

An Early Years Framework for Action: Building an Early Years System in Gwent for The Long-Term

September 2026

Working together, the Gwent Public Health Team have developed a suite of documents to deliver shared priorities, drive collective actions, and improve outcomes, to ensure **EVERY** baby and child has the best start in life



Building an Early Years System – For The Long-Term

The Gwent Best Start in Life Regional Delivery Plan sets out a shared commitment from early years partners to improve outcomes for babies, children and families across Gwent. It identifies regional priorities for improvement and the action that partners will take collectively to deliver these priorities over the lifetime of the Plan. Building on the vision and priorities outlined in the accompanying documents, this document focuses on strengthening the early years system through coordinated partnership working.

The Public Health Wales **Best Start in Life: An Early Years Framework for Action** provides a framework for assessing and strengthening the early years system across Gwent. The Framework supports a coordinated approach across national, regional and local levels, helping to translate national policy into regional action across Gwent and support local delivery within communities. The framework is used to assess current provision, identify opportunities for improvement and drive coordinated action to improve outcomes for babies, children and families.

The framework identifies three cross-cutting foundation stones that underpin an effective early years system:

- 1. **A society that values, understands, listens and responds to babies, children and families.**
- 2. **Shared vision, leadership and strategy.**
- 3. **Enabling structures and ways of working.**

Together, these foundation stones describe the conditions needed at local, regional and national levels to create a strong and sustainable early years system.

Recognising that strengthening the early years system is a long-term programme of work, the immediate focus for partners across Gwent is the delivery of the priorities and actions set out within the Regional Delivery Plan. Progress against the Foundation Stones will be developed alongside delivery of the Plan, with opportunities to strengthen the wider early years system taken forward incrementally as capacity, resources and partnership arrangements evolve over time.

