BRADFORD BIRTH TO 19

50 things to do

REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The focus of this case study is 50 Things to Do Before You're Five, a family-facing initiative designed to give children the best start in life, that is co-designed with and brings together a wide range of partners across the early years, education, health, and cultural sectors - within a place.

It supports early language development, learning, and health through and follows a model of proportionate universalism:

- A universal offer, free and accessible to all families with young children.

Additional support and tailored adaptations for:

- Families in areas of high deprivation
- Families who experience barriers to engagement with services
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

This infrastructure model launched in 2018 from St Edmund's Nursery School, an Ofsted-judged Outstanding early years setting in Girlington, Bradford, one of the most deprived areas of the city, and has since expanded across Bradford, the West Yorkshire region, and into many other parts of the country through a place-based, locally-led model. This case study will focus on Bradford.

The total annual Bradford reach is estimated at 25,000 children, 65% of all children.

The programme's current evaluation in Bradford will follow 1,000 children across 16 nurseries over 3 years to gather data around children meeting age expected outcomes and progress towards GLD.

KEY AMBITIONS AND OUTCOMES

The key aim of the initiative is for every child to reach their important health, learning, and wellbeing milestones through a play-filled childhood. 50 Things to Do Before You're Five supports a wide range of positive outcomes for children in their earliest years:

- It strengthens parent-child relationships, fostering emotional security and improved wellbeing.
- It enhances school readiness by supporting development across key areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), including personal, social and emotional development, and physical development.
- It promotes strong foundations in language and communication, helping children develop the vocabulary, listening, and interaction skills critical for later literacy and learning.



THEORY OF CHANGE

At the heart of 50 Things to Do Before You're Five is the belief that everyday experiences, when enriched through purposeful play and strong adult-child interaction, can significantly improve children's early development:
When parents use the activities at home, they are better equipped to support their child's learning in meaningful, age-appropriate ways, leading to stronger relationships, improved confidence, and enriched home learning environments.

When Family Hubs, early years settings, and community services actively embed 50 Things into their work, families receive coordinated, consistent messages and support across settings, helping to bridge gaps in service access and increase parental engagement, particularly among families who may face social or economic barriers. See the overarching Theory of Change diagram to the left.

POWER AND AGENCY OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

1. 50 Things to Do was shaped by parents to ensure the activities reflect real-life experiences, interests, and cultural relevance, recognising that empowering families as active participants in their children's early learning and building ownership and connection to the resource.
2. 50 Things to Do encourages parents to take an active role in their child's learning and to connect with local opportunities and services. Many families become more confident in navigating their community, accessing support, and participating in local life.
3. Parents participate in local steering groups, bringing together partners from culture, voluntary & community, health, education, and the local authority. These cross-sector groups help to shape local delivery, align 50 Things to Do with other early childhood priorities, ensuring the diverse needs of local families are met.

GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATIONS

COLLABORATION PARTNERS WHICH SHARE OUTCOME ACCOUNTABILITY

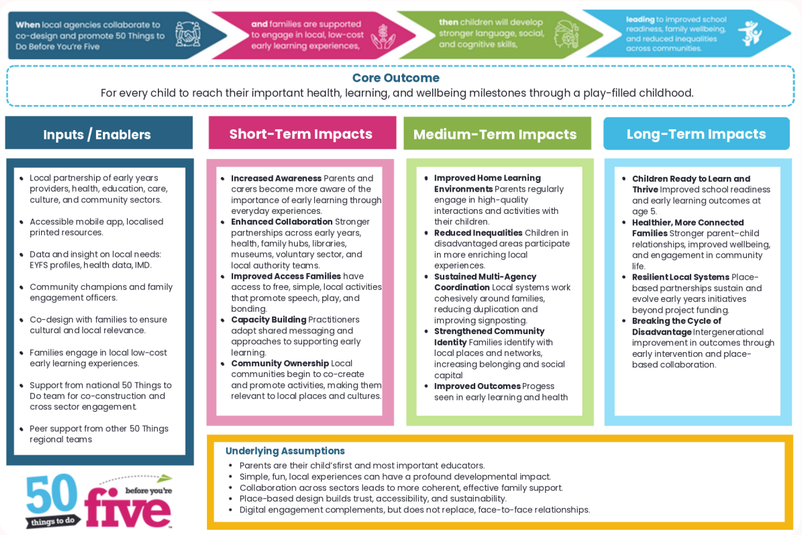
Birth to 19 collaborates with a wide range of partners across the education, health, voluntary and cultural sectors, and so far, accountability for outcomes relating to 50 Things to Do has been primarily rooted in the education sector. Family Hubs are becoming a key partner and while Birth to 19 have established links with the health sector, including GP practices, NHS trusts, and public health teams, shared accountability is still developing. They also partner with a wide range of cultural and community organisations, including museums, galleries, libraries, parks, and other local assets, to co-deliver accessible, enriching experiences for families.

