

Happy, Healthy Lives



**Our Integrated
Starting Well Plan
2024-2027**

The Havering you want to be part of



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Foreword

Children and young people are the future of our society, and it is our responsibility to provide them with every opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. One of the greatest joys of our roles is celebrating the successes of Havering's children and young people. Whether it is academic brilliance, artistic achievements, sporting excellence, or overcoming adversity, we take pride in recognising and applauding every accomplishment. These success stories not only inspire others but also contribute to fostering an aspirational environment that encourages our children and young people to strive for greatness.

Welcome to **Happy, Healthy Lives 2024-2027**, a comprehensive strategy designed to support the well-being and development of children and young people in Havering. This plan outlines our shared vision, priorities, and actions to ensure that every child and young person in our community has the opportunity to lead a happy, healthy life. This plan aims to deliver on the aspirations set out in our Council's Corporate vision: The Havering you want to be part of.

Reflecting on the past few years, we have seen remarkable achievements. Almost all Havering schools were graded Good or Outstanding when Ofsted made the decision to move away from single word judgements in 2024. We know that the challenges we face to safeguarding children, as confirmed by Ofsted in their report of February 2024, require a significant improvement journey, which has already started. Our commitment is to create an environment where children and young people are well, inspired, safe, heard, and treated fairly. We want children to flourish, supported by a network of dedicated professionals, families, and community partners.

We recognise the unique challenges faced by our young residents and are determined to address these through innovative and effective solutions.

Our plan is to build on our solid foundations and partnerships, to deliver better services using Council and NHS resources efficiently, in our pursuit of supporting the highest possible outcomes for our children and young people. This requires careful planning and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and the wide range of challenges we face as a Council locally and nationally. Listening to what children and young people tell us is vital. The actions in this plan respond to the Council's first comprehensive survey of children and young people (SHOUT we are listening), and the many engagement activities that have been undertaken since.

Further strengthening our relationships with our partners and the community is also key. We must foster collaborations and engagement with schools, parents, and all stakeholders who have a vested interest in the well-being of our children and young people. By working together, we can pool resources, share knowledge, and create a network of support and opportunities that will enable our children and families to lead happy, healthy lives.

We invite you to join us on this journey as we work together to build a brighter future for our children and young people. Your support and involvement are crucial to the success of this plan. Together, we can make a lasting impact on the lives of our young residents.



Councillor Oscar Ford
Cabinet Member for
Children and Young
People



Councillor Gillian Ford
Deputy Leader of the
Council and Cabinet
Member for Adults
and Wellbeing



Andrew Blake-Herbert
Chief Executive for
the London Borough
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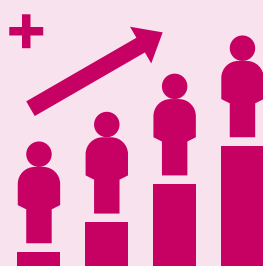


About our Children and Young People

Our child population



From 2016 to 2020, Havering experienced the highest net increase of children among all London boroughs



(source: ONS mid-year population estimates, June 2023 and Havering JSNA Demography Chapter, 2024)

Children we support

530

children with a child in need plan

295

children subject to a child protection plan

280

children in care

330

care leavers aged 18-25

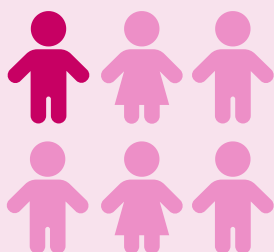


(as of 31 March 2023, figures rounded to nearest 5)

Deprivation

7,000

children (around 1 in 6) are estimated to be living in poverty



(source: Havering JSNA Demography Chapter, 2024)

Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP)

2,583

children had an Education Health and Care Plan as at January 2024



(source: Department for Education, SEN2 return)

Child obesity

22%

aged 4-5 overweight or obese

40%

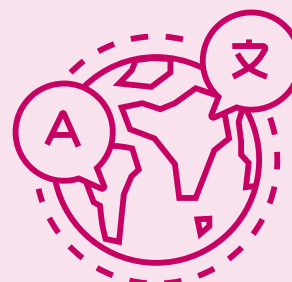
aged 10-11 overweight or obese

(source: National Child Measurement Programme, 2023)

Language

27%

pupils have a first language other than English



(source: School Census, 2024)

Strategic Priorities

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27 sets out a vision for the borough: The *Havering you want to be part of*. In support of delivering this vision, the Council has reorganised its services under a new operating model of People, Place and Resources.

The Corporate Plan sets clear objectives for both People and Place, which are:

- *Supporting our residents to stay safe and well; and*
- *A great place to live, work and enjoy*

We are clear that these ambitions apply to residents of all ages and our Integrated Starting Well Plan - *Happy, Healthy Lives* further builds upon these ambitions for our youngest residents - those under the age of 18 - who now represent almost a quarter of the borough's population.

Our plan also considers the actions required to meet the needs of young people up to the age of 25 who are care experienced or have special educational needs and disabilities.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

In 2023, Havering's Health and Wellbeing Board published its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) chapter for Starting Well. JSNAs are assessments of the current and future health and social care needs of the local community. Such needs could be met by the Local Authority, NHS boards and other local partners.

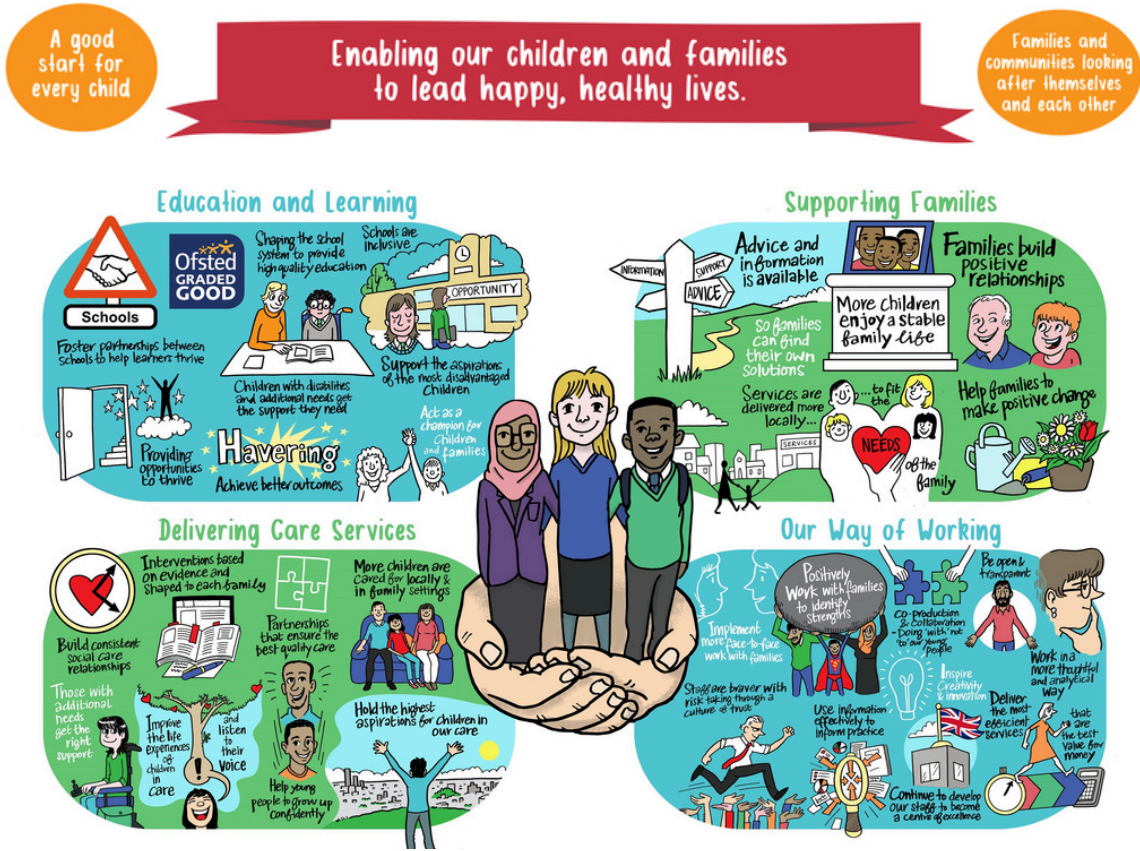
The data and insight set out in the JSNA follows a life-course approach covering maternal and new-born health, early years and families (0-4 years) and covering the first 1001 days, school age children (aged 4-18 years), including children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) up to 25 years, and finally adolescents' health and the transition to adulthood.