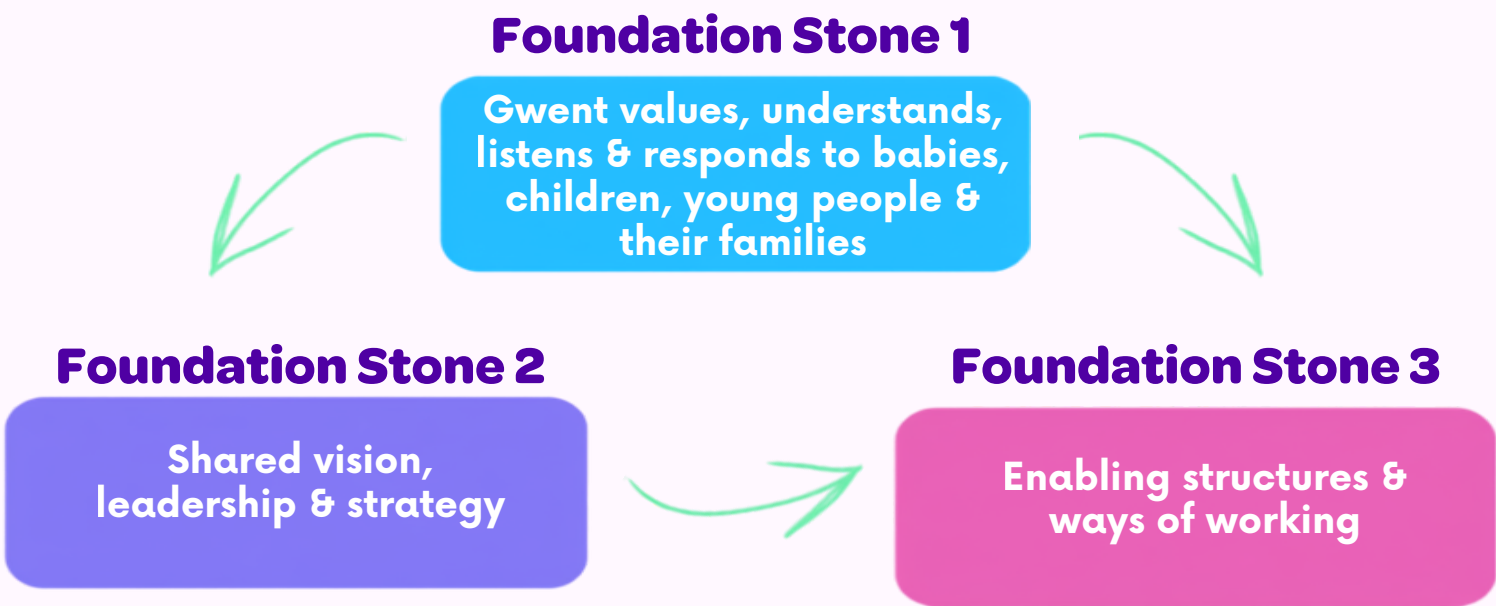
Regional Mapping and Assessment

To understand how regional activity aligns with the Framework, work has been undertaken to map actions within the Gwent Best Start in Life Regional Delivery Plan against the three foundation stones and their associated actions. This process has helped identify areas of strength, highlight existing activity and identify opportunities where further action may be required.

A **Red, Amber, Green** assessment has been used to review the level of alignment between current regional activity and the Framework. This assessment summarises progress made to date and identifies opportunities for further development across each regional action. Whilst actions to progress are presented against individual regional actions, many overlap and contribute to multiple areas of the Framework. Together, they represent a coordinated and whole-system approach to strengthening the early years system across Gwent over the longer term.

Foundation Stones for Best Start In Life

Giving every baby and child the best start in life



- Click to view the**
- **The Journey So Far**
 - **The Regional Delivery Plan**

1. Gwent Values, Understands, Listens, and Responds to Babies, Children, and Families

Shared values and agreed principles underpin regional planning and partnership working.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- A Regional Best Start in Life (BSiL) Delivery Plan has been developed to provide a shared framework for improving outcomes for babies, young children and families across Gwent.
- The Delivery Plan has been developed collaboratively with partners from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Local Authorities, Public Health, third sector organisations and Public Services Board partners.
- Six child-centred priorities for improvement have been agreed, providing a common focus for regional action.
- A set of regional Ways of Working has been developed to guide implementation, including commitments to reducing inequalities, children's rights, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, integration and collaboration.
- Activity and priorities have been mapped against the Public Health Wales Early Years Framework for Action to assess current progress and identify opportunities for further development.
- Governance structures, including the BSiL Leadership Group and Regional Management Group, have been established to provide strategic oversight and leadership.

Actions to Progress

- Ensure the agreed values and principles are explicitly reflected within the implementation plans developed for each action under the six priority areas.
- Embed values and principles within governance arrangements, reporting processes and Terms of Reference.
- Develop a process to review how effectively agreed principles are being applied across implementation activity.
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation arrangements assess alignment with the agreed Ways of Working.

Children's rights are embedded in the development, implementation, and evaluation of regional plans.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Child-centred language has been adopted throughout the Regional Delivery Plan, placing babies and young children at the centre of priorities and actions.
- The six priorities are framed from the perspective of the child, helping to ensure a continued focus on improving outcomes for babies, children and families.
- Children's rights are referenced within the Ways of Working, alongside commitments to reducing inequalities, anti-discriminatory practice and ensuring no child is left behind.
- Priority actions identify children and families who may face additional barriers or experience poorer outcomes, supporting a more equitable approach to delivery and helping to ensure that all children have the opportunity to achieve the best start in life.
- A proportionate universalism approach has been incorporated throughout the Delivery Plan, recognising that some children and families require additional support to achieve equitable outcomes.

Actions to Progress

- Use existing partnership structures, including the Community of Practice, to promote understanding of children's rights and share learning, resources and examples of how they can be considered within early years policy, planning and service delivery.
- Develop a process for considering children's rights during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions.
- Improve understanding of which groups of children and families are more likely to experience poorer outcomes or inequalities, and consider how their needs and experiences can be better reflected.
- Explore opportunities to include children's rights considerations within reporting and decision-making processes, helping to maintain a focus on equity and ensuring no child is left behind.
- Incorporate the voices and experiences of babies, children and families into future reviews and updates of the Delivery Plan.

