

Happy, Healthy and Ready to Learn



Early Years Strategy

2021-26

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Introduction from Cllr Caroline Woodley

Every child has the right to be as happy, healthy and ready to learn as they can possibly be – no matter what their individual circumstances or needs.

In Hackney we want to help each child grow in confidence, and to share easily accessible resources, advice and support with their families and carers.

We know how important it is to give children the best start in life and we want our young people to carry this great sense of pride in growing up in our borough.

This strategy sets out our vision for Early Years, our priorities, our principles and what we want to achieve. The challenge for families in a densely-populated borough like ours should not be underestimated – too many of our children are born in poverty, but with effective Early Years services we can help every parent prepare to raise their child with confidence and every child to reach their potential.

Working together with parents and carers, our information services can help to secure the right support from pregnancy through immunisations to choosing a playgroup, nursery or childminder.

Where children have additional needs we can do more to help families and carers to understand and support their child's development, build resilience and promote wellbeing. For some, dropping into 'stay and play' sessions can make all the difference. For others, the opportunity lies in engaging in local activities, training and employment skills.

For our children, it's important to let them know from the very start that their voices will be heard, that we understand their behaviour and can help them to understand it too. With access to early education, children will find help with their communication, with language and discovering the joy of reading.

In broadening the role of our children's centres into 'children and family hubs', we recognise the importance of child and parent attachment and encourage the development of supportive peer networks. In further integrating our Early Years and Health Visiting service we can ensure we have collaborative and holistic support in place right from the start.

In Hackney, we take great pride in building an inclusive culture. If we can get it right in Early Years, our children will grow in self-esteem and inspire us all with their creativity, curiosity and desire to learn.



Early Years

An overview

Early education, childcare, play opportunities and support is at the core of what we offer to families during this critical time of development and foundation in a child's life, which we call the 'early years'.

We are really proud of these services that support children, young people and families, which were recognised by Ofsted as being 'well-developed and effective'.

In order to build on these successes and so we can continue to improve outcomes for our children, we have developed a new Early Years Strategy. This sets out our vision, priorities and principles that underpin all the work we do and all the services we provide for young children and their families.

We have also been looking at how we can support families who need extra help to overcome challenges they face, whatever their children's age.

Over the past two years, we listened to hundreds of residents – parents, carers, those who would like to become mothers and fathers in the future as well as other professionals who work with families – to ensure this strategy reflects what is most important to them.

They told us the services we provide are invaluable to them; and they are positive about the support they receive from us. Parents with younger children said nurseries, 'stay and play' activities and family support are what they care about most; and parents with older children and young people said they really value being able to access a range of different opportunities that work for them. Our Early Years Strategy protects those services into the future.

We also know that families appreciated some of the digital resources we developed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, when settings remained open for key workers and vulnerable children, and play activities moved online, and we will be looking at how we can make improvements and innovations to ensure we cater for more of Hackney's communities in an increasingly digital world.

Happy, healthy, ready to learn. Those are Hackney Council's ambitions for every child in our borough, whatever their background or start in life, as they grow and learn from birth to five.

The Council is committed to Rebuilding a Better Hackney out of the pandemic. That includes better supporting our communities who need extra help, and embracing the opportunity to find long-term solutions to systemic problems, such as poverty and inequality. That's why this strategy focuses on ensuring we provide more holistic help to families by working more closely with partner organisations, including health teams; and broadening the services we deliver to children and families on the ground. At the same time, there is also an opportunity to ensure the services we provide remain fit for the future, both operationally and financially.

When we talked to residents to find out how we could better support children and families in a way that is both most beneficial to them, and also sustainable into the future, we looked at how we could better use our current children's centres, of which we have 20.

Our children's centres are a trusted mainstay of our communities, and we know that residents who use these centres value them immensely: 97 per cent of people we talked to were positive about the centres they used.

We want to build on that accomplishment. To do that, we have been developing plans to turn some children's centres into new 'children and family hubs'. These will bring together support across early years, primary and secondary ages.

However, the strategy is also a means to properly confront some difficult decisions and meet some of the challenges ahead of us. The Council must make many millions of pounds of savings over the coming months and years in order to meet our severe budget deficit - a legacy of more than a decade of sustained core Government cuts combined with the more recent impact of the Covid pandemic.