The analyses contained in the JSNA consider the social, economic and environmental factors that impact on the health and well-being of children and young people in Havering. Or more simply put: the building blocks for good health and wellbeing.

Our Integrated Starting Well Plan - *Happy, Healthy Lives* takes account of the insight provided by the JSNA, and responds to several of the recommendations made.



Our Vision



The above image depicts our on-going vision for delivering Children’s Services in Havering: *enabling our children and families to lead happy, healthy lives*. This includes Education and Learning – a universal service that all children receive - but also how we work with those children and families who require additional support. In particular, this describes our Face to Face model of practice, covered further in the section on our workforce.

Our Improvement Journey for Children’s Services

Underpinning our work in Starting Well (Children’s Services) is a comprehensive improvement plan that was developed following our inspection by Ofsted in December 2023 under the Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework.


Happy, Healthy, Lives does not attempt to replicate the actions that have already been identified as required through our improvement journey for our services. Instead, it describes a vision for *all* Havering’s children and young people.

Happy, Healthy Lives brings together several key strategies which collectively respond to evidence, recommendations, and importantly, feedback from children and young people, in order to deliver our vision.



Enabling our children and families to lead happy, healthy lives.

To achieve our vision, we have organised our work under five priorities. This is our WISH for children and young people in Havering:



As a society, as soon as we learn of a child's existence, our first hope is that they will be born healthy and **well**. As babies grow, we track their developmental milestones to check that they are thriving. As they move through childhood and adolescence we are as concerned with their emotional wellbeing as their physical health, understanding the delicate balance, and equal priority that must be given to the two. Our first wish for the children and young people of Havering is for them to start well and to stay well.

For children to grow into individuals who will positively contribute to society and the communities in which they live, we want them to be **inspired**. Children need to be engaged with learning and to know that they can accomplish hard things. We want Havering to be a place where all children access a high-quality education, whilst understanding that not every child will achieve academic excellence, which does not take away from any child's individual achievements. We recognise the importance of resilience in children and achievement in all of its forms, academic and otherwise.

Havering is a **safe** place to grow up and this will be the experience for an overwhelming majority of children. But we know this is not how all children and young people feel. Most children live in loving, nurturing homes but increasingly children and families require additional support for this to be the case. Some children feel safe at home but not outside of it, due to risks in their community, from their peers, or online. We understand the many opportunities we have to positively influence the environment in which children live, play and go to school. We will use our powers towards ensuring that children not only are safe but also feel safe.

For children to be healthy and well, inspired to be their best, and safe both inside and outside of their home, we are very clear that they must also be **heard**. We will give children the space, the voice, the audience and the influence to be listened to, and understood. We will place them at the centre of decisions that will affect them now and in the future, and empower them to lead the change they most want to see in their local area.

Alongside our four wishes is a commitment: for children and young people to be **treated fairly**. This means remembering that first and foremost, children are children. It does not mean treating everyone equally. It means taking action to level the field when groups of children and young people, who share common characteristics, consistently experience worse outcomes than their peers. This could be due to special educational needs or disability, race, sexual orientation, or disadvantage, such as living in poverty or being care experienced. We will use data and what children and young people themselves tell us to understand the inequalities they experience, and work to make Havering a fairer place for all.



Priority 1:
For children to be Well

“

**NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE
COMING OUT TO
TEACHERS AND FRIENDS
SAYING 'I'M NOT OKAY AT
THE MOMENT**

”

Priority 1: For children to be Well

Our first wish for children and young people in Havering is that they start **well** in life. Research has shown that the experiences we have early in our lives, even before conception, through pregnancy, birth and into our early years, lay the foundations for our future health and well-being. This is not to say that poorer circumstances in early life inevitably lead to poorer opportunities and outcomes. But such circumstances place children at increased risk of disadvantage. This is why as part of the national Healthy Child Programme we have universal services, which *all* children and families should access, and more targeted and specialist services for those with greater need, or who are at higher risk of experiencing poorer outcomes.

What children and young people have told us

In June and July 2023, more than 2,200 young people aged 13 to 16, in ten Havering secondary schools, took part in the first Havering Youth Wellbeing Census. The Census is part of Havering Council's commitment to amplifying the voice of young people in the borough. It used the #BeeWell survey, part of an initiative originally developed in Greater Manchester, to understand the state of wellbeing in adolescents, adapting the survey to meet locally identified needs, as voiced by local young people themselves, and the services and organisations that support them. Themes covered by the Census included 'emotions', 'meaning, purpose and control' and 'understanding yourself', as well as what drives wellbeing (for example, health and routines, hobbies and entertainment, relationships).

Through the Youth Wellbeing Census, we have learned that:

- 80% of students rated their general physical health as excellent, very good or good, though for those eligible for free school meals, the figure was lower, at 76%
- Boys are getting more regular exercise than girls, with 54% of males undertaking physical activity on 5-7 days per week, compared with only 33% of females
- 62% of students reported they eat fruits and vegetables 5-6 times per week or more frequently, and for those living in the North of the borough or travelling to school from outside of the borough, the figure was below 60%
- Only 49% of students reported getting enough sleep to feel awake and concentrate on their school work during the day. For girls, the figure was 39%.

Our partnership response to the findings of the Havering Youth Wellbeing Census remains an on-going priority. An action plan has been developed which includes plans to explore many of the topics in more depth, in order to understand, for example, what is preventing girls in particular from getting enough sleep and more physical exercise, and what we can do to help.

We are also working with the schools that took part in the Census to support their students in exploring the results, and considering ways in which wellbeing might be improved in their schools.



Our Place-based Partnership

In 2022, Integrated Care Systems were established across England, bringing together organisations that deliver health and social care services. Locally, the Havering “Placed based Partnership” is leading the integration of services across our borough.

Havering Council itself has undergone its biggest ever transformation to deliver to this agenda, with all services now sitting within three strategic directorates: People, Places and Resources. In the context of local authorities, our adoption of a life course approach, with operational ‘People’ directorates for Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing Well, is innovative and a key enabler for more joined up working between the local authority and health services.

We now have an ‘Integrated Team at Place’ which brings together key elements of health and care, and the budgets that support those services. The aim is to reduce duplication, increase value for money, and by doing so, improve the health and wellbeing of local people.

The Havering Place based Partnership has developed a five year strategy setting out the priorities that the Havering Integrated Team will focus on and jointly deliver over the next five years. These are generally priorities that require joint working between the Local Authority, NHS and other partners, rather than projects that sit primarily with one organisation. The strategy will be monitored via the Havering Partnership Babies, Children and Young People group, with oversight from the Havering Place based Partnership Board.

For Start Well, the Place based Partnership’s vision is that: Children and young people get the best start in life, are able to achieve the best opportunities and keep as healthy and well as possible throughout their lives. The immediate priorities for delivery by April 2025 are:

- Improved wait times for services including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Improved uptake of childhood immunisations

Other on-going priorities include:

- Work with parents and families to build their resilience; meeting the needs of families at home without the need for more intensive interventions later along their journey
- Increase identification of and support for children and young people who provide informal and unpaid care for family members
- Build on and improve the mental health offer for schools, working with young people
- Increase the number of children receiving timely Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis and integrated family support
- Reduce the wait time of children for Special Educational Needs therapy provision
- Improve uptake of childhood immunisations through a series of events reaching out into communities



The Healthy Child Programme

The **Healthy Child Programme** is a nationally developed programme that local authorities are responsible for delivering. Central to the programme is the Health Visiting Service for children aged 0-5 years and School Nursing Service for children aged 5-19 years. In Havering, we currently commission North East London Foundation NHS Trust (NELFT) to provide these services under a 5 year contract (with 2 year extension option) which commenced in April 2020.