COLLABORATION GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance of 50 Things to Do Before You're Five is led by Birth to 19, but supported further by a multi-agency model at both strategic (national) and operational (local) levels. At the local level, implementation is typically guided by a local steering or advisory group, bringing together representatives from:

- Local authority early years and education teams
- Family Hubs
- Maintained schools and MATs
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Libraries, museums, and cultural partners
- Public health or health visiting teams

THEORY OF CHANGE CONTINUED



STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF THE BACKBONE FUNCTION

The Birth to 19 team provides the core national backbone function overseeing strategy, resource development, training, and data. At the local level, the backbone role is typically shared between the local authority lead (often from Early Years or Family Hubs), Family Hubs, and local steering groups, who coordinate delivery, align the initiative with local priorities, and engage partners across sectors.

- ☑ Coordinate shared vision and strategy
- ☑ Collaboration/Partnership management
- ☑ Engage, empower and connect communities
- ☑ Data gathering and analysis
- ☑ Deliver services for Children/Families
- ☑ Support delivery of services
- ☑ Facilitate learning
- ☑ External Communications
- ☑ Fundraising

AMBITIONS TO SCALE

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is already scaling nationally and has grown from a local programme rooted in Bradford to a local offer in 23 localities across the British Isles. Birth to 19 now has the ambition and capacity to scale 50 Things to Do across the whole of England, as an integral element of the Best Start in Life initiative.

Alongside expansion into new areas, the team is also focused on deepening the impact of the programme in both existing and new localities, particularly targeting improved outcomes for children most at risk of not having the best start in life. This deeper work includes:

- Supporting early years settings to strengthen parental engagement through initiatives such as 'Friends of 50 Things' and 'Parents and Partners'.
- Developing a socially prescribed 'Wellbeing Playgroup' programme to support families where one or more parents are experiencing mental health challenges.
- Delivering transformational workforce development training for Family Hubs and Best Start in Life teams.
- Enabling early years settings to offer targeted parenting programmes for families from disadvantaged backgrounds, often running over 6–12 weeks.

WORK WITH FAMILY HUBS

The Birth to 19 team is delivering training for Family Navigators and Family Support Workers within Family Hubs, with the aim of embedding 50 Things to Do Before You're Five as a core part of joining up their practices and meaningfully integrated it into family support and engagement. The training is also about practice development - strengthening practitioner-family relationships, increasing strengths-based support to parents, and improving access to enriching early learning experiences in everyday life.

BACKBONE DELIVERY MODEL

NUMBER OF STAFF

The Birth to 19 team includes 25 staff spread across leadership, administration, finance, and marketing and communications – national and local.

The core team supporting 50 Things delivery in Bradford consists of 4 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, who are responsible for local coordination, partnership working, practitioner training, and community engagement.

ANNUAL BUDGET

Budget levels vary between other local authority areas depending on the scale of implementation, commissioning arrangements, and whether additional outreach or adaptation is planned for specific communities.

Within a mature local offer such as Bradford, 50 Things to Do costs typically £100,000 annually which includes the work of engagement officer, marketing and delivery resources, and the support of leadership and backbone teams.



place matters
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