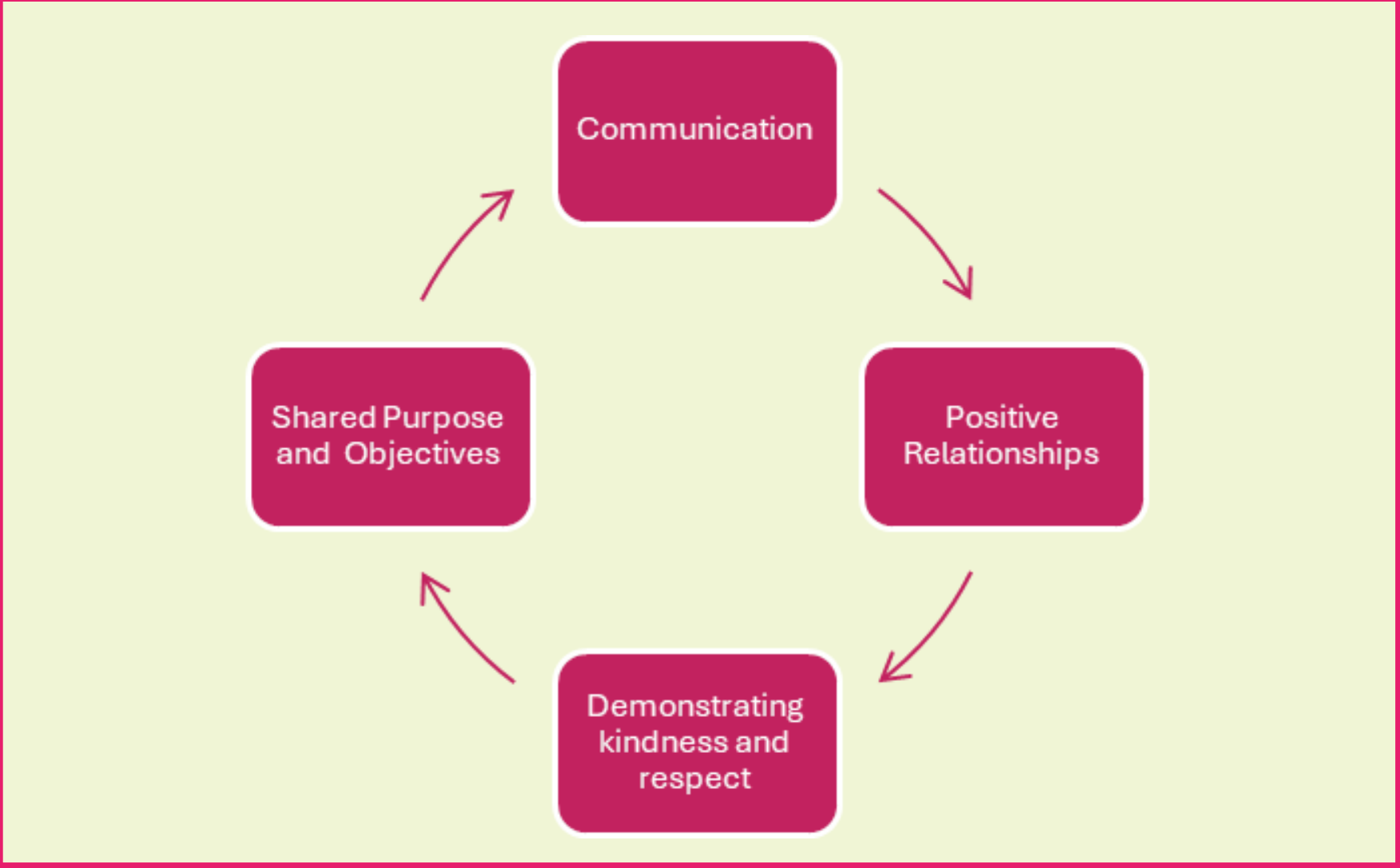
[5] <https://www.haltonfamilyhubs.co.uk/evaluation-and-impact>

BEST START FAMILY SERVICE – STRATEGIC SUMMARY FROM STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

These partnership principles were co-produced by Halton’s multi-agency early years system during a stakeholder workshop that brought together partners and practitioners from across health, education, family services, and the voluntary and community sector. Through shared reflection, dialogue, and collaborative mapping, participants identified the behaviours and conditions that enable effective partnership working.

The resulting four partnership principles – Communication, Positive Relationships, Shared Purpose and Objectives, and Kindness and Respect – represent a collective agreement on how we will work together to deliver our early years priorities.

They provide a clear, shared framework for collaboration, shaping every stage of the strategy from design to implementation. These principles ensure that our system acts as one, with consistent ways of working that strengthen coordination, build trust, and support seamless experiences for families.



HALTON: A LOCAL NEEDS ANALYSIS

Since 2022, Halton has used Government investment to transition from children’s centres to a modernised Family Hub model, establishing six Best Start Family Hubs supported by three outreach sites across the borough.

These hubs form the core of Halton’s Best Start network and represent our commitment to creating accessible, welcoming, non-stigmatising spaces where families can easily find support from pregnancy through early childhood.

As national policy moves towards the rebranding of Family Hubs to *Best Start Family Hubs* from April 2026, Halton is well-positioned, with a strong, established offer already in place.

Our Best Start Family Hubs provide a comprehensive universal and targeted service offer [6], delivered by a wide range of different professionals across different services, combining trusted early years activities with specialist, evidence-based interventions.

Families can access a wide range of support including:

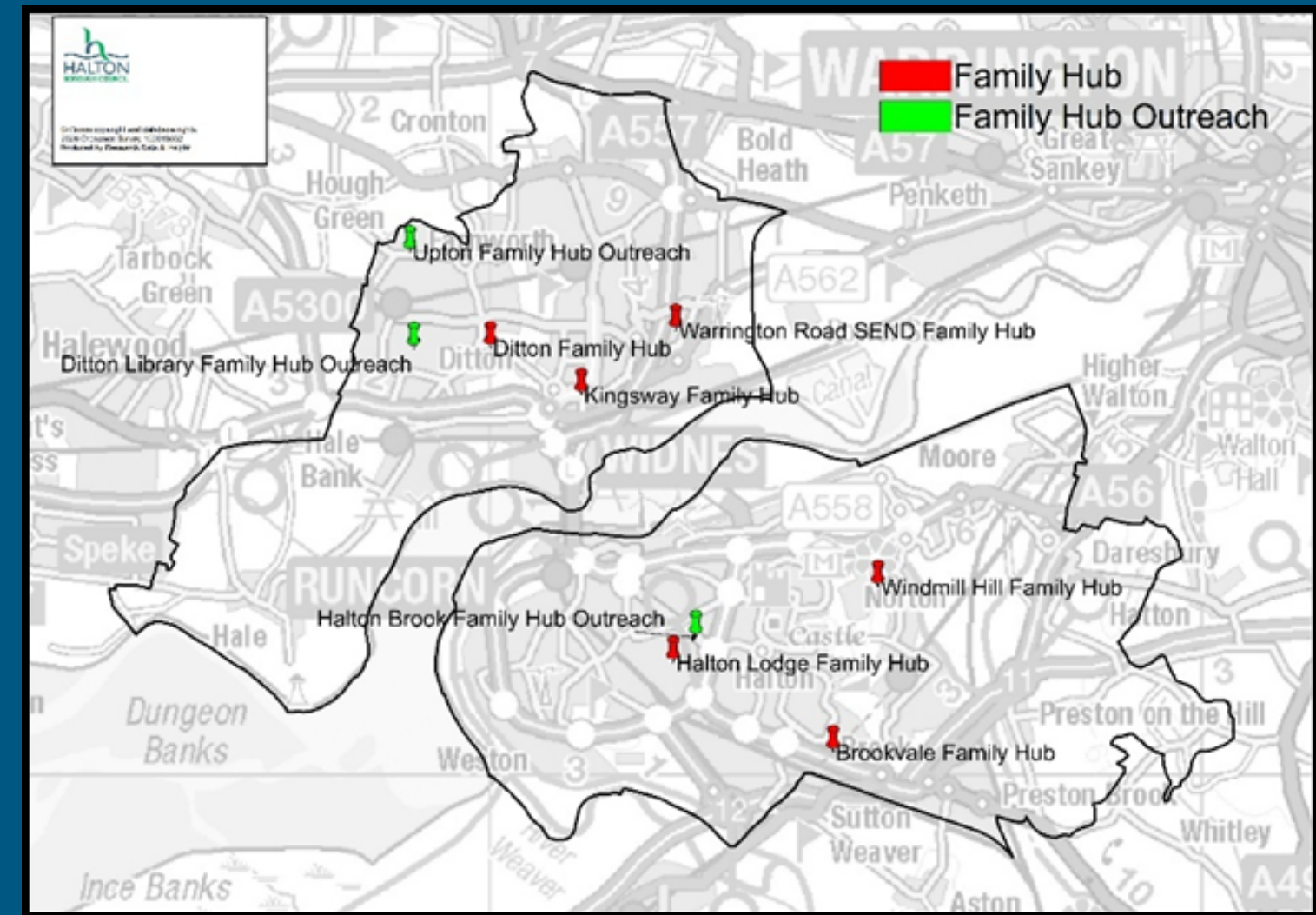
- Universal early years activities such as Stay and Play sessions, communication and language groups, and baby massage.
- Evidence-based programmes including PEEP and Nurture, helping parents build confidence, strengthen attachment, and support children’s early development.
- Targeted outreach and support for families experiencing financial hardship, parental mental ill health, domestic abuse, housing instability, SEND needs, or other vulnerabilities.

A defining feature of Halton’s model is our integrated partnership with health services, which brings maternity and early years health support directly into the hubs. This includes:

- Maternity clinics and midwifery appointments
- Baby weighing and health visitor drop-ins
- Integrated 6–8-week and 1-year development reviews
- Baby showers, supporting new parents to understand infant cues, safety, bonding, and available local support
- Our award-winning antenatal education offer, Baby Showers, once described as “a wedding fayre for babies”, which has been nationally recognised for its engaging, inclusive approach to preparing families for birth and early parenthood.

[6] <https://www.haltonfamilyhubs.co.uk/events>

Together, these universal and targeted services ensure Halton’s Best Start Family Hubs act as a single, trusted front door for families, reducing barriers to support and providing joined-up, relationship-centred help in the communities where families live.



Government guidance requires that at least 70% of Family Hubs are located within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Analysis of Halton’s 2025 deprivation data confirms that all six of Halton’s Best Start Family Hubs fully meet – and exceed – this expectation.

Four hubs – Brookvale, Halton Lodge, Windmill Hill, and Kingsway – are situated within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally, with Windmill Hill and Kingsway ranked in the top 1%. Warrington Road sits within the top 15%, and Ditton within the top 25%.

This means Halton’s Family Hub network is strategically located at the heart of the communities that benefit most, ensuring support is focused where it will have the greatest impact. With child poverty and deprivation levels in parts of the borough remaining above the national average, this localisation strengthens our commitment to equity, providing easy access to universal and targeted early years support for families who need it most.

NEEDS AND INEQUALITIES

Halton Integrated Children’s Data Profile (2026)

These findings directly inform the strategic priorities outlined in the next section, ensuring our approach is grounded in what Halton’s children and families need most.

Halton’s Integrated Children’s Data Profile (2026) shows a borough with significant and persistent inequalities that begin early and are concentrated in the same neighbourhoods experiencing the highest deprivation.

Around 8,300 children aged 0–5 live in Halton, many in areas of high poverty, and early development data highlights widening gaps:

- Good Level of Development remains below national averages.
- Ages Stages Questionnaire 3 (ASQ-3)^[7] results show early emerging delays – particularly in communication and personal-social skills;
- Boys, summer-born children, and children eligible for free school meals (FSM) are disproportionately affected.

SEND is the strongest predictor of not achieving GLD, with ‘Speech Language Communication Needs’ the most prevalent need, while Early Help and Social Care involvement also correlate with lower outcomes.

Attendance at early education and Family Hubs supports better development, yet engagement is uneven.

Public health challenges – including high dental decay, hospital admissions, and low breastfeeding rates – combine with social determinants such as child poverty, housing instability, and parental mental health concerns to shape early outcomes.

These inequalities cluster spatially, creating predictable ward-level patterns of disadvantage.

[7] <https://agesandstages.com/products-pricing/asq3/>

Together, these data points reinforce the priorities of the Best Start strategy:



Improving early communication and language



Strengthening early identification of SEND



Increasing engagement with universal and targeted Family Hub offers



Addressing poverty-related barriers



Ensuring integrated, place-based support for families most at risk



Assets, services & system capacity

Halton has a strong foundation of Family Hubs, libraries, early education settings, and health visitor capacity.

However, system integration, quality of early years practice, and consistent family support remain the core challenges.

CRADLE TO CAREER

Delivered by Right to Succeed

The Cradle to Career programme, delivered by Right to Succeed, is a place-based initiative designed to transform outcomes for children and young people by addressing systemic barriers to education, health, and wellbeing.

Halton Lea was selected as a pilot area due to high levels of deprivation, persistent attainment gaps, and the need for coordinated multi-agency support.

The vision is to ensure that every child in Halton Lea has the opportunity to thrive from birth through to adulthood.

This is achieved through a collective impact approach, bringing together schools, local authority services, health partners, voluntary organisations, and families to create a shared plan for improvement.