The universal reach of the Healthy Child Programme provides an invaluable opportunity from very early in a child's life to identify families that may need additional support, and children who are at risk of poor outcomes.

The aims of the Healthy Child Programme are to:

- help parents, carers or guardians develop and sustain a strong bond with children;
- support parents, carers or guardians in keeping children healthy and safe and reaching their full potential;
- protect children from serious disease, through screening and immunisation;
- reduce childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating and physical activity;
- promote oral health;
- support resilience and positive maternal and family mental health;
- support the development of healthy relationships and good sexual and reproductive health;
- identify health and wellbeing issues early, so support and early interventions can be provided in a timely manner;
- make sure children are prepared for and supported in all childcare, early years and education settings and are especially supported to be 'ready to learn at 2 and ready for school by 5.

Integration of health visiting and school nursing services with wider local authority, NHS and voluntary and community sector services (including maternity, primary care, early help, education, social care, SEND, screening and immunisation, smoking, substance misuse, mental health, sexual health and oral health services) is key to improving outcomes for children and families, and the overall success of the Healthy Child Programme.



Our 'Whole Systems Approach' to Healthy Weight

In 2024, we launched the Havering Healthy Weight Strategy 2024-2029: Everybody's Business. The vision for Havering is that within 20 years' childhood obesity will have been eradicated, that the Borough will have become a healthier place to live, work and play, and a place where communities have come together to make the healthier choice the easier choice.

Our whole systems approach to reducing overweight and obesity recognises the complexity of the issue. Rather than being the result of personal choices, obesity is caused by multiple factors interacting with each other, with modern life making us more likely to opt for unhealthy food options, and less likely to be physically active.

As it is largely the circumstances where we live, known as 'the system', that has resulted in the increasing rates of overweight and obesity in adults and children, the whole 'system' must work together to achieve change.

In Havering, more than one in five children in Reception (aged 4 to 5) are overweight or obese and by Year 6 (aged 10-11), this almost doubles, to roughly 2 in 5 children. Children are now beginning to develop diseases that were previously seen only in adults, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, liver conditions, and bone and joint problems.

Overweight and obesity could also be affecting children's life chances as there are higher rates of school absence among children who are overweight, compared with children of healthy weight. Obesity in childhood is also more likely to lead to overweight and obesity in adulthood.

The Healthy Weight Strategy describes eight objectives, grouped under three themes.

- Theme one is concerned with ensuring that the whole system is engaged and works together on the many drivers of obesity;
- Theme two is concerned with the Borough becoming a place that promotes healthy weight; recognising that the places where people live, work and play shape the type of foods they eat and how physically active they are; and
- Theme three recognises the importance of a life-course approach, and ensuring that individuals are supported to achieve a healthy weight.

Specific actions include supporting food retailers to deliver a healthier food offer and further restricting the availability of fast food outlets; developing active travel interventions and ensuring Havering's parks continue to provide opportunities for children to be physically active; supporting schools to achieve the Healthy Schools London award and providing a children's weight management support programme to those who are eligible.

A steering group has been formed to oversee delivery of the strategy and this will be accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Place-based Partnership, and the Council's Cabinet.



Early Help

Havering is fortunate to have a strong and well-established Early Help offer, much of which is delivered through our [Children's Centres](#).

The government's '[Stable Homes, Built on Love](#)' Strategy, published in early 2023, supports an early help and intervention approach and the need to build upon strengths within a child's family network. This is consistent with Havering's own Face To Face model of practice, which is based on working with families, engaging with them to identify existing strengths, and building relationships over time with the aim to stop problems from escalating.

Our **Early Help Strategy** is being refreshed for 2024/25 onwards and will set out how we will continue working in partnership to deliver Early Help, under our five established priorities. These are:

- **1001 days and School Readiness.** Our aim is that an offer is in place to support the development of skills to ensure a child is best equipped to thrive and learn. Working with parents to explore the link between life skills and being ready to learn by reception age.
- **Increasing Community Capacity and Reducing the Need for Statutory Intervention.** Our aim is to continue to develop an offer that is more responsive to need and demand, working in conjunction with health, education and the voluntary sector to deliver accessible services within the local community. To support cost benefit initiatives throughout Havering and reduce the need for statutory services.
- **Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND).** Our aim is that an offer is in place for children, young people and parents with SEND, to access early intervention from birth to the age of 25.
- **Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing.** Our aim is to align the [Thrive model](#) to our delivery and interventions for those who need emotional wellbeing and mental health support. Ensuring pathways are in place for children, young people and parents/carers to access mental health and emotional wellbeing support.
- **Adolescent Safeguarding Intervention and Prevention.** Our aim is that clear pathways are in place for the early identification of risk, and intervention in relation to vulnerable adolescents, inclusive of but not limited to: Child Criminal Exploitation, Children who are Missing, Child Sexual Exploitation and Harmful Behaviours.

Mapping of the borough's wider early help offering to families is taking place, to inform the refresh of our partnership Early Help Strategy and the updating of information about the local offer online. This will then be widely publicised and shared with early years settings and schools to ensure that families and those who support them are aware of the many tools, resources and sources of help available.

Delivery of our strategic approach to Early Help is overseen by a Partnership Board, which includes representation from across the Council, health partners, schools and Early Years providers.

As a partnership, we recognise the crucial role that Early Years providers play in the early identification of safeguarding concerns and responding to these, as has been tragically evidenced by learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (both locally and nationally), involving very young children. To further build upon our already strong relationships with the sector, we are reviewing the membership of our various boards and groups to ensure representation from Early Years at each.



Healthy Schools and Healthy Early Years London

In Havering, we know that early years settings, schools and colleges play an important role in improving the health of children and young people. They help children to learn about their health and develop the motivation and self-respect to make healthy choices for themselves. This is why we continue to support and promote the Healthy Early Years London (HEYL) and Healthy Schools London (HSL) awards programmes.

These initiatives, supported by the Mayor of London, encourage schools and early years settings to promote healthy lifestyles through various activities and awards.

Key elements of Healthy Schools London include:

The awards

Schools can earn Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards based on their efforts to support pupils' health and wellbeing. The awards recognise schools' achievements in areas such as healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health.

Support and resources

Schools will receive support from local Healthy Schools London Leads, who provide guidance and resources to help schools achieve their health goals. This includes tools, advice, and best practices for promoting a healthy school environment.

Community engagement

The programme emphasises the importance of involving the wider community in promoting children's health. Schools are encouraged to engage with parents, local organisations, and other stakeholders to create a supportive environment for healthy living.

Sustainability

The initiative aims to create lasting changes by helping schools implement sustainable health practices. This includes developing long-term plans and measuring the impact of their efforts.

In September 2024, a total of 70 Havering schools were registered with the programme. 12 have achieved gold status, 20 have silver status and 38 have bronze status.

Building on the success of Healthy Schools London, Healthy Early Years London helps to reduce health inequalities by supporting a healthy start to life across themes that include healthy eating, oral and physical health and early cognitive development. Havering was one of the first London boroughs to take part in HEYL when it was first piloted in 2017, and in 2024, a total of 123 early years settings are registered on the programme.



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP)

As well as seeing significant growth in our child population, the number of Havering children and young people with special educational needs requiring an education, health and care plan (EHCP) rose by 29% between 2020 and 2023. The biggest growth has been seen among those whose main area of need is communication and interaction, including Autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.

In March 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) published its Special Educational Need, Disability and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan and alongside this, Ofsted implemented a new framework for Local Area SEND Inspections from the start of 2023. A significant shift within the framework is a prominent focus on the experiences of children with SEND (and their families) and for us to consider what impact we have had on children's outcomes.