1. Gwent Values, Understands, Listens, and Responds to Babies, Children, and Families

Collaborative approaches that involve babies, young children and their families in regional strategic planning and partnership working.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- The importance of involving babies, young children and families in the development, implementation and review of the Delivery Plan has been recognised.
- The Gwent BSIL Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was informed by the voices, experiences and needs of babies, young children and families, helping to build an understanding of what matters most to local communities and directly informing the development of the six priorities for improvement within the Regional Delivery Plan.
- A commitment has been made to ensure future work, including the next phase of the JSNA focusing on children aged 5-11 years, continues to be grounded in the voices and experiences of children, families and communities.
- Whilst engagement has informed understanding of population needs and priority settings, formal co-production mechanisms are not currently in place.

Actions to Progress

- Identify existing parent, carer and community networks that could support engagement activity across Gwent.
- Utilise the Community of Practice and partner networks to support future engagement and co-production activity.
- Establish mechanisms for gathering and using feedback from babies, children and families.
- Include evidence of family involvement within annual reporting, programme reviews and delivery plan updates.
- Explore opportunities for families to contribute to the review, development and evaluation of regional priorities and actions.
- Ensure individual action plans clearly articulate how babies, children and families have informed the design of actions and how their voices will continue to shape implementation and evaluation.

Cross-partnership decision making processes routinely consider the impact on babies, young children and families and maximise opportunities to optimise early childhood outcomes and reduce inequalities

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Reducing inequalities has been embedded as a core principle within the Delivery Plan.
- The Ways of Working include commitments to a life-course approach, proportionate universalism and stronger use of data to understand need.
- Priority actions identify target populations and groups at increased risk of poorer outcomes.
- Development of the Delivery Plan has been informed by evidence from the Building a Fairer Gwent (Marmot) Report and the Best Start in Life Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- The Delivery Plan promotes a whole-system approach to improving outcomes for babies, children and families.

Actions to Progress

- Explore the use of a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) to inform implementation, decision-making and future reviews of the Delivery Plan and individual action plans.
- Provide partners with access to training, resources and guidance to support a children's rights-based approach to planning and delivery.
- Incorporate the voices and experiences of babies, children and families into future reviews and updates of the Delivery Plan.

1. Gwent Values, Understands, Listens, and Responds to Babies, Children, and Families

Multi-agency partnerships are committed to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice and are aware of their own biases.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice is referenced within the Ways of Working.
- Equality and inclusion principles were considered during development of priorities and actions.
- Priority actions identify population groups who may experience greater barriers to achieving positive outcomes.
- The Delivery Plan recognises the importance of addressing inequalities and ensuring no child is left behind.

Actions to Progress

- Develop a more systematic approach to embedding anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice across implementation activities.
- Undertake equality impact assessments where appropriate.
- Promote workforce development opportunities that support cultural competence and inclusive practice.
- Strengthen the use of data and lived experience to understand inequalities and inform action.
- Monitor how actions are addressing inequalities across different population groups.

Mechanisms to build understanding across decision makers, service providers, and the public of the importance of early child development and how to support it.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- The Best Start in Life agenda has been promoted through development of the Regional Delivery Plan.
- Senior leaders and key stakeholders from across Gwent have been involved in Delivery Plan development.
- A Best Start in Life Community of Practice was established in January 2026.
- The Community of Practice provides a mechanism for sharing evidence, learning and best practice relating to early child development.
- Bi-monthly webinars and quarterly newsletters have been established to support communication and knowledge exchange.

Actions to Progress

- Use the Community of Practice to increase awareness of early child development across organisations and sectors.
- Develop consistent key messages relating to Best Start in Life and child development.
- Produce accessible resources for practitioners, partners and the public, available in multiple languages and platforms.
- Explore opportunities for public-facing campaigns and engagement activity.
- Promote awareness of the role all sectors play in enabling children to have the best start in life.