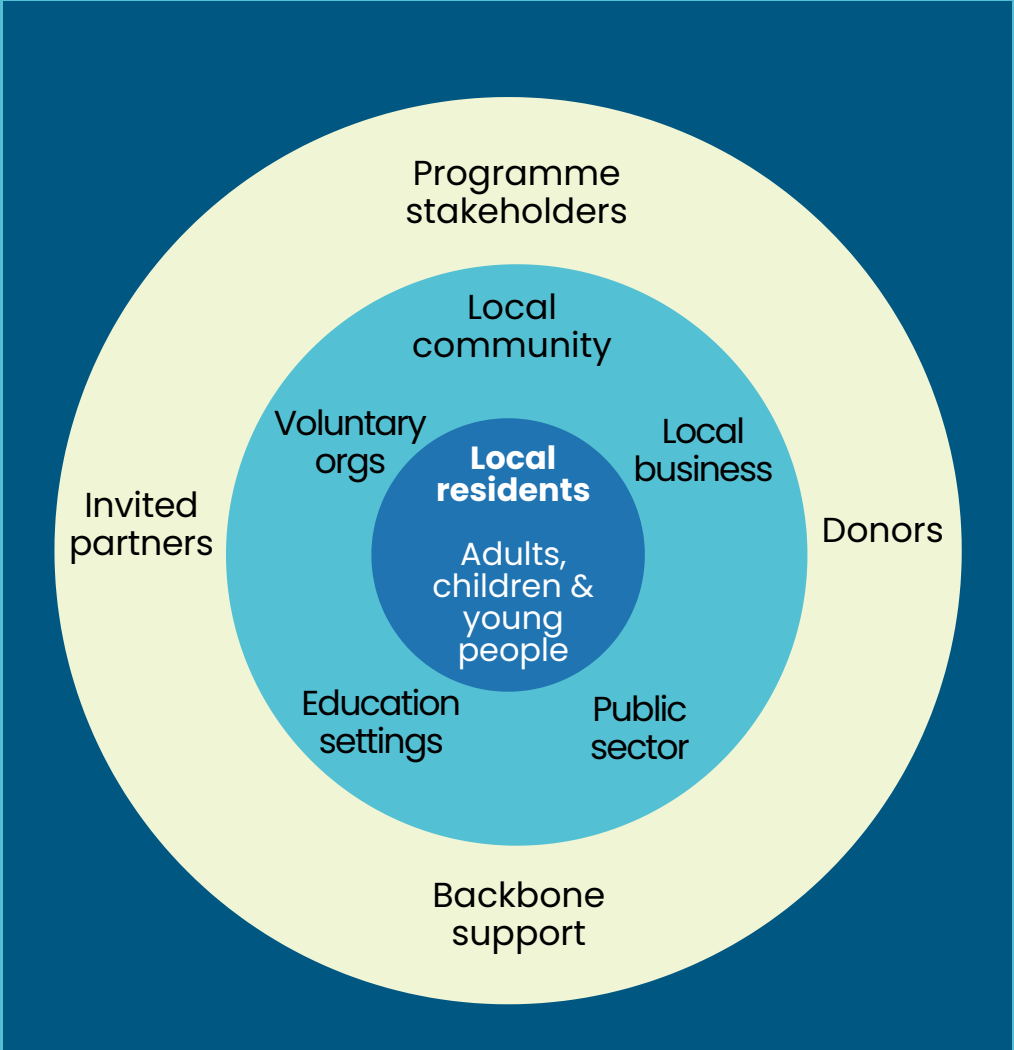
About Cradle to Career

The key objectives for the programme are:

- Early years readiness: Improve school readiness through targeted family support and high-quality early years provision.
- Educational attainment: Raise literacy and numeracy standards across primary and secondary phases.
- Wellbeing and inclusion: Address social, emotional, and mental health needs through integrated support services.
- Community engagement: Empower families and residents to shape solutions and participate in decision-making.
- Post-16 pathways: Strengthen progression routes into further education, training, and employment.

Impact over the last 3 years has demonstrated:

- Increased engagement of local schools and early years settings in shared improvement plans.
- Development of literacy hubs and targeted interventions for disadvantaged learners, resulting in improved educational outcomes.
- Strengthened family support networks through community-based programmes.
- Positive feedback from stakeholders on improved collaboration and trust.



Years 4-6 of the programme is focusing on aims and objectives in the 3 following areas:



Education



Community and services



System change

LIBRARIES

Halton Borough Council is responsible for overseeing the delivery of a comprehensive and efficient library service reflecting the changing needs of local communities.

Halton Library Service is delivered through four public libraries and as an outreach service across the Borough, this includes the Community Library Service – our bespoke offer to care and residential homes, and the Home Library Service, to provide services to those unable to access our buildings.

Current service priorities include:

- Promoting early language and communication development through rhyme times, story sessions, and targeted early literacy activities.
- Supporting parental engagement in reading and home learning.
- Providing welcoming, inclusive spaces for families, including those who may be more vulnerable or less likely to access other services.
- Partnership working.
- Encouraging a love of books and reading from birth through initiatives such as Bookstart and library membership from an early age/birth.

**Halton Lea Library, Halton Lea,
Runcorn, WA72PF**



Contact details

Tel: 0151 511 7744
Email: hlelib@halton.gov.uk

**Widnes Library, Victoria Square,
Widnes, WA8 7QY**



Contact details

Tel: 0151 511 7744
Email: hlelib@halton.gov.uk

**Runcorn Library, 6 Church Street,
Runcorn, WA7 1LT**



Contact details

Tel: 0151 511 7744
Email: hlelib@halton.gov.uk

**Ditton Library, Queens Avenue,
Widnes, WA8 8HR**



Contact details

Tel: 0151 511 7744
Email: hlelib@halton.gov.uk

N.B. Runcorn Library is relocating to a temporary old town site at 6 Church Street until opening in The Brindley in 2026. The library will relocate on Tuesday, April 1.

Rhyme time and Saturday sessions



Rhyme Time sessions for pre-school children take place all year round across each library location on a weekly basis.

Stories and songs are enjoyed and provide a fun and enjoyable introduction to books, reading and libraries for young children.

In 2024, 7,674 children and parents attended Rhyme Time sessions across the library service.



STRATEGIC PILLARS AND PRIORITIES

The three strategic pillars that follow translate this evidence into a clear framework for action, addressing the issues identified in the needs analysis and setting the direction for the system as a whole.

Giving every child in Halton the best start in life is a shared ambition across our partners, families and communities. The early years shape a child’s health, wellbeing, and future learning, and we know that some children face more barriers than others.

Our local data highlights clear differences in early development, particularly for children with SEND, boys, children growing up in poverty, minority ethnic families, and those born in the summer months. If we want to improve outcomes and narrow these gaps, we need to focus our efforts on the things that make the biggest difference.

To do this, our strategy is built around three pillars, which together provide the structure for how we support families and improve children’s development.