Havering's **Special Educational Needs, Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2024 – 2029** sets out our vision, for a SEND and AP system:

- *where every school and setting is confident, skilled, and enabled to effectively support our children with SEND;*
- *that has a wide range of SEND and AP settings and services providing community members the help and support they need;*
- *which makes sense, which families can navigate, and which places families at its heart;*
- *where children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP are valued, visible, and prepared for adulthood;*
- *where leaders work together effectively to deliver what is needed for our children with SEND and those accessing AP; and*
- *where education, health, and social care teams do what matters well and in a timely way*

Our Local Offer describes the range of services, information and advice available to families of children with special educational needs and disabilities, including:

- universal services (such as GPs and schools);
- targeted services (additional short-term support over and above universal services); and
- specialist services (specialised, longer-term support).

We continue to work with our official parent forum to develop the local offer website and ensure that it contains appropriate details. We will be undertaking a full review and refresh of the site in 2024-25 to ensure that information is up to date and relevant, as well as easy to find.

Inclusion

Havering has a lower proportion of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) than its statistical neighbours and London but a higher proportion of children with EHCPs in Havering attend mainstream school settings, as opposed to special schools.

Our Local Area Partnership is committed to ensuring inclusive education in Havering. We continue to work with all our schools and education settings to ensure children and young people with additional needs can grow and learn within their local community wherever possible, while recognising that for some children specialist provision will be required. Maintaining highly inclusive mainstream schools and settings, while also growing our local specialist provision, is a key focus for the partnership.



Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Wellbeing

Poor mental health and wellbeing can negatively impact present and future outcomes for children and adolescents. It is critical that services are in place to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents and that these services work together.

The Anna Freud Centre's THRIVE Framework is an integrated, person centred and needs led approach to delivering mental health services. It conceptualises the mental health and wellbeing needs of children, young people and families into five needs-based groupings (shown in Figure 1). The THRIVE framework places emphasis on prevention and the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing across the whole population. Its principles are being used in Havering to facilitate system change for the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and adolescents in the borough.

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The Havering CYP Emotional Wellbeing Group facilitates cross-sector partnership working across the borough to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes. The Group utilises the THRIVE framework, providing a common language, and working together through shared decision making. The Group consists of representatives from various services across the system including council services, VCSE, NHS and education. The Group meets regularly to discuss the provision of community mental health services across the borough and emerging needs.

The provision of support for mental health and wellbeing in education settings is a national and local priority. National policy recommends the use of a whole school or college approach to promote children and adolescent's emotional wellbeing and mental health. This is being actively implemented in Havering, as demonstrated by:

- 21 education settings in Havering being supported by Mental Health Support Teams (locally known as the Havering Emotional Support Team (HEST)) who provide intervention for mild to moderate emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns in children and adolescents.
- An 80% uptake of the national Senior Mental Health Leads Training grant to equip school staff with skills to support children and adolescents, families and school staff.
- The Havering Education Mental Health Leads Network, established to support senior mental health leads in all schools with implementing the Whole Schools and College Approach to Wellbeing.

Figure 1: The THRIVE Framework



Wider local mental health support for children and adolescents is also available. Examples of services are listed below:

- **Thriving** –the promotion of community-based activities, including a range of clubs delivered by the council’s Youth Service such as The Off Street Club which provides games, arts and crafts, cooking and more. HEST also run holiday clubs in collaboration with their placement schools.
- **Getting Advice** – this includes HEST in schools, Primary Mental Health Team consultations (with schools, GP surgeries, parents and students), 18-25 workers in the Cocoon (for care experienced young adults), as well as school nursing.
- **Getting Help** –Kooth provides a live counselling service for young people to receive professional support through either booked or drop-in sessions as and when a session is required. HEST can provide one-to-one support directly in schools to those experiencing mild to moderate difficulties with anxiety or low mood and can also provide targeted group interventions and workshops.
- **Getting More Help** – Havering Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) delivers a range of specialist treatment and assessments for children and adolescents experiencing more severe mental health difficulties, such as depression, psychosis, PTSD and trauma, as well as supporting families to engage with other agencies.
- **Getting Risk Support** – NELFT INTERACT is the Crisis Team within the community that works with children, adolescents and the services supporting them, preventing or following a crisis situation.

Tobacco Harm Reduction

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable deaths in the UK. Despite national declines, Havering’s smoking prevalence has risen in recent years and is the highest in Northeast London, at 15.9%, and higher than London (11.7%) and England (12.7%) averages.

Smoking amongst pregnant women at the time of delivery in Havering has declined and is now similar to the London average and significantly lower than the England average. This is a priority because smoking in pregnancy poses significant health risks to both the mother and the unborn child, including low birth weight, miscarriage, premature birth, stillbirth, and sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI).

A recent Tobacco Harm Reduction Needs Assessment found that in Havering around 10,200 children live in smoking households and are exposed to second hand smoke. Around 480 children themselves start smoking each year. Factors that contribute to smoking initiation, include exposure to smoking by family and friends, easy access to cigarettes, lower socioeconomic status and exposure to tobacco marketing.

Whilst vaping (E-cigarettes) can be an effective tool for adults stopping smoking, they are *not recommended* for young people. There is growing concern about the rise in young people vaping, with widespread promotion through social media and in shops. Vapes are deliberately produced with sweet flavours and packaged colourfully to appeal to children. The Havering Youth Wellbeing Census revealed that 12% of Havering pupils have vaped.

There are key challenges in reducing tobacco and vaping use, including among children. Those exposed to vaping are at risk of developing chronic respiratory issues like coughing and bronchitis and exacerbating asthma, along with potential long-term cardiovascular consequences. The accidental ingestion of vaping liquids by children is another concern, highlighting the importance of child-proof packaging. Vaping can also lead to nicotine dependence, which can adversely affect brain development in adolescents.

Our Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy emphasises the need for a joined up approach across different organisations to reduce smoking and vaping by children. Planned actions include increasing the capacity of trading standards to combat illicit sales, strengthening enforcement of tobacco marketing and sales regulations, anti-tobacco campaigns and working with schools to highlight the harm and risks of both smoking and vaping.



Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy

In September 2024, we formally adopted the North East London (NEL) Joint Sexual & Reproductive Health Strategy. This aims to build on joint working arrangements to agree an approach for addressing four, shared, sexual and reproductive health priorities:

- Priority 1: Healthy and Fulfilling Sexual Relationships
- Priority 2: Good Reproductive Health across the Life Course
- Priority 3: High Quality and Innovative STI Screening and Treatment
- Priority 4: HIV: Towards Zero and Living Well

Young people are disproportionately affected by sexually transmitted infections and the impacts of unplanned pregnancy. They can be more vulnerable to unhealthy or coercive relationships and this is particularly pronounced for some groups, including those living in more deprived areas, certain ethnic groups and those with learning disabilities. Action to support young people in navigating the exploration of their sexuality and relationships in a way that is informed, safe, and enjoyable is critical in both protecting and promoting their immediate health and wellbeing, as well as laying the foundations for their longer term sexual and reproductive health into adulthood.

The strategy identifies several actions to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young people. These include reviewing the approach to delivering Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in schools, steps to drive up access and utilisation of condom distribution schemes, and engaging with particular groups of young people with more complex needs or vulnerabilities to better understand the support they require. We will be developing a local action plan for Havering, which will consider specific actions needed locally.

Support for Young Carers

Young Carers provide unpaid care for family members or friends with illnesses, disabilities, mental health issues, or addictions. They assist with practical tasks, physical care, and emotional support while managing their own lives. Often, children and young people who care for family members, for example a parent or sibling, do not recognise the caring role they provide because it is just a part of their family life and helping those they love. This could mean that they miss out on vital support for their own wellbeing.

In Havering, our goal is to minimise the negative impacts of caring and provide access to social and educational opportunities and emotional support, whilst also recognising the positive impacts of being a carer, such as increased resilience and empathy.

Support for Young Carers in Havering is provided by Imago. The offer focuses on promoting the wellbeing of Young Carers through various activities, workshops, and respite. By collaborating with school staff and other professionals, the aim is to ensure that Young Carers receive the necessary support and know they are not alone.