2. Shared Vision, Leadership and Strategy

The importance and prioritisation of early child development is reflected across regional strategic partnerships and visible to all appropriate system leaders.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- A Regional Best Start in Life (BSiL) Leadership Group has been established, bringing together senior leaders from across partner organisations to provide strategic oversight of the Best Start in Life agenda.
- A Regional Management Group has been established to support implementation of the Regional Delivery Plan and provide a mechanism for coordinated action.
- The Regional Delivery Plan has been informed by the Building a Fairer Gwent (Marmot) Report, the Best Start in Life JSNA and discussions with regional partners.
- Mapping has been undertaken to identify how Best Start in Life activity aligns with existing regional partnerships, programmes and governance structures.
- Early child development is reflected within a number of regional plans and partnership priorities, although this is not yet consistent across all relevant partnerships.

Actions to Progress

- Complete a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify all regional partnerships with an influence on early childhood outcomes.
- Assess the extent to which Best Start in Life priorities are referenced within each partnership's terms of reference, work programme, or strategic plan.
- Develop an engagement plan for partnerships where Best Start in Life is not currently represented.
- Establish a mechanism for two-way communication between the BSiL Leadership Group and key strategic partnerships.
- Include Best Start in Life considerations within partnership annual reporting arrangements.
- Develop a communications and engagement approach to increase awareness amongst senior leaders of the importance of early child development.

Cross-organisational partnerships share the ambition to give every child the best start in life and have a coordinated approach to ensure their strategic priorities are contributing to the ambition.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Six regional priorities for improvement have been agreed through a collaborative development process involving multiple organisations and sectors.
- Priority leads have been identified to support implementation and accountability.
- Actions have been mapped to regional partnerships and governance structures to identify delivery routes and areas of shared responsibility.
- The Delivery Plan has been developed as a shared regional framework for action, bringing together activity from multiple organisations and programmes.
- Discussions have taken place with other PSB Areas of Focus to identify opportunities for alignment and integration.

Actions to Progress

- Finalise accountability arrangements for all actions within the Delivery Plan.
- Implement a monitoring and reporting framework to track progress and contribution to outcomes.
- Review opportunities for joint delivery and shared ownership across organisations.
- Strengthen alignment between organisational plans and Best Start in Life priorities.
- Develop a shared outcomes framework to support collective accountability.

2. Shared Vision, Leadership and Strategy

Cross-organisational partnerships work collaboratively with families to develop a common vision, a clear theory of change and a strategy for service development and delivery.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- A shared regional vision and strategy for the Best Start in Life has been established through the development of the Regional Delivery Plan.
- The Gwent BSiL Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was informed by the voices, experiences and needs of babies, young children and families, helping to build an understanding of what matters most to local communities and directly informing the development of the six priorities for improvement within the Regional Delivery Plan.
- A commitment has been made to continue this approach through the development of future needs assessments, including the planned primary school-age JSNA, ensuring that the voices of children, families and communities continue to inform regional understanding of need.
- Whilst the regional vision and priorities have been informed by the experiences of children and families, formal mechanisms to routinely involve families in regional strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are not yet embedded.

Actions to Progress

- Undertake engagement activity with babies, children and families to inform implementation of the Regional Delivery Plan and future areas of development.
- Build on the lived experience gathered through the Best Start in Life JSNA and planned primary school-age JSNA to further strengthen understanding of the needs, experiences and priorities of children and families across Gwent.
- Establish mechanisms for babies, children and families to contribute to the review, monitoring and evaluation of priorities and actions.

Mechanisms to align local and national strategic planning and delivery plans, to optimise the impact of partners' collective efforts.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- The Delivery Plan has been developed in the context of national policy and evidence relating to Best Start in Life and early years development.
- Alignment has been undertaken with the Public Health Wales Early Years Framework for Action.
- Links have been established with the other Gwent Public Service Board Areas of Focus, Local Authorities ABUHB, Regional Partnership Board priorities and wider regional partnerships to better understand the partnership landscape and identify opportunities for stronger alignments across plans, programmes and delivery arrangements.
- Potential delivery routes have been identified to support integration with existing regional partnerships and programmes.
- Priority actions have been mapped to relevant governance structures, helping to reduce duplication and support coordinated delivery.

