



Children and Families Strategy

2025-2030



Beyond 'Room to Grow' – Progress against 2020 priorities

Priority (2020 strategy)	Progress achieved
Develop our early years offer	Uptake of early education places is level with the national average and outperforming the regional average
Design an early help offer	More early help is now being offered by local partners.
Reform our child protection front door	Redesigned the service to be focused on prevention and early support for children and their families.
Develop and implement an inclusion strategy	Developed a partnership SEND improvement plan and published a joint commissioning strategy with the ICB.
Develop and implement an educational improvement plan	Developed a delivery plan as a priority education investment area, focused primarily on English and maths.
Improve the quality of social work practice	October 2022 Ofsted report confirmed 'sustained progress' in improving service quality.
Develop the best possible offer for our cared-for children	Virtual School was shortlisted for a national award in 2023. Reunification project enables children to remain with or return to families.
Improve our education, training and work offer for 16-25s	Launched our Young People's Learning And Skills Strategy, and achieve 'good' Ofsted ratings across all criteria.
Develop the best possible offer with and for our care-experienced young people	Developing a local offer for care leavers and have set up a care-experienced parents' group to offer peer support.
Improving health outcomes for all children and young people	Improved access to health visitors and school nurses by collocating with early years settings and schools.

Where are we now

- Family support (delivery of multi-agency network of Family Hubs and innovative partnerships with VCS Locally Trusted Organisations).
- Major improvements across Children's Services (October 2022 Ofsted judgement).
- New operating model for Children's Social Care (including new 'front door' arrangements).
- New administration, with strong focus on improving wellbeing and life chances for all and tackling persistent inequalities.
- New approaches to delivering family support services in areas across the city (including launch of first Family Hubs).
- Investing in prevention and early intervention models of service delivery.
- Improved partnership working around SEND services.
- Clearer understanding of causal factors around cared-for children.



Current priorities for our children and families

Area	Priority
Family Support	A whole-city approach to supporting family life and empowering communities.
	Building anti-poverty practice into family support services and approaches.
Children's Social Care	Enabling more children to safely remain with, or return to, families.
	Creating better in-house provision for children who need to be in care.
	Strengthening partnership approaches to keeping children safe from harm.
Education & Skills	Transforming outcomes and life chances for care-experienced young people.
	Developing a high-quality FE / skills offer for post-16 learning.
	Improving opportunities for disadvantaged children, young people & families.
	Improving learning opportunities and outcomes across all age groups.
Health & Wellbeing	Ensuring that more children are ready to learn by age five.
	Tackling serious inequalities which undermine children's life chances.
	Designing a citywide preventative approach to children's mental health.
	Providing the best opportunities for every child with SEND.
	Improving children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

Key challenges

- Reducing numbers of cared for and at risk children.
- Closing the child development gap.
- Addressing persistent health inequalities.
- Tackling poor child / adolescent mental health.
- Protecting children from poverty.
- Raising educational attainment levels (in both absolute and comparative terms).
- Supporting children and young people with SEND.
- Removing barriers to opportunity and improving life chances.
- Increasing the number of young people who are in education, employment or training.



Where we want to be in 2030

Key outcomes:

- Providing a family support offer that is among the best in the country, enabling all families to access the help they need to thrive as close to home as possible.
- An expanded Family Matters programme is helping to reduce the number of children requiring statutory child protection.
- A culture of lifelong learning and skilling-up our young people ensures they are ready to thrive in the industries and workplaces of the future.
- A skills and employment 'climbing frame' ensures local residents can gain and combine skills that local employers will need in the future.
- Young people can access improved vocational skills pathways, including greater numbers and choice of quality apprenticeships.
- Higher education is more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds and the city benefits from improved graduate retention rates.
- Partnership approaches are addressing inequalities and promoting social mobility.
- Children's health and development is addressed through an extensive physical activity and healthy nutrition programme.
- Young people benefit from a substantial expansion in youth provision.



National policy context

Recent policy announcements:

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive

- Children remaining with families rather than entering care.
- Support children to live with kinship carers or foster families.
- Fix the broken care market.
- Invest in key enablers underpinning children's social care system.

National Youth Strategy (To be coproduced with young people)

- Better coordination and resourcing of local youth services.
- Creating and improving opportunities for young people.
- New Youth Guarantee to ensure 18-21s are earning or learning.
- Expansion of Creative Careers Programme for working in the arts.