Joint working with Housing

Housing is a key factor in keeping children well. It is not just about having a roof over your head; the conditions of a home can greatly affect the physical and mental health of those living within it. Poor living conditions, such as mould, dampness, overcrowding and unstable housing, can all lead to various health risks.

In recent years, Havering, like many areas, has seen a substantial increase in families and young people requiring support with housing. Sadly, in 2024, we have as many as 100 households with children living in hotels without immediate access to hot meals, and children attending school tired and hungry in the mornings.

We have put in place a joint-working protocol between Starting Well and the Housing Demand Service for families at risk of destitution having been evicted from their housing providers, as well as for 16-and-17-year-olds who are at risk of homelessness, whether actively known to the Council or not. This provides a reference that all relevant professionals can refer to, in order to ensure affected young people receive an efficient and effective temporary housing service.

The protocol also relates to joint assessment working practices between Housing and Starting Well where families including their children are at risk of homelessness and are therefore subject to duties owed by either Housing and / or Starting Well (Children's Services). We closely monitor the number of children living in emergency hotel accommodation to support with benefit provision and to understand their needs.

The health of children in our care and care experienced young adults

When children cannot live safely at home with their birth family they become 'looked after' by the local authority and we become their 'corporate parents'.

As a local authority we are corporate parents to 281 children in care and 330 care experienced young adults (figures as at 31st March 2024).

In 2022 we relaunched Our Pledge to our children in care. The pledge was co-produced with children and young people with care experience and outlines our promises to them as their 'corporate' parent.

One of our pledges is that we will help children in care and care experienced young adults to keep healthy and well.

Specifically, our pledge outlines: We will support you to stay physically and mentally well, and will respond quickly and with care when you are feeling unwell.

This element of the pledge includes:

- An annual assessment of physical health and emotional well-being
- Registration with a GP and dentist, and attendance of appointments for immunisations, opticians and any other checks needed
- Information and support around healthy relationships and sexual health
- Information, advice and guidance on healthy lifestyles
- Support with mental and emotional well-being
- Opportunities to stay physically active and broaden experiences

We also have specific actions in our improvement plan (implemented following our December 2023 Ofsted inspection) that relate to ensuring children in care have their physical and mental health needs identified and met.





Priority 2:

For children to be Inspired

“

**TAKING A STEP
FURTHER EVERY DAY
TO REACH YOUR
FUTURE GOALS**

”



Priority 2: For children to be Inspired

Our first wish for children and young people in Havering is that they start *well* in life. Research has shown that the experiences we have early in our lives, even before conception, through pregnancy, birth and into our early years, lay the foundations for our future health and well-being. This is not to say that poorer circumstances in early life inevitably lead to poorer opportunities and outcomes. But such circumstances place children at increased risk of disadvantage. This is why as part of the national Healthy Child Programme we have universal services, which *all* children and families should access, and more targeted and specialist services for those with greater need, or who are at higher risk of experiencing poorer outcomes.

What children and young people have told us

In late 2022, we undertook our largest consultation of children and young people in a number of years, called 'SHOUT – we are listening'. More than 2,000 children and young people completed the survey, with most responses (70%) coming from children aged 10 to 12. One of the topics covered by the survey was the support that children and young needed to help them reach their future goals.

Through the SHOUT survey, we learned that:

- 67% of felt supportive teachers were what they needed
- 38% needed volunteering opportunities; and
- 33% needed access to careers advisers

In response to these findings, we continue to work with local schools and our commissioned Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) provider, Prospects, to support children and young people with their goals. Recent examples include a 'School insights' day held at the Town Hall, which gave Year 9 pupils the opportunity to hear about careers at the Council and to 'speed network' with staff from a variety of different departments, and our very successful Social Enterprise Schools Programme. Young people who took part in the programme told us:

- *"It was nice listening to other people's ideas and what they want to do for the world"*
- *"I think its helped me to grow more confidence in certain areas that I'm not used to, like presenting"*
- *"I feel like each one of us could each start our own business and become successful with it because we've had this experience".*

Other examples include:

Futures Week – where both Primary and Secondary School pupils are supported and encouraged to think about their future pathways. This includes practical advice around the qualifications needed for their chosen career, financial guidance on student loans, and the provision of honest and clear information help individuals consider the best pathway for them individual.

Raising Participation Age Event – organised annually to support local young people post-16 with their options when leaving school & college. The exhibition hosts a variety of providers ranging from apprenticeships, employers, education and training providers, school sixth forms, colleges, higher education, the voluntary sector and local community-based organisations.



National Apprenticeship Week event – giving young people and their parents/carers a chance to speak to local training providers, employers and apprenticeship ambassadors, to find out more about apprenticeships and the T level qualification.

Work Experience days – working with schools that struggle to find work experience opportunities for their pupils and showcasing the career pathways available in local government.

The First 1001 days

Our wish for children to be inspired begins a lot earlier than at school. There is strong evidence that the first 1001 days of a child's life, from pregnancy to the age of two, is a vital phase in terms of shaping and improving the child's health, development and life chances. This is when children develop the skills they need to thrive, laying the foundations for the best start in life and their future.

As set out in our Early Help vision, we aim to ensure that a strong offer is in place within Havering to support the development of such skills, by working with parents so that children are curious about the world around them and ready to learn.

With input from parents and organisations that deliver maternity and early years services in Havering we have created a [booklet](#), outlining the support available to families across the borough in their child's first 1001 days.

Early Years Childcare

We continue to promote the government's offer of free childcare and to prepare for the gradual expansion of the current offer, ensuring we have enough childcare places for parents who are working, studying, or training for employment.

From September 2024, the offer of 15 hours free childcare support has been extended to eligible working parents of children from the age of 9 months to 3 year olds.

From September 2025, working parents of children aged nine months and upwards will be entitled to 30 hours free childcare per week, up until their child starts school.

School Readiness

When referring to school readiness, many people think of children being able to hold a pen, with basic writing and drawing skills, and knowing their numbers. Being 'school ready' also means that children are:

- Curious and learning about the world around them
- Developing their social and emotional skills
- Able to be away from their parents and carers
- Learning to manage their personal care and hygiene

We know that the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound and lasting impact on many children born in and around the lockdown periods. We continue to work with partners in early years settings and the health visiting service to promote the importance of school readiness, so that children arrive at school feeling confident, able to communicate and ready to learn.

This includes further embedding joint working between health visiting and early years providers in delivering development checks when children are aged 2 to 2 and a ½. These checks are a critical opportunity for early intervention where children are not meeting their developmental milestones, which may mean they are not on track to be school ready. We are working to strengthen key referral pathways to support earlier intervention in areas such as speech and language.



Education Place Planning

Havering Council is responsible for planning and providing early years and childcare places, primary and secondary school places, post-16 places, SEND and AP places for all 2 to 25-year-olds in the borough. This includes ensuring there are enough appropriately located places, providing suitable accommodation to promote high educational standards, and managing an admissions process to allocate school places fairly, especially for vulnerable learners.

The council also manages the impact of changing pupil numbers and helps create a diverse community of schools. Our [Children & Young People Education Place Planning Plan 2023-2027](#) serves as a tool to continually review education places in response to new housing developments, changes in birth rates, migration, and government policy changes.

Strategic Education Vision

Our local education vision was co-produced with schools and early years providers. It sets out a vision for the education system in Havering, where: *All children and young people thrive and achieve through accessing high-quality education provision and are supported to live safe and healthy lives.*

The vision is underpinned by three key priorities: *Leadership*; *Inclusion*; and *Aspiration*, and sets out our approach to how these will be delivered, which involves:

- Developing and supporting strong leaders
- Enabling innovation
- Using networks to share and improve
- Building capacity for a self-improving system
- Securing effective practice
- Maintaining a strong focus on teaching and learning
- Providing access to a greater array of support services
- Ensuring good communication, engaging the sector to co-produce
- Sharing and using intelligence to drive improvement
- Learning from others, within and beyond Havering
- Creating a culture of collaboration

Progress in delivering the vision and priorities is reported annually via the Education Strategic Partnership.