Actions to Progress

- Review and refine delivery routes as implementation progresses to ensure actions are being progressed through the most appropriate partnerships and governance structures.
- Strengthen links with relevant national networks, programmes and policy developments to ensure regional activity reflects emerging evidence, guidance and priorities.
- Identify opportunities to connect Best Start in Life activity with national programmes and groups, such as the Child Health Network and other early years and child health initiatives, to support shared learning and consistency of approach.
- Review alignment annually as part of the Delivery Plan review process and update arrangements where required.

2. Shared Vision, Leadership and Strategy

Effective systems to collate and analyse data and insight to inform strategic decision making.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- The Best Start in Life Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been used to inform development of the Regional Delivery Plan and priorities.
- Existing intelligence and evidence sources have been reviewed to support identification of regional priorities.
- Discussions have taken place regarding performance measures and population outcome indicators.
- The need for a consistent monitoring and evaluation framework has been recognised through feedback from partners and stakeholders.
- Work is underway to develop outcome measures and reporting arrangements for priority actions.

Actions to Progress

- Complete a review of available data sources and identify gaps in intelligence.
- Develop a shared outcomes and performance framework for the Regional Delivery Plan.
- Strengthen links with the GPHT Intelligence Team to support analysis and reporting.
- Establish arrangements for regular data review through governance structures.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate qualitative evidence, family feedback and lived experience alongside quantitative measures.

Collaborative approaches to regional and local strategy development informed by whole system approaches.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- A whole-system approach has been adopted throughout development of the Regional Delivery Plan.
- The Delivery Plan has been developed collaboratively across organisations, sectors and professional groups.
- Mapping of regional partnerships and delivery routes has been undertaken to improve understanding of the wider system.
- Priority actions have been linked to existing partnerships and governance structures to support coordinated delivery.
- Opportunities for alignment with wider regional priorities and programmes have been explored through engagement with PSB Areas of Focus and regional stakeholders.

Actions to Progress

- Continue to strengthen the use of systems thinking approaches within implementation and review processes.
- Develop mechanisms to routinely identify gaps, duplication and opportunities for collaboration across the system.
- Undertake a service map and gap analysis to better understand existing provision across Gwent.
- Share examples of effective whole-system working through the Community of Practice.
- Explore use of the PHW Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool to support continuous improvement.

3. Enabling Structures and Ways of Working

Opportunities to network and build trusted relationships between partners.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- A Best Start in Life Community of Practice was established in January 2026 to bring together professionals and partners from across the early years system.
- Bi-monthly webinars have been established to support shared learning, collaboration and dissemination of evidence and good practice.
- Quarterly Community of Practice e-newsletters have been introduced to share updates, resources and learning across the region.
- The BSiL Leadership Group and Regional Management Group provide regular opportunities for partners to connect, build relationships and coordinate activity.
- Development of the Regional Delivery Plan has strengthened relationships between organisations and facilitated collaboration across sectors.
- A systems mapping exercise has been undertaken to improve understanding of the partnership landscape across Gwent.

Actions to Progress

- Increase representation and engagement from partners across the wider early years system.
- Establish face-to-face networking and learning opportunities to complement webinars and newsletters.
- Develop mechanisms to evaluate participation, reach and impact of networking opportunities.
- Strengthen links between the Community of Practice and regional partnership structures.
- Identify and address gaps in representation from partner organisations and sectors.

Effective mechanisms to support collaborative working.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Governance arrangements have been established to support leadership, implementation and oversight of Best Start in Life activity across Gwent.
- A systems mapping exercise has been completed to improve understanding of the partnership landscape and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Delivery routes have been identified for priority actions to support coordination through existing partnerships and governance structures.
- The Regional Management Group provides a forum for coordinating activity, monitoring progress and addressing cross-cutting issues.
- The Community of Practice provides an additional mechanism for knowledge exchange and collaboration across organisations.

Actions to Progress

- Review and update the systems map on a regular basis to reflect changes in the partnership landscape.
- Utilise the PHW Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Develop clearer mechanisms for communication and escalation between partnerships where appropriate.
- Continue to strengthen coordination between delivery routes and governance arrangements.
- Identify and address barriers to collaboration as implementation progresses.