We want to reassure residents that, despite the financial pressures we face as a Council, we will always ensure our most vulnerable families have access to the services and childcare and respite they need.



The case for intervening early

The Cross Party 1001 Days Manifesto (2014), cited the 'early years of life are a crucial period of change; alongside adolescence this is a key moment for brain development. As our understanding of the science of development improves, it becomes clearer and clearer how the events that happen to children and babies lead to structural changes that have life-long ramifications. Science is helping us to understand how love and nurture by caring adults is hardwired into the brains of children'.

London Councils - The best start for Londoners (2021) notes the impact of Covid-19 on reversing the gains achieved in closing the attainment gap. Covid has had an impact on children's language, communication, physical, social and emotional development. Early Years will therefore play an important role in children's recovery.

The review into poverty and life chances: The Foundation Years Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults, found that children's life chances and outcomes are grounded on their development in the first five years of life. Parental education and opportunities for learning in those important years, have a greater impact on later outcomes than income (Frank Fields, 2010). What parents do is more significant than who they are.

The Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), showed the association between high quality early years settings and children's educational, cognitive, behavioural and social development in both the short and long term (Barnes and Melhuish, 2016).



Early Years statutory duties

- To improve outcomes for children at age 5 years, particularly in early language and communication, to increase school readiness, and reduce inequalities in outcomes for children at risk of not fulfilling their potential.
- Provision of effective quality early years services, evidenced to be a key element of early help, leading to improved outcomes (school readiness and lifetime outcomes).
- Provide advice, information and guidance to parents and carers, settings and agencies through the Parenting & Family Information Service.
- Ensure sufficient nursery provision, and a coordinated approach to services for preschool children, working through children's centres, to promote integrated health, childcare and parenting support, training and employment skills.
- Support eligible 2, 3 & 4 year olds to take up their free 15 or 30 hours early years entitlement.



Principles

1

Partnership working with parents and carers to promote home-learning; and child and parent attachment.

2

Ensure parents and carers, have all the information they need at the right time in order to access services and opportunities.

3

Partnership with settings, (including independent settings) agencies and organisations to forge strong relationships that deliver integrated, seamless and broad-ranging services to children and families, which are inclusive and accessible.

5

Commitment to inclusive services that supports children with special educational needs or a disability.

4

Deliver **excellent universal and targeted services** that support early identification of need and early help to address that need, including promoting healthy start, physical activity, and nutrition.

6

Support children to **understand their own feelings and those of others**, and to regulate their own behaviour; and develop early language, communication, physical, social and emotional skills, central to supporting their outcomes.

7

Explore opportunities to broaden the role of children's centres into **children and family hubs** in order to support parenting across all phases: early years, primary and secondary, where it makes sense to.

8

This strategy **complements other local strategies** which enhance the life chances of children and families, with particular attention to health outcomes, meeting the needs of children with additional needs, and supporting parents' economic outcomes.

9

Develop greater interaction and cooperation, through **integrated leadership and planning, between Early Years and Health Visiting services**, to achieve better knowledge gathering and sharing to better support young children – particularly babies in their first 1001 days.

10

Deliver **family support that respects, values and thinks about the whole need of the family**, informed by an understanding of trauma and secure attachments.