Attendance

The law ensures that every child of compulsory school age is entitled to a full-time education suited to their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational need they may have. Regular attendance is crucial as missing lessons can lead to children falling behind.

The barriers to accessing education can be very complex, involving factors both within school and at home, so improving attendance is a collective responsibility. We want Havering's schools to provide a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

The Local Authority works with schools and partner agencies to remove barriers and encourage early intervention to promote high levels of attendance across every school in Havering. By rigorously collecting, analysing and tracking local attendance data from schools, we can devise a strategic approach to improving attendance across the borough, with targeted support for individual schools where needed.

Senior Education Welfare Officers arrange regular meetings offering support, advice and guidance, and working with schools to identify any barriers.

In line with the Department for Education's guidance, "Working Together to Improve School Attendance," published in 2024, our borough has implemented several strategies to enhance school attendance rates. These strategies include relaunching our Attendance Hubs to engage parents more effectively, collaborating with schools to align their attendance policies with revised legal frameworks, including fixed penalty charges, and providing training and resources on topics such as the Senior Attendance Champion role and the National Framework for Penalty Notices to support these efforts.

Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education

Havering has consistently maintained exclusion rates below the national average, which is attributed to a range of interventions implemented by the local authority to support schools in avoiding suspensions and reducing permanent exclusions. Through our dedicated Attendance, Admissions, and Inclusion service, we have fostered a culture of early intervention within schools to address the increasingly complex needs identified among pupils in Havering.

Our initiatives include:

- Expanding our range of Alternative Provision, including support for children and young people with medical needs;
- Providing mentoring and coaching to help children and young people stay engaged with their education;
- Offering in-school counselling for those experiencing loss and trauma; and
- Implementing both short and long-term interventions.

In addition, like many other local authorities, Havering continues to experience a significant increase in parents choosing to home educate their children following the Covid-19 pandemic. Our focus remains on:

- Promoting positive relationships and mutual respect within all home-educated families in Havering;
- Protecting the rights of the child by ensuring they receive their legal entitlement to a suitable education;
- and
- Providing efficient and effective support and advice.

While parents have a legal right to educate their child at home, we work closely with schools to ensure parents are provided with Department for Education guidance and can make fully informed decisions. Additionally, we are committed to identifying and supporting children missing education to ensure they receive the education they are entitled to and do not fall through the cracks



Attainment

Education outcomes for Havering's children and young people remain relatively strong across all Key Stages when compared to the national average. Standards are showing signs of continued recovery after the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption to children's education.

In 2024:

- The percentage of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) achieving a Good Level of Development was broadly in line with national average (1% below);
- The percentage of pupils attaining the required standard in phonics increased by 4.1% on the previous year and was in line with national average (0.3% above);
- At Key Stage 2, attainment for all subjects remained above national average;
- At Key Stage 4 (GCSE), the average Attainment 8 score in Havering increased by 1.2pts and was above the national average result in 2023;
- Havering continues to perform very well (22.6% higher than the 2023 national average) for entries into the English Baccalaureate;
- The percentage of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate increased by 0.5%, again well above national levels;
- The percentage of pupils achieving a Standard Pass in the Basics (English & Maths at Grade 9-4) increased by 0.8%;
- For A-levels, the Average Point Score (APS) per entry, the APS for best 3 A-levels and the percentage of students achieving grades AAB or better (of which at least two are in facilitating subjects) all increased compared with the previous year.

We are proud of our children's accomplishments and that we have such a high proportion of schools in Havering rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted (94% in 2024).

Ofsted has moved away from single-word "headline" school ratings and we continue to monitor schools using our own Quality Assurance Framework. This involves the local authority undertaking quality assurance activity with every school and early years setting each year, the exact nature of which is informed by our assessment of the school using a risk register, and the findings of their last Ofsted inspection.

During this activity there is discussion of school performance, including in relation to specific pupil groups, and improvement work the school has planned. Schools are also able to purchase support from Havering Education Service and most primary schools do. All secondary schools in Havering have academy status and therefore the local authority does not have any 'right of entry'; however, the majority of academies do participate in quality assurance activity.



The education of children in our care and care experienced young adults

Our pledge to children in our care, as their corporate parents, is that like any good parent, we will help them to achieve their full potential in education. Specifically, we will:

- Support them and their carers to make sure that they attend school regularly and listen to their views about school life;
- Work with their school and designated teacher to help them do their best by having a Personal Education Plan that is reviewed every term, ensure their thoughts and feelings are recorded and offering help to expressing these, especially for those who have a disability or find it hard to speak up;
- Keep them safe in school, and ensure that they feel safe;
- Help them to join in with activities and opportunities inside and outside of school and within their community;
- Celebrate their achievements and progress, and share stories of the good things they have done;
- Work with their school to ensure they are not called out of class to attend meetings about their care, and details about them being in care is not shared with others that do not need to know.
- Support them in further education and training, including College and University, and help them to plan for the future, working together when completing their Pathway Plan to ensure that it is a plan that will work for them.
- Ensure the right support is in place when they transition between primary and secondary school and between secondary school and college / sixth form / training, as well as for the transition into university.

Our space for children in care and care experienced young adults, the Cocoon, has a dedicated area for education, employment and training (EET) information and advice and regular workshops are held with guest speakers from local colleges, universities, the job centre and local businesses. Young people are also supported with their CVs, interview skills and a variety of sessions delivered by our Virtual School. In 2024, the Council has committed to offering 5 apprenticeships to care experienced young adults.

One of the highlights of the year is the annual awards ceremony we hold each December to celebrate the achievements of our children in care. Children are nominated by their social workers for progress they have made either academically or socially in the past year.

We also organise events and trips for our children during the school holidays, which have included Stubbers, Pizza Express, museums, cinema, ice-skating and the theatre.



I WAS SO NERVOUS COMING OUT TODAY AS I WAS NOT SURE WHO I WOULD SEE, BUT IT HAS BEEN AN EXCITING DAY AT THE AQUARIUM SEEING ALL THE FISHES, SOME I HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE



Culture Strategy: A Good Life

Havering's Cultural Strategy 2025-28, A Good Life, has been developed in collaboration with the public, private and voluntary sector in the borough and represents the planned strategic work of a broad range of organisations and groups. The strategy recognises that Havering is changing more quickly and radically than most London boroughs, yet has one of the least developed cultural ecologies in London, with the 4th lowest level of public engagement with culture in the capital.

The strategy has a vision that 'Havering will plant the seeds for a thriving cultural borough', with five key principles, which include: Every child and young person engaging in culture. Uniting education and arts partners to empower young people and make them feel proud.

A key enabler is FUSE, our Local Cultural Education Partnership. Between 2025 and 2028, this aims to:

- Create and embed a Youth Board
- Deliver 4 micro commissions, driven by the Youth Board; and
- Establish an Artist in Residence programme, delivering creative education across the borough.

Alongside the work being delivered through FUSE, one of the actions in our SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy is to create a dedicated working party whose focus is on improving community access for children and young people with SEND. This will act on feedback from children and young people with SEND, and their parents and carers, telling us that there is a need for a wider range of more accessible community activities open to children with SEND. This work also serves as a response to findings of Havering's Youth Wellbeing Census, where children with SEND told us they experience a weaker sense of belonging within their local area than their peers without SEND.

Our Workforce

In order for our children and young people to be inspired, we believe that the same needs to apply to those who support them. This includes our own workforce across Starting Well, teachers, and other professionals who interact with children on a daily basis, such as those providing local health services.

A Stable and Able Workforce

Our Starting Well Improvement Plan (covered further under the next priority) is structured around four key themes, the first of which is 'Embedding a Stable and Able Workforce'.

