REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Thrive at Five currently operate programmes in three locations: Stoke on Trent, Redcar & Cleveland and Middlesbrough. In Stoke-on-Trent, their work has been focused in the two wards of Abbey Hulton and Bentilee since 2023, with scoping underway with the Local Authority to expand into two new wards. They work across five wards in Redcar & Cleveland: Dormanstown, Eston, Grangetown, Kirkleatham and Southbank. Middlesbrough, their most recent programme, was launched in 2025 and will be operating in the wards of Newport and Central. They are also in the process of establishing a new programme in Scotland, with a site expected to be agreed in the next 3-6 months.

Each local programme targets approximately 2,500 children from pregnancy to five, and their families. It is anticipated that they will be working with at least 12,000 children and parents by 2027, with the broader influence of work improving early years support across the whole of each of the four Local Authority areas.

Programme areas are targeted to places where:

(a) a high proportion of children, particularly children from more disadvantaged backgrounds, are not reaching a Good Level of Development and;
(b) where deprivation is strongly concentrated.

The Thrive at Five model aims to improve outcomes for children from pregnancy to five in these communities, with a particular focus on those children at most risk of not reaching developmental milestones.

In Stoke-on-Trent, the proportion of FSM eligible children in Thrive at Five wards achieving a GLD increased by 11.4 percentage points from 52.8 percent in 2024 to 64.2% in 2025. Across the city, 58 percent of FSM eligible children achieved a GLD in both 2024 and 2025.

KEY AMBITIONS AND APPROACH

Everything Thrive at Five does is to ensure that all children in their early years have the strong foundations they need for life and learning. They do this by bringing together local communities, families and a wide range of local partners, including health services, family hubs, schools and local charities, and by joining up and strengthening the early years system.
They do this in two key ways:

- Unlocking the power of parents and carers to give their children the nurturing care and supportive environments they need.
- Enable collaboration across health, education, community and voluntary sectors, improve engagement with parents and carers and support the early years system to use evidence and data more effectively to create a stronger and more effective early years system.

Thrive at Five also supports their programme teams through the charity's central learning and evaluation function and with their trustees and advisors who connect local teams with best-in-class expertise in relation to early development, evidence-based practice, community engagement, implementation, evaluation, and systems change.

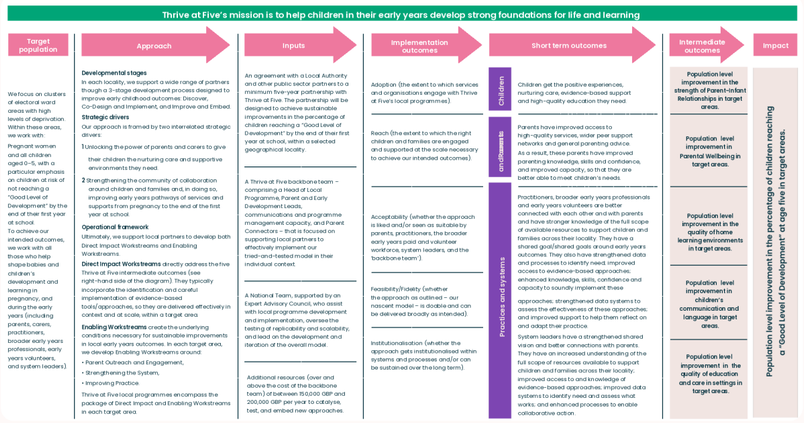
POWER AND AGENCY OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Thrive at Five involves parents, carers and community members in decision-making and priority setting from the outset to create strong relationships for their work. They do this by:

1. Being partners in their Discovery phase to share parents and families experiences and what help they need to support children's development
2. Involvement in their Co-design phase, identifying ways parents and carers can shape the initiatives being implemented
3. Upskilling and training parents and families with parenting knowledge and skills and at times, providing employability skills

THEORY OF CHANGE

The backbone teams support local partners to develop both Direct Impact Workstreams and Enabling Workstreams. Direct Impact Workstreams directly address the five Thrive at Five intermediate outcomes incorporating the identification and implementation of evidence-based tools and approaches, delivered effectively in context and at scale for each target area.



GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATIONS

COLLABORATION PARTNERS WHICH SHARE OUTCOME ACCOUNTABILITY

Key partners include:

- Local voluntary and community organisations
- Local faith groups
- Partners from across the private and public sectors, including:
    1. Family Hubs
    2. Nurseries and schools
    3. Midwives, GPs, speech and language therapists, health visitors

COLLABORATION GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

To establish a programme, a partnership agreement is entered into with the Local Authority which sets out shared goals and expectations.

The programmes are developed with oversight from a senior leaders group, with director level representation spanning relevant public agencies. A wide range of senior local stakeholders are enlisted, from school leaders to local charity CEOs. The design and implementation of the programme is the responsibility of local working groups, which can include school foundation stage leaders, family hub workers, midwifery and health visiting team leads and representatives from local faith and other community organisations.

STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF THE BACKBONE FUNCTION

Thrive at Five recruit a local backbone team in each area they work. This consists of around four roles including a Programme director, roles that lead collaboration and co-design with schools and nurseries, health partners and the wider community, and a communications specialist. Capacity for parent outreach is provided through paid parent connectors and a community coordinator. The local team is supported by a central team who provide additional expertise, including communications, fundraising and back-office support.

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



ANNUAL BUDGET

Thrive at Five's annual budget for a programme varies depending on the phase of work (from discovery through to implementation of workstreams) and the availability of existing resources. Costs can include some or all the following:

- Local backbone team
- Local parent outreach team
- Resources for implementation of workstreams
- Central costs for comms and learning and evaluation

SOURCES OF INCOME

The model is designed to be sustainable and scalable. Local Authorities must co-invest with philanthropists to ensure shared ownership, investment and commitment.

AMBITIONS TO SCALE

Thrive at Five is currently committed to delivering and securing additional funding for four local programmes (three in England and one in Scotland) to (a) continue testing and refining the approach for several more years, (b) deepen the approach to reach more children who would benefit and (c) to embed long-term change. Their approach is showing promise, and they are open to working in more Local Authority areas.

WORK WITH FAMILY HUBS

Thrive at Five works with family hubs in a range of different ways depending on the commissioning structure, existing provision and needs identified in the Discovery phase. Ultimately, Thrive at Five aims to: support the expansion of provision of universal and evidence-based support within the hubs which makes use of existing local assets and local professionals; use their parent outreach model to build awareness and trust in the community of family hubs to encourage attendance; and support family hub staff to reach out to families in community settings.

Thrive at Five's experience of working with family hubs has varied significantly between programme areas and even between hubs in the same area but different wards. This has included:

- Using Thrive at Five's partner network to make the most of hub space, for example supporting the set up of health visitor baby clinics to allow for drop-in appointments and bringing in local voluntary local voluntary organisations to deliver groups and interventions
- Providing training to Early Years workers
- Supporting connections between the hubs and the community
- Making the best use of new birth data to support parental engagement

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