What we want to achieve

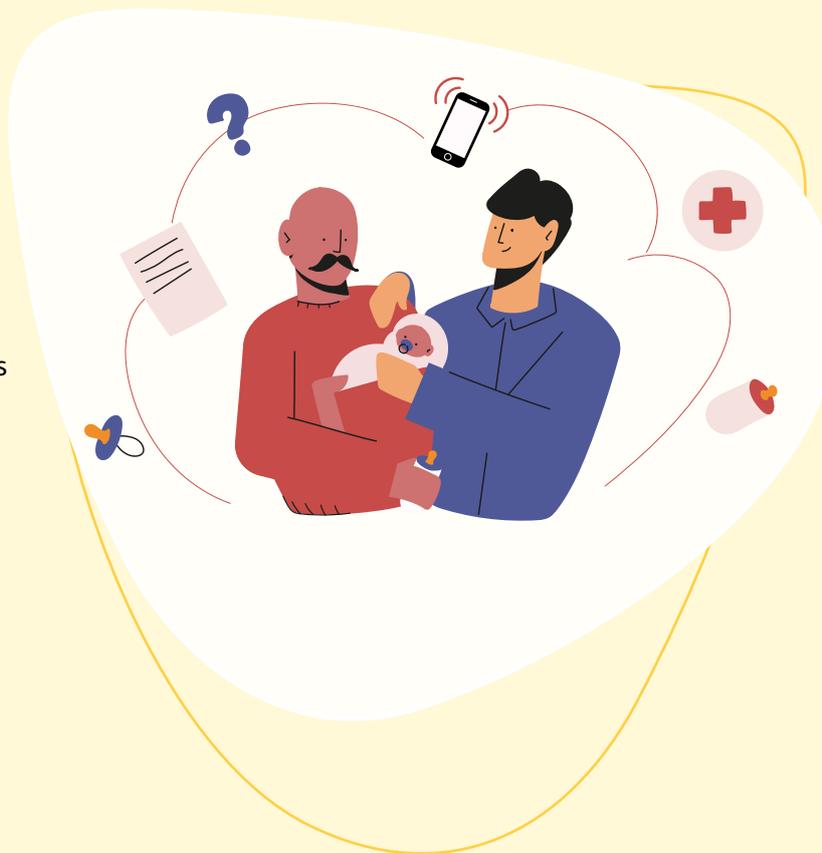
- A holistic service for young children and their families through a new model of joined-up Health Visiting and Early Years, on the basis that these services are entwined, serving the same children.

One service provides an opportunity to:

- Improve pathways and information for families
- Strengthen collaboration, knowledge, skills and communication
- Plan together to reduce duplication and make best use of resources.

- Work with partners to broaden the role of the 6 multi-agency children's centres into children and family hubs, with particular attention to:

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and children with SEND, from conception to 5 years
- Universal services, such as stay and play activities, to support language, communication, physical, emotional and social development
- Early help to support families pre-birth to 19 years.





- Review and reconfigure children’s centres in accordance with our childcare sufficiency duty, corporate priorities and budget savings.
- Robust learning and governance to reduce inequalities in outcomes for disadvantaged children. Currently, 77% of reception pupils in Hackney schools are achieving a good level of development by the end of their first school year.
- Embed a system of outreach to enable marginalised communities to access services, information and opportunities.
- A programme of support, training, information and guidance to early years settings and childminders, to maintain effective quality provision.
- 90% settings and childminders judged good or better by Ofsted.
- With the SEND service, develop two early years hubs, one in the north and one in the south of the borough, for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan.