Pillar 1: Better support for families

Pillar 2: More accessible early years education and childcare

Pillar 3: Improving quality in early years including reception

An illustration of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a green jacket over a yellow shirt and blue trousers, carrying a red backpack. She is holding the hand of a small child with dark hair, wearing a pink shirt and dark trousers, who is also carrying a backpack. They are walking towards the right.

BEST START IN LIFE: PRIORITY COHORT APPROACH TO IMPROVE GOOD LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT IN HALTON

Purpose and ambition

The Priority Cohort approach strengthens Pillar 1 and 2 by identifying children and families who are most affected by the inequalities outlined in Appendix A and who will benefit most from targeted support.

Building on the needs analysis, the following Priority Cohort model identifies the children most affected by the inequalities outlined above and who will benefit most from a coordinated, system-wide response across all three pillars.

We will increase the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by prioritising those with multiple risks of not being school-ready.

Our ambition is that by 2028:

- Borough-wide GLD is $\geq 70\%$.
- SEND (special educational needs and disability) GLD increase from 13.8%.
- The summer-born and boys' gaps are narrowed.
- The FSM (free school meals) vs non-FSM gap is $\leq 10\%$, with sustained improvement in the most deprived IDACI areas.

Why this focus: what the data tells us

Local analysis shows the largest and most consistent gaps are for children with SEND, boys, summer-born children, FSM-eligible children, and minority ethnic groups – particularly where families live in high deprivation (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) 1–3) and/or attend settings with GLD $< 50\%$.

Lower early education hours (≤ 15 hrs/wk) and communication and language delays (ASQ-3) are critical drivers.

These insights shape a priority cohort and a place-based delivery model.

Who we will prioritise:

Children aged 0–5 with one or more of:

- SEND, boys, FSM-eligible, summer-born, minority ethnic
- Living in IDACI 1–3 neighbourhoods
- Attending ≤ 15 hours/week early education
- Enrolled in wards/Early Years settings with low GLD (e.g., Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank, Halton Castle, and Early Years settings $< 50\%$ GLD)



Where we will prioritise (place-based):

We will concentrate outreach, workforce, and quality improvement in:

- Wards with low GLD and ASQ-3 concerns
- Settings persistently below 50% GLD (targeted quality support and pedagogy for communication and language).



HOW WE WILL DELIVER

Find and enrol

- Through information sharing agreements in place with North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust and the creation of ward level report cards, we will review systematic case-findings from ASQ-3, setting data, health visiting, SALT (Speech and Language Therapy) and FSM lists.
- Provide community outreach via Family Hubs, VCS partners (voluntary and community sector), and health colleagues.

Assess and plan

- Utilising our multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach across Family Hubs, early years and health visiting, we will target a rapid, holistic developmental profile review using indicators related to communication and language, motor, social-emotional; term of birth and attendance across universal provision including settings.
- Where needed, provide and deliver SEND outreach through the family hubs and maximise the use of the Early Intervention Officers across early years settings.

Intervene

- Increase awareness of early education and childcare entitlement to priority families.
- Deliver evidence-based interventions such as PEEP, Early Talk Boost and Nurture, alongside other interventions such as HENRY and Togetherness online.
- Provide home learning environment kits, and library/bookstart packs to those who need it most.

Review and sustain

- Multi-disciplinary team will continually review using standard measurement tools such as ASQ-3, Wellcomm and setting assessments.
- Targeted and tailored transition support will be offered, with a particular focus for summer-born and boys.

What we will measure (outcomes & KPIs)



- **Access & reach:** % priority cohort reached; % accessing early education entitlements; uptake of evidence-based interventions.
- **Quality & workforce:** # staff trained in communication & language, pedagogy; # improvement visits in <50% GLD settings by Early Intervention Officers/Early Years Quality Improvement Officer.
- **Development:** ASQ-3 improvement in communication & language, fine and gross motor.
- **Equity gaps:** GLD gaps for boys, FSM, summer-born, SEND, minority ethnic – tracked ward-by-ward.

Enablers & governance

- **Information and data sharing agreements** are in place to enable a shared dashboard and key performance indicator report cards (GLD, ASQ-3, IDACI, setting quality).
- **Capacity:** targeted investment through the Best Start in Life Strategy related to the appropriate pillars.
- **Leadership:** Best Start in Life steering group; workstreams and place-based delivery groups.



The three pillars that follow set out how Halton's early years system will work together to improve outcomes for this cohort and for all children.

PILLAR 1: BETTER SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

The delivery of this pillar is underpinned by the Partnership Principles agreed by Halton's multi-agency early years system, ensuring consistent ways of working across all partners.

Pillar 1 focuses on ensuring that families receive the right support as early as possible. This means identifying needs quickly, responding without delay, and joining up support around the child. For families, early help should feel simple, accessible, and well-coordinated – whether they first come into contact with us through a Family Hub, a health visiting appointment, or an early years setting.

By acting early, we can prevent difficulties from escalating, strengthen relationships with families, and increase the likelihood that children reach a Good Level of Development by the end of the early years.

To make Pillar 1 meaningful in practice, we worked with partners across Halton to agree the shared priorities that shape how support is delivered. As part of developing the Best Start in Life Strategy, a collaborative analysis was carried out with practitioners and leaders through a series of engagement sessions.

Insights gathered from flipchart exercises were grouped into themes that reflect real experiences on the ground – what's working, where challenges lie, and what families need most. These themes now form the basis of our Priority Framework. They ensure that the strategy is rooted in lived experience, frontline perspectives, and multi-agency knowledge.

Through this process, partners have co-designed a set of guiding priorities that link directly to the aims of Pillar 1 and the wider Best Start in Life Strategy. Together, they provide a shared direction for delivering a coordinated and responsive early help and early years system. The high-level priorities (pictured on next page) guide all workstreams contributing to this pillar.