3. Enabling Structures and Ways of Working

Collaborative and coordinated approaches to developing regional plans.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- The Regional Best Start in Life Delivery Plan has been developed collaboratively with partners from health, local government, public health, education, housing and the third sector.
- Priority leads have worked with relevant stakeholders to identify and agree actions, measures and delivery arrangements.
- Feedback has been sought and incorporated through the BSiL Leadership Group, Regional Management Group and wider stakeholder engagement.
- The Delivery Plan has been informed by existing regional plans, strategies, evidence and partnership priorities.
- Opportunities for alignment with other Public Services Board Areas of Focus have been explored during development of the Delivery Plan.
- Whilst significant collaborative planning has taken place, engagement with babies, children and families has not yet been embedded within the planning process.

Actions to Progress

- Strengthen involvement of babies, children, families and communities in future planning and review processes.
- Develop a formal co-production approach to support future development of regional plans and priorities.
- Continue to broaden engagement with partners across the wider early years system.
- Use learning from implementation to inform future iterations of the Delivery Plan.
- Review the effectiveness of collaborative planning arrangements and identify opportunities for improvement.

Integrated regional networks connecting services to make best use of resources to meet local needs.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Mapping of regional partnerships, governance structures and delivery routes has been completed to improve understanding of the wider system.
- Existing partnerships have been identified as delivery routes for actions within each of the six priority areas.
- The Delivery Plan promotes integration and collaboration across sectors to improve outcomes for babies, children and families.
- Programme Assurance arrangements have been introduced to provide oversight of key programmes and initiatives contributing to Best Start in Life outcomes.
- Discussions have commenced regarding opportunities to strengthen coordination across services and partnerships.

Actions to Progress

- Undertake a service mapping and gap analysis exercise across Gwent.
- Identify opportunities to reduce duplication and improve coordination between services.
- Explore opportunities for greater integration across programmes and partnerships.
- Strengthen Programme Assurance arrangements to improve system-wide oversight.
- Share examples of effective integrated working across the region.

3. Enabling Structures and Ways of Working

Regional partnerships with a shared understanding of early child development, nurturing care, and what babies need for the best start in life.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- Development of the Regional Delivery Plan has increased awareness of the Best Start in Life agenda across partner organisations.
- The Building a Fairer Gwent (Marmot) Report, Best Start in Life JSNA and Public Health Wales Early Years Framework for Action have informed discussions and planning activity.
- The Community of Practice has been established to support shared learning and dissemination of evidence relating to early child development.
- Regular webinars provide opportunities to promote evidence, learning and best practice across sectors.
- A shared commitment to improving outcomes for babies, young children and families has been established through development of the Regional Delivery Plan.

Actions to Progress

- Map existing early years workforce development opportunities across partner organisations.
- Undertake a training needs analysis to identify gaps in knowledge and skills.
- Develop a coordinated regional learning and development offer.
- Use the Community of Practice to promote consistent understanding of early child development and nurturing care.
- Create opportunities for cross-sector learning and sharing of evidence-based practice.

Regular opportunities to celebrate success and share learning across partnerships.

RAG Rating: Amber

Progress to Date

- The Community of Practice provides a platform for sharing evidence, best practice and learning across the region.
- Bi-monthly webinars support the dissemination of innovation, research and examples of effective practice.
- Quarterly e-newsletters have been established to promote learning, celebrate progress and share opportunities with partners.
- Development of the Regional Delivery Plan has encouraged discussion and sharing of activity taking place across organisations and sectors.
- Partners have identified the importance of strengthening mechanisms for celebrating success and promoting shared learning.

Actions to Progress

- Develop a structured approach to celebrating success across the Best Start in Life system.
- Incorporate learning and showcase sessions into Leadership Group, Regional Management Group and Community of Practice meetings.
- Establish a process for sharing case studies, innovation and examples of effective practice.
- Explore opportunities for an annual Best Start in Life learning and celebration event.
- Monitor the effectiveness of learning and sharing mechanisms through partner feedback and evaluation.