CHILDREN & FAMILY HUB

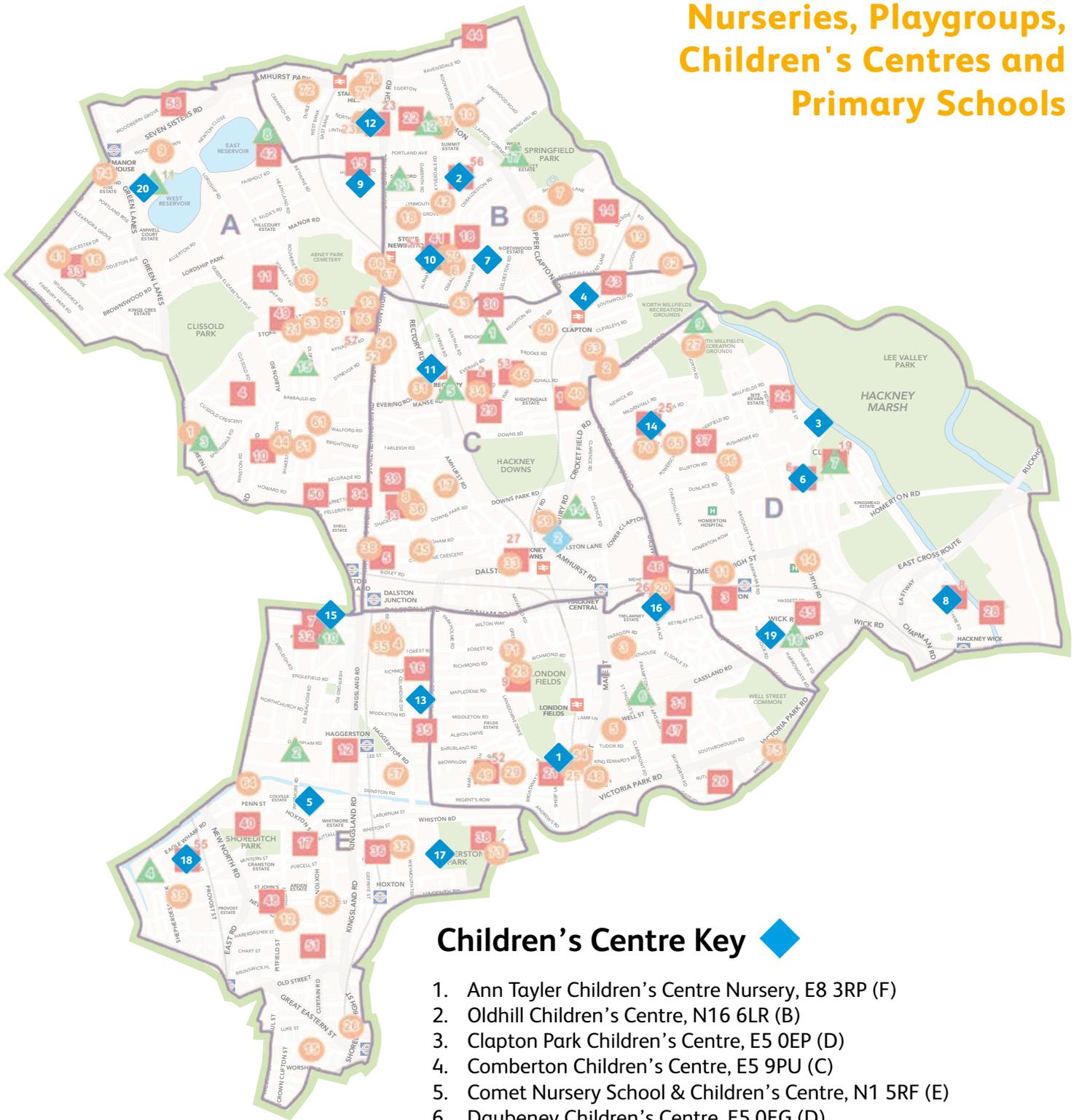


What we are currently doing:

Work with partners to broaden the role of children's centres into children and family hubs with particular attention to;

- Developing a family support model that brings together family support approach across early years, family units and Young Hackney – pre-birth to 19 years.
- Developing links between children and adult services through the development of the emerging primary care networks.
- Reviewing the configuration of children's centres in accordance with budget savings for 2022.
- Maintaining a focus on:
 - Vulnerable and disadvantaged children from conception to 5yrs
 - Universal services such as stay and play activities to support language, cognitive, physical, and social development
 - Attachment aware and trauma informed settings and practitioners.

