

Children's System Early Help



Partnership Update

September 2025

Kim Green

Service Director - Partnerships, Strategy & Innovation



Dear Partners,

We're pleased to share a summary of recent updates, both locally and nationally, that directly impact our work across the Children's System and early help in particular. These updates reflect a renewed national commitment to early intervention, which is hugely welcomed.

Local Updates



The Hut

Children and Young People's Services within the Council have assumed day to day management for The Hut in Airedale. Wakefield Council is working with local groups and organisations to make The Hut a more vibrant space, with a new programme that offers something for everyone, from support and learning to social connection and fun.

Exciting new chapter for The Hut in Airedale - Wakefield Council



Local Updates



Youth Alliance

The Wakefield Youth Alliance is chaired by Dmitry Fedetov, CEO of the Youth Association. It has been established since May 2025. Membership is growing and now has representation from several VCSE providers, Wakefield College and the Council. Membership is for any organisation who has at least one qualified youth worker and is delivering youth provision within the Wakefield district. The aim of the Alliance is to demonstrate the transformative value of youth work in addressing the personal and social development needs of young people in Wakefield. By building strong networks and relationships between partners, the Alliance will create opportunities for collaboration, mutual support, and the sharing of skills and training, ensuring that the sector remains innovative and responsive to the needs of young people and their communities.

If any partners would like to join the Youth Alliance, they can contact wakefieldfamilies一起@wakefield.gov.uk

Local Updates



Youth Zone

Council Cabinet approved the creation of a brand-new Youth Zone in the Ings Rd area of the Wakefield City Centre using Levelling Up 3 Funding from government. It will be developed in partnership with OnSide, a national charity. OnSide have developed a successful and sustainable approach to creating Youth Zones with a network of 16 Youth Zones across the country. They will be establishing a local Wakefield Youth Zone charity and establishing a 4-way partnership with children and young people, the community and partners, the Council and the private sector. The model is intended to complement existing offers, not duplicate, providing increased social and leisure opportunities for young people. More information will be shared with the Early Help Partnership Board and there will be ongoing opportunities for people to be involved in shaping the offer for Wakefield.



World class Youth Zone for district's young people coming to city centre - Wakefield Council

Local Updates



Prevention Partnerships and Youth Engagement Workers in Schools Pilot

Two exciting pilot programmes are developing in Wakefield that will build on the Youth Engagement model currently delivered through the three Youth Hubs. It will enhance an existing but limited offer of support for children and young people 11-24 currently available. First, we are designing a model of practice to meet the strict criteria of the National Young Futures Prevention Partnerships Programme that aims to direct children at risk of crime, ASB and serious youth violence into early help and prevention activities. Partnership meetings have commenced, and further work is planned to ensure we meet the implementation date in October. Second, we are working with two Multi Academy Trusts to provide a Youth Engagement Worker to operate within four secondary schools across the district. The new resource will work directly with vulnerable children who are at risk of adverse outcomes but not currently working with a service, offering one to one support and connection to early intervention and prevention activity within their local community and across the district. Both programmes are informed by data and will build on existing good practice – Wakefield’s Team Around model.

Any questions about this work or for further information please contact Dawn Normanton
DNormanton@wakefield.gov.uk or Joe Seddon jседдон@wakefield.gov.uk

Local Updates



Early Help Strategy

Thank you to everyone that has contributed so far to the shaping of the next iteration of the Early Help Strategy. As agreed at the last Board, we had a very insightful workshop with VCSE Voices Advocates and made some amendments to a working draft. Advocates have taken this working draft back to the wider VCSE sector for further input.

Once comments have been incorporated we will circulate a draft to the Partnership Board members for consultation and comment.

Wakefield's Early Help Strategy



National Updates

Nationally, the Government has announced extensions for 2-3 years across a number of national programmes as well as launching new initiatives. A summary of each is provided in this update. In the Council, we are busy reviewing what we know about these announcements as we would like to plan with partners an approach for the next 3 years that will also help to create some stability and sustainable funding sources by prioritising multi-year funding opportunities wherever possible, particularly for the VCSE.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

The government has committed £600 million to extend the HAF programme for three more years, ensuring continued access to free meals and enriching activities for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals. We are delighted by this news as the HAF programme in Wakefield has become an intrinsic part of the early help offer to children, particularly in the school holidays.



National Updates



Family Hubs and Best Start in Life

The government has announced an expansion of the Family Hub Programme, with more councils set to open hubs. Hubs must offer integrated support across health, education and social care, aiming to reach 500,000 more children.

For Wakefield, this is likely to result in confirmation of three more years of funding, rather than an expansion. However, the opportunity to ensure the wider Wakefield Families Together offer is supported through this is key.

The government has launched a national Best Start in Life website. [Beststartinlife.gov.uk](https://beststartinlife.gov.uk) will officially replace the Childcare Choices website as the main source of information for early education and childcare support - offering a broader range of resources for families, including eligibility for childcare offers, information about free breakfast clubs and Best Start Family Hubs in their area and support on pregnancy through to starting school and beyond.

National Updates



Best Start in Life Branding

There have been announcements about the Best Start in Life Brand too.