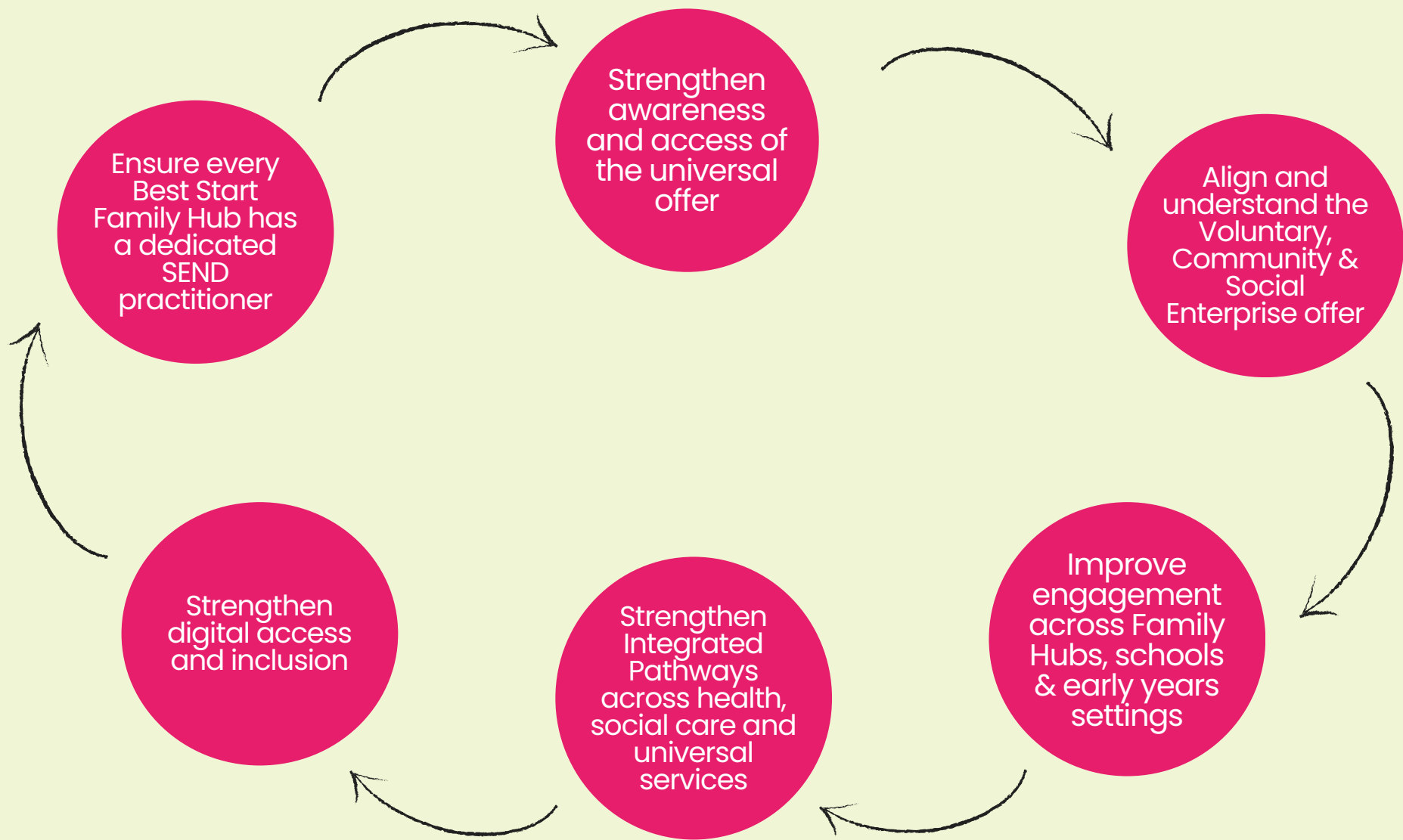
PILLAR 1: BETTER SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Delivering Pillar 1 through our integrated workstreams

To put Pillar 1 into practice, our partnership delivers a number of funded workstreams, including but not limited to parenting support and the home learning environment. Each workstream has its own delivery plan, developed with practitioners, families and partners to meet both national expectations and local priorities. These delivery plans are not standalone projects. They have been deliberately aligned so they work together as part of one integrated early years offer.

The actions and priorities within them collectively support the ambition of Pillar 1: ensuring families can access timely, effective support that strengthens children's early development. By coordinating these workstreams, we ensure that all activity contributes to the shared goal of improving children's outcomes and closing gaps for those most at risk of falling behind.

The detailed actions, milestones, and KPIs for all workstreams contributing to this pillar are set out in the Best Start in Life Delivery Plan (Appendix B). These delivery plans are co-produced with partners and reviewed regularly.



PILLAR 2: MORE ACCESSIBLE EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

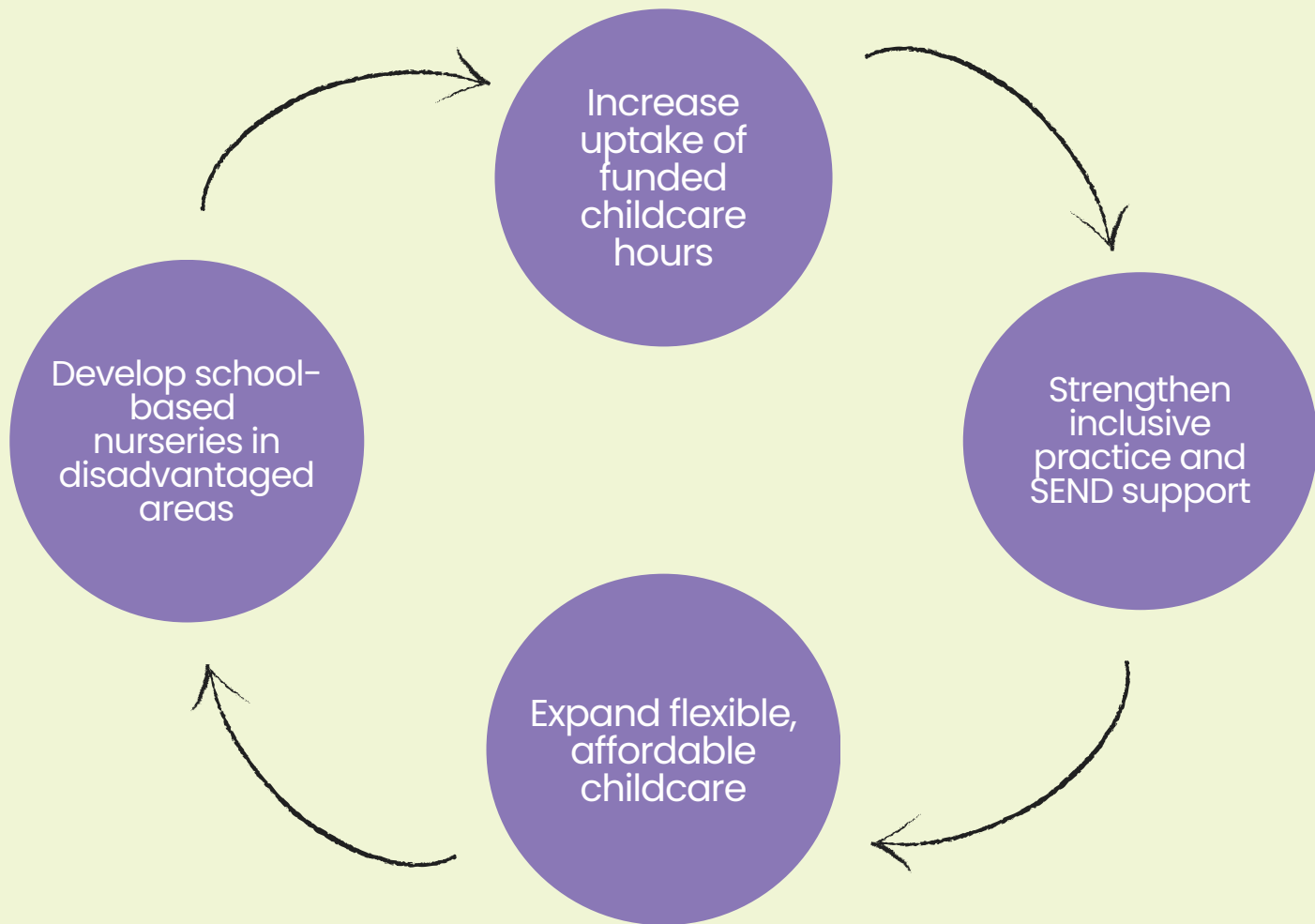
The delivery of this pillar is underpinned by the Partnership Principles agreed by Halton’s multi-agency early years system, ensuring consistent ways of working across all partners.