Nurseries, Playgroups, Children's Centres and Primary Schools



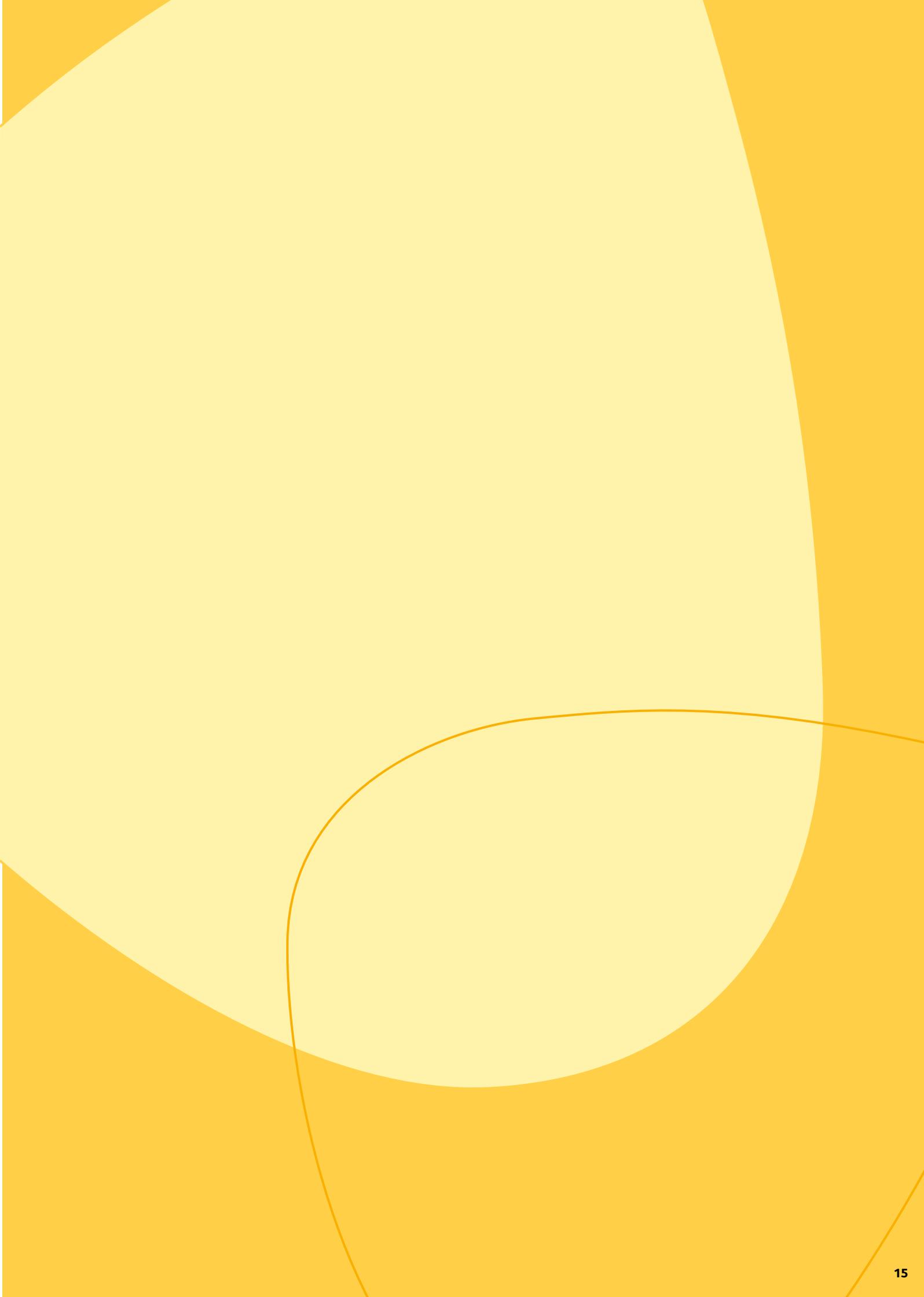
Children's Centre Key

1. Ann Tayler Children's Centre Nursery, E8 3RP (F)
2. Oldhill Children's Centre, N16 6LR (B)
3. Clapton Park Children's Centre, E5 0EP (D)
4. Comberton Children's Centre, E5 9PU (C)
5. Comet Nursery School & Children's Centre, N1 5RF (E)
6. Daubeney Children's Centre, E5 0EG (D)
7. Fernbank Children's Centre, N16 7EA (B)
8. Gainsborough Children's Centre, E9 5ND (D)
9. Hillside Children's Centre, N16 5QR (A)
10. Ihsan Children's Centre, N16 6AA (B)
11. Linden Children's Centre, N16 7SH (C)
12. Lubavitch Children's Centre, N16 5RL (B)
13. Mapledene & Queensbridge Children's Centre, E8 3LE (F)
14. Millfields Children's Centre, E5 0SQ (D)
15. Minik Kardes Community Nursery & Children's Centre, N1 4BW (E)
16. Morningside Children's Centre, E9 6LL (F)
17. Sebright Children's Centre, E2 8NP (E)
18. Comet at Thomas Fairchild, N1 7HX (E)
19. Wentworth Nursery School & Children's Centre, E9 5BN (D)
20. Woodberry Down Children's Centre, N4 2NP (A)

-  Day Nursery Key
-  Playgroup Key
-  Primary School Key

Engagement Timeline 2021





The Early Years Strategy and activity complements other local strategies which enhance the life chances of children and families, with particular attention to health outcomes, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and supporting parents and carers economic outcomes.

To find out more:

 education.Hackney.gov.uk