The Best Start in Life brand brings together all services, offers and support available to help guide and support parents from pregnancy, through their child's journey into childcare, to starting school and beyond.

Partners may have received messaging directly. We will be working with other relevant partners to roll this out over time. Our local Wakefield Families Together branding will remain.

The logo consists of the words 'BEST', 'START', and 'IN LIFE' stacked vertically in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. To the left of each word is a large, rounded square in a different color: yellow for 'BEST', pink for 'START', and blue for 'IN LIFE'.

**BEST
START
IN LIFE**

More information about the branding is available here:

[Best Start in Life](#) | [Campaigns](#) | [Campaign Resource Centre](#)

National Updates



Best Start in Life Branding

The government considers the following policies and offers as part of Best Start in Life:

Childcare and early learning

Under 5s

- School-based nurseries
- Best Start Family Hubs (current and new)
- Settings providing government funded childcare offers and BSIL branded services (including PVI and childminders)
- Schools with reception year which are participating in RISE and other BSIL activities
- Childcare entitlements, including 30 hours childcare for working parents of 9-month-olds to school age, 15 hours for 2-year-olds in families receiving additional support and the universal 15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds, Universal Credit Childcare and Tax-Free Childcare
- Home learning environment support

Over 5s

- Breakfast clubs
- Wraparound childcare
- Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF)
- Universal Infant Free School Meals
- Help with the cost of school uniforms

Services to support Healthy Babies (previously known as

- Maternity support Start for Life)
- Health visiting services
- Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship support
- Infant feeding advice (with specialist breastfeeding support)
- Safeguarding (shaped by statutory requirements)
- Health services related to Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (shaped by statutory requirements)



National Updates



Families First Partnership Programme & Transformation Fund

Backed by over £1 billion between the two programmes, the focus is on driving reforms in children's social care, prevention and early help. Key changes include:

- Family Group Decision Making
- Multi-agency Child Protection Teams
- Improved data sharing and safeguarding integration
- Multi-disciplinary Family Help
- Focus on prevention, early help, and reducing crisis-driven interventions.

Again, for Wakefield, ensuring the wider Wakefield Families Together offer is supported through this is key. As is ensuring our existing integrated working is further strengthened and enhanced. Key statutory partners will be involved in design workshops led by the Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive. We will be including elements of this programme in our next Early Help workshop too.

National Updates



Child Poverty Strategy

The government is developing a new Child Poverty Strategy, due for publication in Autumn 2025. It aims to reverse the rise in child poverty—now affecting 4.3 million children—by tackling root causes such as insecure work, housing costs, and benefit system barriers. The strategy will be shaped by voices of children, families, and cross-sector partners.

Better Futures Fund

A landmark £500 million fund has been launched to support up to 200,000 vulnerable children over the next decade. The fund will back initiatives that improve school attendance, reduce reoffending, and provide specialist support for children facing exclusion, mental health challenges or risk of exploitation. It will be matched by contributions from local government, social investors and philanthropists. We don't have any more detail about this fund yet and what it might mean for Wakefield.

National Updates



Youth Funding

Major investments have been announced:

- £45 million to extend the Youth Guarantee trailblazer scheme, supporting 18–21-year-olds into education, employment or training.
- £7.5 million for the Uniformed Youth Fund, creating thousands of new places in youth organisations like The Scouts, Guides and Volunteer Police Cadets in areas of unmet demand. Organisations like UK Scouts are managing the fund directly.
- £22.5 million over three years to create a tailored enrichment offer in up to 400 schools. This will give pupils access to extra-curricular activities such as sport, art and music, outdoor activities, debating or volunteering that support wellbeing and essential skills around the school day. There is no detail yet on how government will identify the 400 schools.
- Third Phase of the Million Hours Fund – see next page

National Updates



Million Hours Fund

£19 million joint investment with The National Lottery Community Fund to deliver over a million additional hours of youth work in areas with high rates of anti-social behaviour.

- Target Group: Young people aged 10–18, or up to 25 if they have SEND or are otherwise vulnerable
- Delivery: Activities must be open access, led by trusted adults (qualified youth workers, support workers, or experienced volunteers), and designed with youth input
- Projects must operate in one of the eligible ward areas (based on police data on anti-social behaviour).
- Organisations must be:
 - Not-for-profit (e.g., CIOs, CICs, co-operatives)
 - Schools or statutory bodies (e.g. councils) are also eligible
 - Partnerships are allowed, with one lead organisation managing the funding
- Grant size: £30,000 to £100,000
- Application deadline: 22 October 2025 at noon
- Fund duration: Until 31 March 2027
- Note: If demand is high, applications may close early

Eligible Wards in Wakefield:

- Castleford Central and Glasshoughton (E05001447)
- Hemsworth (E05001450)
- Knottingley (E05001452)
- Pontefract North (E05001455)
- South Elmsall and South Kirkby (E05001457)
- Wakefield East (E05001459)
- Wakefield North (E05001460)
- Wakefield West (E05001463)

These developments represent significant opportunities for our partnership to align, innovate, and advocate for children and families. As an Early Help Partnership Board, we have a real opportunity to shape this work in the Wakefield district.



Please share this update with your teams and networks.

Warm Regards, Kim