This pillar turns our shared purpose into action by removing access barriers and ensuring all children – especially those facing disadvantage – benefit from early education that supports their development and readiness for school.

We will expand access to high-quality early education and childcare, ensuring that every family can benefit from affordable, flexible provision that meets their needs. We aim to focus on reducing barriers to participation, supporting working families, and improving take-up among disadvantaged groups.

By working in partnership across family hubs, health services, nurseries, childminders, and schools, we will create a seamless pathway from early years into education, underpinned by integrated health and family support. This approach will help close gaps in school readiness, strengthen early learning outcomes, and ensure that childcare is not only available but accessible and inclusive for all.

The detailed actions, milestones, and KPIs for all workstreams contributing to this pillar are set out in the Best Start in Life Delivery Plan (Appendix B). These delivery plans are co-produced with partners and reviewed regularly.



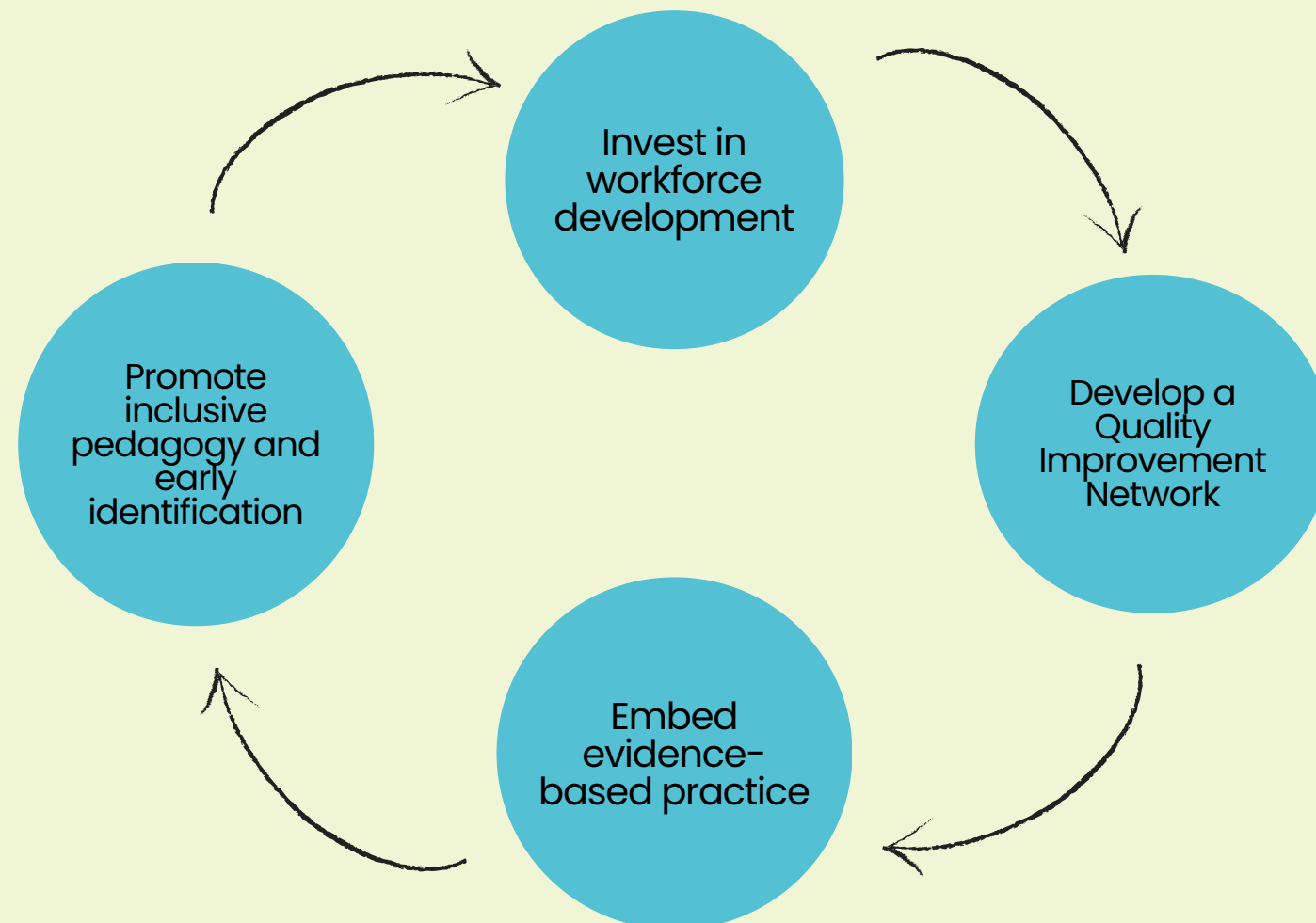
PILLAR 3: IMPROVING QUALITY IN EARLY YEARS INCLUDING RECEPTION

The delivery of this pillar is underpinned by the Partnership Principles agreed by Halton's multi-agency early years system, ensuring consistent ways of working across all partners.

This pillar realises our shared purpose of making sure that great teaching approaches are used consistently, every day, in every setting, inclusive practice, and professional learning across the sector to improve outcomes consistently across Halton.

The following high-level priorities (pictured below) guide all workstreams contributing to this pillar.

The detailed actions, milestones, and KPIs for all workstreams contributing to this pillar are set out in the Best Start in Life Delivery Plan (Appendix B). These delivery plans are co-produced with partners and reviewed regularly. Each pillar is underpinned by a set of high-level priorities, which are expanded further through detailed delivery plans in Appendix B.



GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

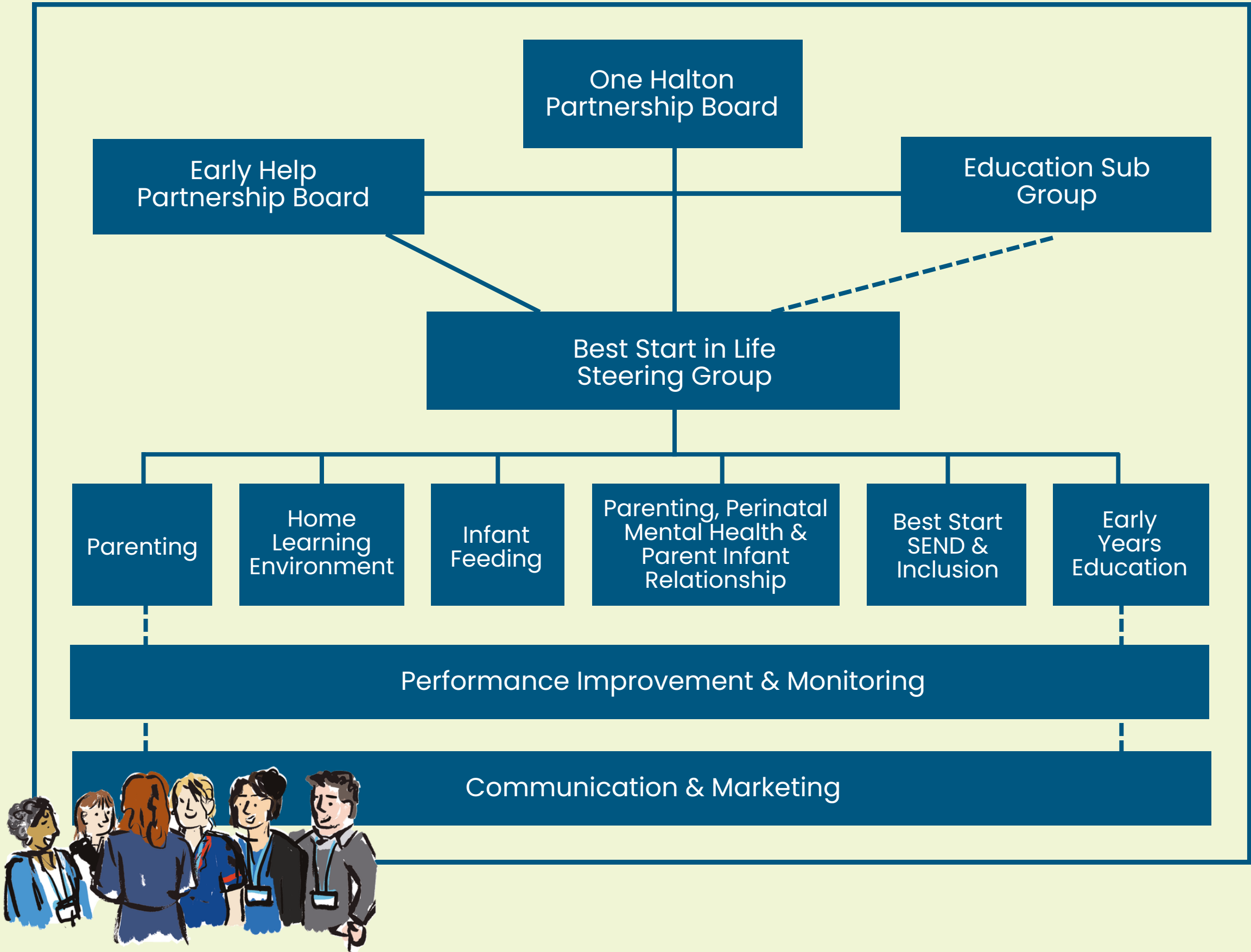
Governance partners commit to:

- 1 Collective accountability for outcomes
- 2 Open reflection and honest challenge
- 3 Decision-making based on lived experience
- 4 System-wide alignment, not organisational self-interest
- 5 Monitoring whether actions align to our shared purpose

The Best Start Steering Group provides strategic oversight, direction, and accountability for the delivery of the Best Start in Life Strategy, ensuring alignment with wider early years priorities and local partnership objectives.

This group sets the vision and direction, while dedicated workstreams drive delivery in key areas. Together, they coordinate efforts, monitor progress, and embed best practice across services, creating a joined-up approach that supports families from pregnancy through early childhood.

The Best Start Steering Group will monitor statutory GLD targets, report quarterly, and lead course-correction.



OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

National alignment: GLD targets, accountability & statutory duties

Halton’s outcomes framework reflects the national ambition set out in *Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life*, which aims for 75% of children to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028.

The GLD graphs included in this strategy show our recent progress as well as the improvement still needed if we are to move closer to that national ambition. As the Government brings in statutory local targets under the Childcare Act 2006, Halton will update its own GLD targets and milestones so they are aligned and clearly understood across the partnership.

Our updated outcomes dashboard will track GLD alongside other key early years measures – such as health visitor led development checks at 2–2.5 years, results and engagement with the Best Start Family Hubs – so partners can monitor changes over time and respond quickly where gaps remain. This approach keeps Halton’s priorities firmly linked to national expectations while staying rooted in our local evidence and data.

These outcomes are owned by the whole system. No single service is accountable for achieving them alone; progress depends on collective leadership, shared learning, and integrated delivery.