Children's Wellbeing Bill

- Put children's wellbeing at the centre of the education and children's social care systems.
- Ensure children are safe, healthy, happy and treated fairly.
- Remove barriers to opportunity.

Recent statutory guidance changes:

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

- Shared responsibility.
- Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Providing help, support & protection.
- Organisational responsibilities.
- Care leaver outcomes.

Children's Social Care National Framework (2023). Statutory guidance covering:

- Purpose of children's social care.
- Key principles underpinning service provision.
- Expected outcomes for children and young people.

Stable Homes, Built on Love (2023).

Guidance aimed at children and young people.

Local policy context

Priorities and commitments

- Deliver an effective programme of family support.
- Establish an economic development model which prioritises community wellbeing.
- Invest in energy efficiency improvements to our housing stock to reduce fuel poverty.
- Use powers and legislation to encourage/compel landlords to provide decent homes.
- Ensure residents of all ages can live in safety.
- Improve the quality of education provision across all stages and settings.
- Work with educators and employers to transform education and skills outcomes for all.
- Ensure every child has the best possible start in life.
- Take steps to ensure that council policies and actions actively promote greater fairness.
- Help to maximise welfare entitlement, tackle debt, and ensure access to a decent home.
- Develop and invest in preventative approaches to physical and mental health
- Teach life skills and personal resilience .

Programmes and interventions

- Family Hubs.
- Family Matters.
- Holiday Activity & Food Programme.
- Catalyst Project (support for young people on the edge of care).
- City Alliance Agreement (increasing collaboration around support services).
- Strengthening Communities project (working with residents to co-design solutions to weak social capital).
- Fostering Skills Payments to support more local fostering placements in the city.
- Future 100 programme (place-based approach to addressing citywide challenges and opportunities).
- Youth Council.



Our city, our wellbeing Corporate Strategy

Key priorities:

- **1. Healthier** (reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes).
- **2. Wealthier** (tackling the causes and impacts of poverty, hardship and deprivation).
- **3. Safer** (protecting vulnerable residents from the threat of harm).
- **6. Fairer** (improving life chances for all).
- **7. Skilled** (providing opportunities for people to improve their skills and education).

Key values:

- **Empowerment:** Enabling communities to improve their own lives and places.
- **Openness:** Sharing the ideas and information needed to solve key challenges.
- **Empathy:** Caring about our residents and how we can best serve them.
- **Partnership:** Pooling energy, expertise and resources to tackle important challenges.
- **Stewardship:** Taking ownership of our responsibilities to residents and businesses.



How Room to Grow relates to other strategies

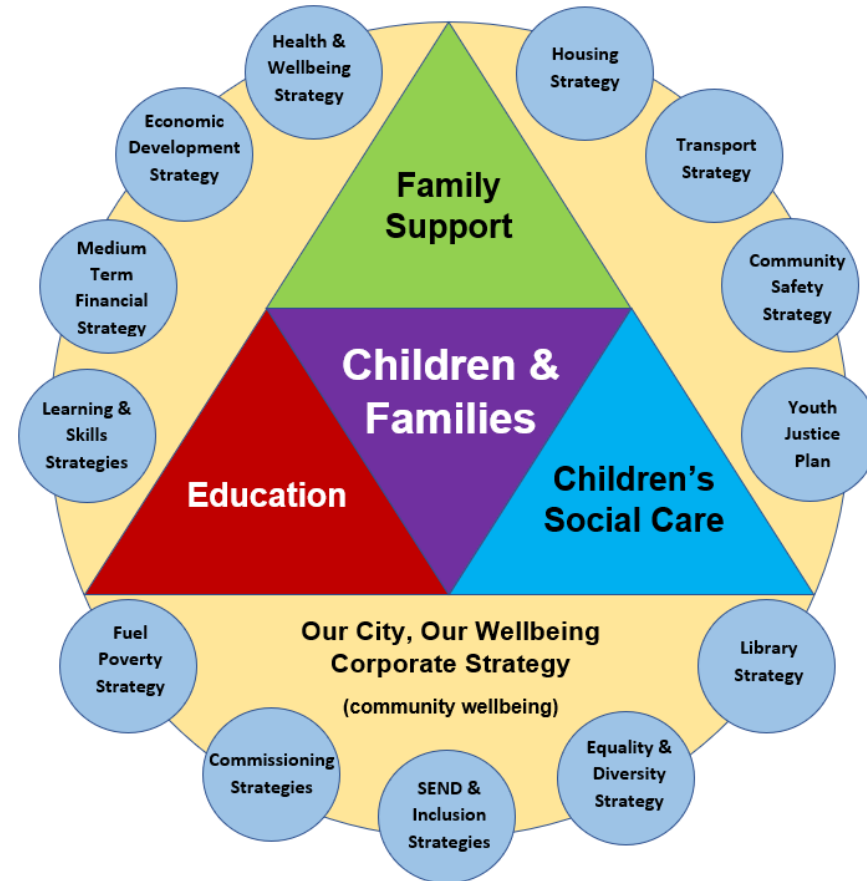
3 key elements of Room to Grow:

- Children's Social Care
- Education
- Family Support

Directly contributes to Our City, Our Wellbeing Corporate Strategy.

Reflects the complex ecosystem of factors affecting children and families, including:

- Economy (poverty & deprivation)
- Income and living standards
- Health and wellbeing
- Housing quality
- Education
- Community
- Skills and employment
- Access to transport



What we are doing as a city council

Area	Activity / Approach
Housing	Improving standards across different housing tenures and types.
	Addressing the causes and impacts of fuel poverty.
	Investing in our own stock to ensure families live in decent homes.
Health & wellbeing	Reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes.
	Improving living standards for all.
	Developing better services for children with SEND.
Education & skills	Working with employers and educators to create viable pathways to higher skills and better employment.
Family support	Delivering the Family Matters programme with partners.
	Establishing multi-agency Family Hubs in local areas.
	Developing strong partnership approaches to Early Help provision.
Children's Social Care	Creating more stable homes for cared-for children.
	Developing a whole-council approach to corporate parenting.
	Strengthening the influence of the voice of children and families at practice and strategic levels.
	Using poverty-informed practice to identify and address the root causes of problems which drive demand for intervention in the city.

Family Matters



Approach:

- Multi-agency programme delivering prevention and support services.
- Working with NHS, VCSE (LTOs) and commercial sectors.
- Delivered via: Family Hubs, Citywide Play, youth provision.

Key aims:

- Make sure families are helped.
- Give their children the best start in life.
- Reduce financial pressures from the care system.
- Reduce spending on children's care placements.

Key outcomes

1



Safe

Children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect or harm and are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to keep themselves safe as they grow older.

4



Nurtured

Children and young people are secure in the care they are receiving in stable environments, and families are confident in their ability to enable their children to thrive.

2



Healthy

Children and young people experience healthy growth and development; this covers physical, mental, emotional and social development. They are motivated to make informed choices about healthy and safe lifestyles as they get older and given lots of opportunities to be physically active.

5



Involved

Children and young people know their rights and how to exercise them. They are able to express their views and to be involved meaningfully in the decisions that affect them. They feel empowered.

3



Achieving

Children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their potential and make the most of their abilities.

6



Prepared

Young people enter adulthood with the qualifications, skills, confidence, self-esteem and opportunities they need to make their best contribution to society.

Aim is to consult with partners and stakeholders to determine whether these are still the desired key outcomes for the new strategy, or whether they should be expanded or reworded to reflect current context and revised aims.



Key theme for partnership working

- Family Matters programme (VCSE, NHS/ICB, businesses).
- Family Hubs (DfE and DHSC).
- Education (DfE, schools, FE colleges, training providers).
- Corporate parenting.
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- Child development (Thrive at 5, VCS, Early Years settings).
- SEND provision (ICB and commissioned orgs.).
- Health outcomes (ICB, VCS, schools, housing providers, employers).
- Improving emotional health and wellbeing.
- Future 100 (citywide stakeholder-led approach to addressing key challenges and opportunities).

Principles for partnership working:

- Children and young people are at the heart of our ambitions.
- Co-production - internal and external engagement.
- A shared vision and collective ambition.
- Shared protocols for the way we work, underpinned by common values.
- An enabling infrastructure to sustain ongoing dialogue and drive delivery.
- Strong and effective systems to evidence impact.



How we will work – key principles

F.A.M.I.L.I.E.S.

Focused on strengths

Adaptability and flexibility

Mutual trust and relationships

Inclusive and accessible support

Long-term stability and consistency

Involvement in decision-making

Empowerment and collaboration

Support for whole family well-being

- Importance of a whole-council and whole-city commitment to delivering the strategy as a shared endeavour.
- Greater focus on prevention and early help services.
- Stronger, more effective partnership working.

