

# Suffolk County Council's Early Years and Childcare Improvement Strategy

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“A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances”  
*Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework*

## Vision

Our vision is for every child in Suffolk to access:

- ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ early years provision as judged by Ofsted; and
- the best support for their development, learning and achievement.

We aspire to eliminate the difference in educational outcomes between those children who are disadvantaged (free school meal eligibility criteria) or vulnerable and their non-disadvantaged peers.

No child should be disadvantaged by being unable to attend a high quality early years provision.

No parent / carer should be prevented from work or training by the absence of childcare.

## National Context

The national context for the Early Years and Childcare Strategy is to:

- help families to meet the costs of childcare;
- enable parents/carers to use childcare to access employment and training;
- enable families of children with special educational needs and disabilities to access a childcare place;
- increase the amount of affordable provision;
- improve access to high quality early education and childcare; and
- give parents/carers access to the right information so they can make informed choices about childcare.
- improve social mobility through education
- close the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their non-disadvantaged peers.

## Local Context

Suffolk’s Early Years and Childcare Strategy links and contributes to the wider context of a range of local priorities and plans that affect families, children and young people; in particular ‘Raising the Bar’ and ‘Family 2020’.

Early education and childcare in Suffolk is provided by private, voluntary, independent (PVI) organisations, schools and childminders.

We will

- act as champions for disadvantaged children and their families;
- challenge and support early years providers judged by Ofsted as ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’; and
- challenge and support all providers to become outstanding as judged by Ofsted
- make sure there’s enough good quality early education and childcare for families who need it

## Delivery

### 1. **Quality improvement**

We will:

- promote partnership working between childcare providers and other professionals to support continuous improvement at a local level
- commission, promote and deliver training and development for the early years and childcare workforce;
- challenge all providers to improve their practice to become and remain outstanding
- provide targeted support to childcare providers judged by Ofsted to be 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement'; and those providers whose practice is of concern

### 2. **Childcare place development:**

We will:

- monitor the sufficiency of early years and childcare places;
- support providers with sustainability concerns
- consult with families to identify their need and use of childcare;
- explore the range of opportunities to fund the development of new provision; and
- work with a range of providers and partners to develop additional places to meet demand.

### 3. **Government funded early education:**

We will:

- maintain a 'list of providers' approved to deliver funded early education places on behalf of Suffolk County Council;
- ensure providers are paid in an efficient and timely way to support their business in order to maintain effective service delivery; and
- ensure the appropriate use of public funds.

### 4. **Childcare information and access:**

We will:

- promote the take up of funded places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds;
- raise parents' awareness of their childcare entitlements (including the extended entitlement to 30 hours of childcare for eligible 3 and 4 year olds);
- provide a brokerage service for families identified as vulnerable and those who have experienced difficulties in accessing suitable childcare; and
- provide a Family Information Service, including access to childcare information published online.

### 5. **Support for individual children:**

We will:

- provide advice, support and challenge to early years providers to help them meet the needs of individual children in their care.

## Principles

These four principles will guide the work of Suffolk County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service:

### **1. Quality**

We will:

- promote excellence and challenge underperformance in all childcare providers
- focus on developing high quality provision for all eligible 2, 3, and 4 year old to access their funded early education entitlement.

### **2. Efficiency**

We will:

- target our resources where the impact will be greatest;
- use available technology to work effectively with families, and early years and childcare providers; and
- use information from a range of sources to set targets and monitor progress.

### **3. Integration and partnership**

We will:

- promote the collective responsibility of all leaders and staff in early years settings, schools, academies to deliver our vision; and
- maximise opportunities to work in partnership with multiple agencies to achieve the service aims in the most efficient and effective way; and
- identify best practice in early years settings and schools and facilitate the sharing and development of this across other settings and schools.

Children benefit from all education providers working in partnership and sharing best practice as they continue to improve together. The success of the strategy depends on effective work with our partners.

### **4. Early Help**

We will:

- support parents to engage in their child's learning;
- help every parent/carer who wants a childcare place for their child to access one;
- offer additional help to families who are struggling to find a childcare place;
- support childcare providers to offer Early Help to children in their care and their parents/carers; and
- maximise opportunities for children to reach their potential and to prevent the need for higher tier services.

Early Help is the principle of assessing need and providing support to a family to prevent matters deteriorating. All agencies working with families are expected to provide Early Help (Working Together to Safeguard Children).

## Measurable Aims

To support continuous improvement we will:

- encourage early education providers to inspire and challenge all children so they reach their potential;
- help continuously improve all early years providers so Ofsted outcomes in Suffolk are above the national average, and:
  - all are judged 'good' or 'outstanding'
  - all leadership is judged 'good' or 'outstanding'; and
  - no children are placed in an 'inadequate' Ofsted category setting.
- help narrow the attainment gap for all children vulnerable to underachievement including:
  - children living in economically disadvantage families
  - children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
  - minority ethnic groups and
  - children in care.
- Promote effective transition for children between early years settings and schools; and
- ensure there is enough high quality and accessible childcare for children 0 to 14 (up to 25 where a young person has a SEND)

## Enablers

We will:

- use the Signs of Safety and Wellbeing model to work with children, families and providers to help us identify what is working well, resolve problems and improve services; and
- use digital and new technology to improve the services and information we provide to all audiences.