High-Level Outcomes

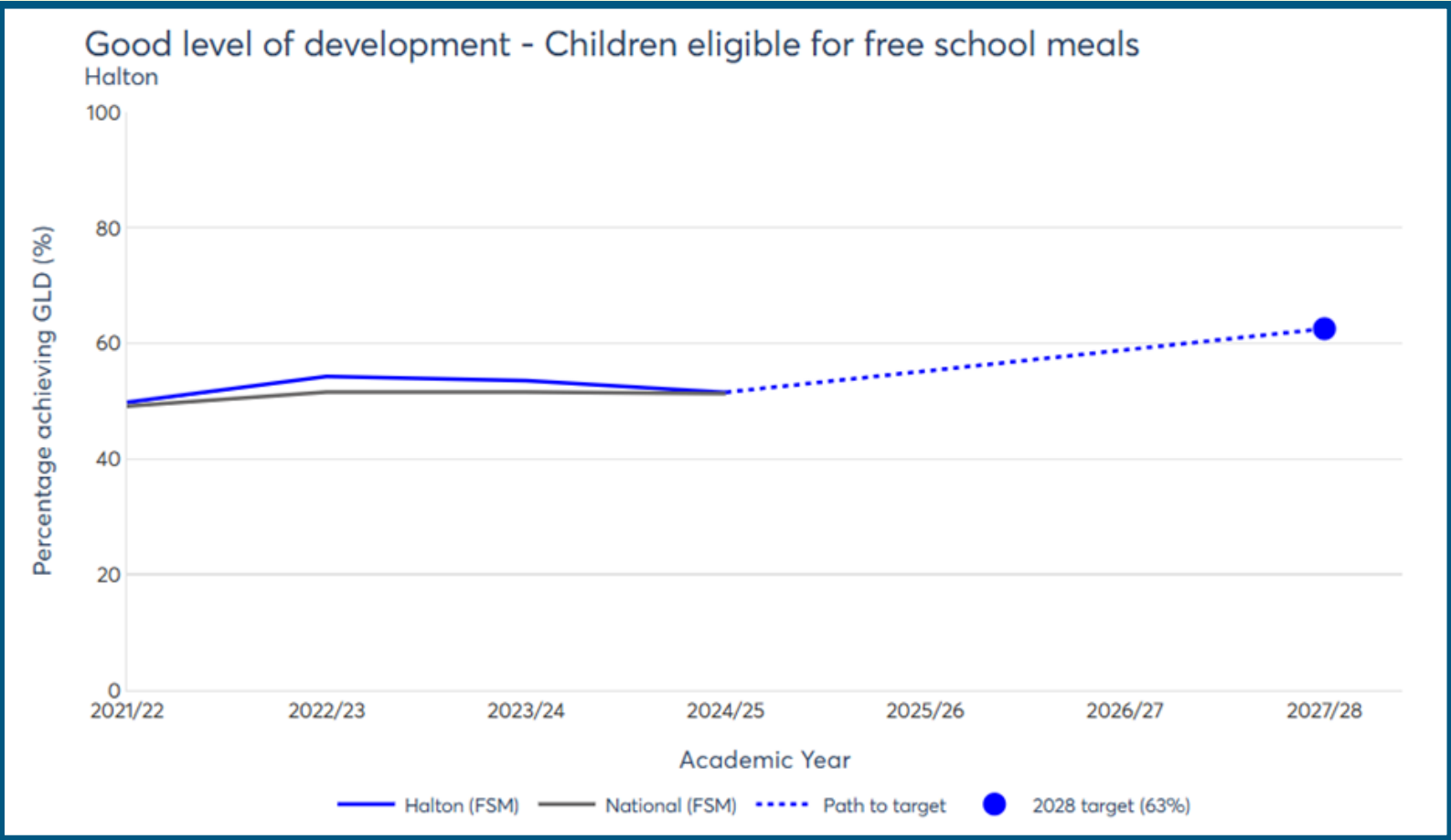
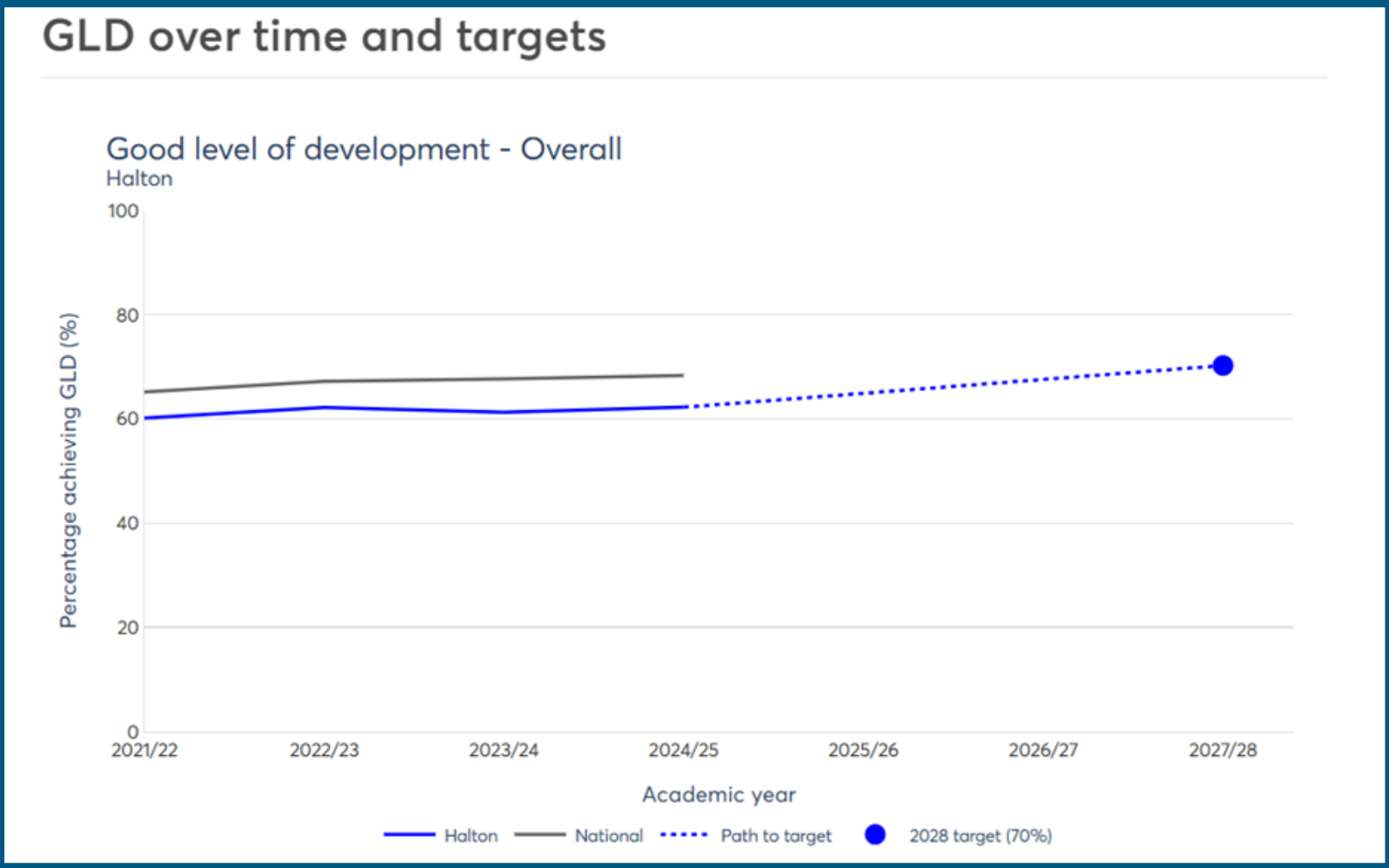
- More children ready for school (↑ GLD)
- Improved early development (↑ ASQ-3 outcomes)
- Increased access and engagement (↑ uptake of universal & targeted support, ↑ early years entitlements)
- Reduced early years health inequalities (↑ breastfeeding, healthy weight, ↓ ward gaps, ↓ hospital admissions)



Indicators

- % of children achieving a GLD at the end of reception
- % of children meeting expected developmental milestones at 2–2.5 years, especially in communication, language, and social–emotional development
- % of families accessing universal and targeted Best Start/Family Hub support
- % of families reporting improved confidence and positive experience of early years services





DELIVERING THE BEST START IN LIFE: OUR NEXT STEPS

This plan reflects the commitment and contribution of partners, practitioners, families and communities across Halton.

It will continue to evolve as we learn, listen and work alongside the families we support. The actions in this strategy are not the responsibility of one service or organisation – they depend on all of us.

Through shared principles, shared priorities and shared delivery, we will build a stronger, more connected early years system.

Together, we will give every child the best possible start, ensuring that our collective efforts translate into real, lasting change for families.

Together, the strategic framework, priorities and delivery plan form a connected system of support.

The appendices should be read alongside the main strategy, as they show how the identified needs translate into the actions that will drive improvement.