It is no coincidence that this is the first stage of our improvement journey. Our workforce is our greatest asset and the last five years have been extremely challenging, with unprecedented need for services driven by population change, the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis. At the same time, the borough remains underfunded for Children's Social Care due to an outdated funding formula. The combined effect has been that at the time of inspection by Ofsted, Havering had the highest caseload per social worker of any London borough, making the recruitment and retention of skilled staff a significant challenge.

Despite the Council's financial challenges, we remain committed to investing in our workforce and ensuring that Havering is a well led, supportive and progressive place to work. Within our Plan, actions under this theme include implementing a full reorganisation of Children's Social Care in two phases, embedding a fit for purpose structure that enables best practice to thrive. We have also received Department for Education funding for the Centre for Systemic Social Work Practice to deliver a programme of accredited training, as part of refreshing and relaunching our model of practice in 2024/25.



Our Face to Face Model of Practice

Face to Face is our systemic approach to working with families who require support from Children's Services (now called Starting Well). First adopted in 2016, our model is centred on supporting more face to face time between workers, children, young people and families, focusing on relationships and evidence based intervention to provide long term positive outcomes.

We firmly believe in empowering families to create sustainable change for themselves, allowing them to find their own solutions. Our aim is to provide services that are child-centred, collaborative, responsive, value-driven, and reflective.

As part of refreshing and relaunching our Face to Face Model in 2024/25, we will continue to roll out cultural competence training, with a focus on the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS. Within this, linked to the priority of ensuring children are treated fairly (and as children first), we will ensure staff have an understanding of issues surrounding the adultification of black children.

Havering Social Care Academy

We are fortunate in Havering to have our very own Social Care Academy. The Academy provides access to training that supports the very best practice, skills and knowledge needed to work to, and within any legislative changes in social care and the local context of Havering. It facilitates opportunities for both professional and personal development to achieve better outcomes for the children and young people of Havering.

The Academy is arranged over 4 faculties:

- Practitioners;
- Management and Leadership;
- Providers; and
- Research, Evidence & Evaluation.

The Academy is committed to learning from what has gone well and not so well, incorporating important lessons from quality assurance and auditing activity, as well as local and national practice learning reviews.

Havering Academy of Leadership

The Academy of Leadership was established to support and develop leadership in Havering's education community. It is a collaboration and partnership between the Local Authority, the East London Teaching School Hub, the Havering Teacher Training Partnerships and headteachers, principals, governors and early years settings leaders across Havering. The Academy has 6 priorities, which are:

- To ensure that leadership and management within education is ranked 'Good' by Ofsted, with a strong aspiration for 'Outstanding';
- To ensure that all leaders can access high quality induction, training, support and development via clear career pathways, from career entry level, to whole system leadership;
- To promote innovative and flexible leadership structures within schools, in order to ensure improved pupil outcomes and cost-effective provision;
- To align and strengthen the work of the strategic partners to improve leadership.
- To make effective use of expertise and good practice already in the system, to learn from the best leaders locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- To develop the sustainable conditions, opportunities and incentives to recruit and retain top quality leaders and potential leaders, and support succession planning





Priority 3:
For children to be Safe

**IT'S NOT THAT I FEEL
UNSAFE IT'S BECAUSE I
KNOW I'M NOT 100%
SAFE WHEREVER I AM**



Priority 3: For children to be Safe

Our third wish is for children to be, and to feel, safe. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and loving home and whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities also have specific duties to work with partner organisations to keep children safe and promote their welfare. In essence, this means creating a safe, supportive and nurturing environment where children can thrive and reach their full potential.

What children and young people have told us

In our first large-scale survey of children and young people in 2022, 'SHOUT we are listening', we explored the topic of where children feel safe and unsafe.

Through SHOUT, we learned that:

- 57% of children and young people who responded felt unsafe on the streets;
- 34% felt unsafe at bus stops and train stations;
- 25% felt unsafe at local parks

When asked if there was anything they would change about the local area, almost one in ten children who responded said they would like crime to be prevented and the local area made safer.

Feedback was shared with our partners in the Police and Transport for London, who each provided a written response to some of the themes and comments provided, outlining action they would be taking as a result.

As crime and safety is a clear priority for young people, we also wanted to understand how this impacts on wellbeing. The Havering Youth Wellbeing Census, undertaken in the Summer of 2023, asked further questions on this topic. Through the census, we learned that:

- Around three quarters of young people feel fairly safe or very safe in their local area (within about 5 minutes walking distance of home);
- At 70.4%, the figure was lower for those living in the North of the borough;
- Young people living in the Central part of the borough were more likely to report feeling that crime was a problem in their area;
- When it came to people joining gangs or using or dealing drugs, young people in the North of the borough were more likely to feel this was a problem in their area. young people feel in their community.

In 2024, a number of Havering primary and secondary schools are implementing a new online platform called Student Voice: a child-friendly reporting tool that utilises interactive maps of spaces that young people spend time in (including school and the journey to and from it). Children and young people will be able to report safety concerns without fear or stigma and schools can then improve the spaces with more targeted and effective interventions to prevent future harm. The Council will also receive data gathered through Student Voice, to inform how services and partner agencies can work together to increase the sense of safety that young people feel in their community.



Children in Need of Help and Protection

In December 2023, Ofsted visited the borough to undertake an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). The outcome of this inspection was that, whilst there were areas of strength, overall services to safeguard vulnerable children had deteriorated since our previous inspection in 2018, and we are now graded inadequate overall. The [report](#) was published in February 2024 and following this, we worked with staff and partners to develop our comprehensive [Starting Well Improvement Plan](#). This responds to the specific areas highlighted by Ofsted, as well as those we had already identified through our own self-evaluation, which were in close alignment.

The Starting Well Improvement Plan is structured around four key themes, which are:

- 1. Embedding a Stable and Able Workforce**
- 2. Improving Practice to achieve consistently good outcomes for children and young people**
- 3. Removing Barriers to support improving Practice**
- 4. Governance, Leadership and Management Oversight**

Running across all four themes are two further priorities, which are:

- Ensuring Equality, Diversity and the Social Graces are considered in all aspects of practice, and our support offer to staff; and
- Hearing and responding to the voice and lived experiences of children and families in all that we do.

Our plan is focused on the journey we need to take towards better outcomes for our children, young people and families. Ofsted have told us that we are focused on the right actions to successfully deliver our improvement plan, and significant investment has been allocated to its delivery, which has been costed at £5million.

Our progress is being overseen by an independently chaired Practice Improvement Board, which reports into a strategic Practice Improvement Oversight Board (POIB) chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council. This board includes a representative group of elected members, Safeguarding Partners and our Department for Education Improvement Advisor.

We will remain subject to a high level of scrutiny by Ofsted and the Department for Education, with regular monitoring visits and a full re-inspection to take place after approximately two years.



Neglect Strategy

The definition of neglect is set out in statutory guidance as:

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education

Neglect can impact children in a number of ways, which could include their development and physical health, their attachment and relationships with others, their mental health and emotional wellbeing, and their ability to learn.

Havering has a Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy which provides an overarching view of the response to Neglect in Havering. The aims of the strategy include:

- Listening to the voice of the child and their lived experiences and reflecting that in our work with children and families.
- Building upon the foundations laid by previous neglect strategies to address neglect, with multiagency governance and operational approaches.
- Delivering a well-trained multi-agency workforce confident in tackling neglect and a public that recognises and reports neglect.
- Ensuring that we have approaches and policies in place to address the different elements of neglect.
- More effectively mitigating the impact this form of child abuse has on children and young people.
- Reducing the number of children that suffer neglect and reduce the impact and time they suffer.

Delivery of the strategy is overseen by the Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Safe Sleeping

An on-going priority for the Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership is to raise awareness of and promote messages about safe sleeping. Each year around 200 babies die unexpectedly before their first birthday, with many classified as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or cot death. We know that greater awareness of safer sleep leads to a decrease in the numbers of babies dying.

There is evidence of a shift towards these tragedies happening predominately in families from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. This highlights the importance of not only consistent messaging to all parents of infants less than 1 year but the need for a more targeted approach.

A Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) Steering Group has been established to oversee this work locally, with a number of initiatives underway. These include a Safer Sleep Conference attended by 140 professionals and Safer Sleep training offered by the Havering Learning Partnership.

We are also exploring the possibility of providing safe sleeping equipment to families without the necessary equipment.

Anyone affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young child can contact the [Lullaby Trust](#).



Safeguarding Adolescents

In 2019, Havering's Safeguarding Children Partnership agreed its first Strategy for Safeguarding Havering's Adolescents. The strategy recognises that children and young people are influenced by not only their family and home environment but also their surroundings. Factors, or 'contexts' such as friends, neighbourhoods, school and – increasingly – online interactions, can have a significant impact on their wellbeing and safety.

The strategy is guided by a number of key values and principles, which include recognising that adolescents are children and not adults and understanding the constrained choices that adolescents may feel powerless to avoid.

Ultimately, our focus is on safeguarding adolescents from abuse and exploitation by recognising and responding to signs of vulnerability. Potential risk factors include (but are not limited to): child sexual exploitation; children being missing from home, care or education (including those excluded from school); exposure to risk through gang involvement, county lines, trafficking and serious youth violence; domestic violence and abuse; Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) ; adolescent neglect; self-harm and suicide; substance misuse; and the impact of trauma.

Whilst our formal strategy is being refreshed for 2024/25 onwards, our approach to safeguarding adolescents in Havering remains built around the following six strategic priorities:

Collective Leadership:

We have an established Safeguarding Adolescents Strategic Board, with multi-agency representation including from across Starting Well, Community Safety, the Police, Education and Health partners. The Board provides oversight of our work in this area and reports to the Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership;

Identify:

Our analysis of key datasets supports the identification of vulnerable young people, and informs prevention, intervention and disruption activity that responds to adolescent risk factors;

Engage:

We listen to the lived experiences of children and their caregivers, ensuring there are mechanisms in place for these to be heard by senior leaders and partners, making sure the right support is in place and delivered by a trusted professional;

Prevention:

We conduct appreciative enquiry and gap analysis of current policy and practice in work with adolescents across our professional partnership, including the application of systemic, relationship-based, restorative and strength-based practices to prevent harm and exploitation of adolescents;

Intervention:

We have a multi-disciplinary offer and integrated working methods that respond to the changing needs and risks of adolescents and are building on available disruptive techniques to develop outreach and place-based interventions that reduce future adolescent involvement in violence and crime;

Communication and workforce development:

We deliver communication and training plans that meet the needs of professionals across the partnership who are working with adolescents at risk and aim to improve the life chances of children and young people in Havering.



Serious Violence Strategy

Havering's Serious Violence Duty Strategy 2024-27 was produced as part of the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty. This duty requires local partners to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence, and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

Serious Violence for the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty in Havering, is defined as: Any violence and exploitation affecting young people under the age of 25, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

A strategic needs assessment was undertaken to inform Havering's Serious Violence Duty Strategy and in line with guidance, this considered data and evidence across eight themes, one of which was: a Profile of Violence and Exploitation Affecting Young People Under the Age of 25. Some of the key findings under this theme include:

- Havering has a relatively low number of violence-related offences affecting under 25 year olds compared to regional averages but a very high proportion (50.4%) of all violence and exploitation offences that do occur involve at least one individual under the age of 25. More of Havering's violence is youth violence than any other borough;
- Weapon possession (specifically knives) is a key concern;
- The victims of serious violence are, broadly, evenly split by gender, although this changes depending on the type of offence. 83% of sexual offence victims were female and 85% of robbery victims were male;
- Romford is a significant location of serious violence, both in the context of the borough and of the capital, with St Edwards Ward ranked 7th highest in London for these offences;
- The most frequently occurring time of offence is between 3pm and 4pm;
- While reports of violence on transport overall are low, four particular bus routes make up 42% of such incidents. These were the 174, the 496, the 103 and the 248.

The Strategy outlines a series of actions that will be taken to prevent and reduce serious violence under 8 key objectives, which are:

- Governance
- Analysis and Enforcement
- Reducing Access to Weapons
- Safeguarding and Educating Young people
- Working with Communities and Neighbourhoods to Reduce Violence
- Supporting Victims of Violence and Vulnerability
- Positive Diversion from Violence
- Tackling Violence against Women and Girls

Progress in delivering the strategy and local action plan is reviewed through the Community Safety Partnership.

In 2024/25, the borough secured £280,000 in grant funding from the MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit as part of the Havering 'My Ends' Partnership. 'My Ends' will deliver a programme of engagement and activities for young people, focusing on sports-based and creative (music, arts, etc.) activities, and mentoring. It will utilise local grassroots organisations to build on existing good practice and develop hyperlocal interventions, which will be designed with and for young people who live in or access Romford Town Centre / St. Edwards Ward on a daily basis.

Strategic oversight of My Ends will be held by the Havering Community Safety Partnership (HCSP), whilst operational oversight will be carried out by Havering's Serious Violence Strategic Partnership.



Substance (Drugs and Alcohol) Misuse

Partners in Havering have produced a joint strategy to combat drugs and alcohol from 2024. The successful implementation of this five-year strategy will be dependent on the whole local partnership working together and sharing responsibility for creating a safer, healthier and more productive society.

One priority of this new strategy is for the partners in Havering to work together to achieve a generational shift in the demand for drugs. You can also hear what partners have to say about the strategy.

As one young person said:

“Teaching children in schools about drugs and alcohol awareness at an earlier age such as age 11 is really important. Sometimes there is peer pressure and they don’t know where to go to and who to talk to. ... Schools need to ask us how they can help and support young people.”

The needs assessment and other evidence that informed our strategy found that:

- Some children are more at risk than others due to genetic predisposition and environmental exposure;
- Engaging in physical activity can reduce stress-induced epigenetic changes, which will decrease the risk of developing addiction in the first place, or stress-induced relapse;
- 21% of services users of drug and alcohol treatment services in 2019/20 were living with their children;
- 21% of the people using illicit drugs are aged 16-24;
- The proportion of Havering’s children in care identified as having a substance misuse problem was 7.6% in 2022/23, compared to an England average for children in care of 3%;
- Hospital admissions of 15- to 24-year-olds due to substance misuse in Havering was significantly higher than London and England averages in 2020/21-2022/23.

Partners in the Havering Combating Drugs Partnership will:

- Support parents with drug misuse problems to minimise the harm to children including the heightened risk that they themselves will in turn experience similar problems; and
- Ensure school-based prevention and early intervention are there to reduce the chances of young people abusing alcohol, drugs and other substances.

Information on substance misuse and how to seek help can be on the Wise Up website.

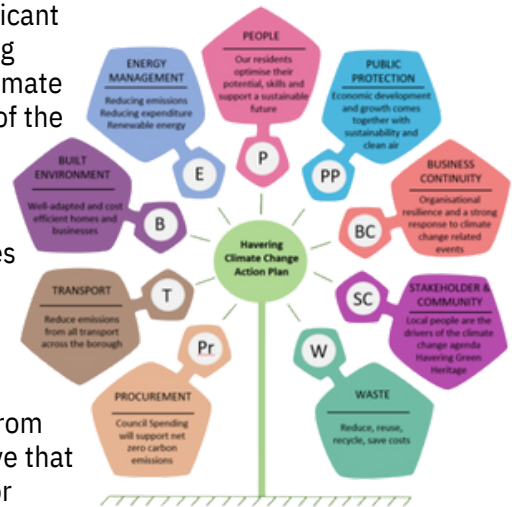


Climate Change

We know that the impact of climate change on our planet is of significant concern to children and young people. The Havering Youth Wellbeing Census asked students how often they worry about the impact of climate change on their future. 44% of all respondents, and more than half of the girls who completed the survey, answered 'sometimes' or 'often'.

Havering's Climate Change Action Plan (HCCAP) 2024 to 2027 was adopted in 2024 and outlines the key initiatives, goals and objectives to meet the Council's carbon neutral ambitions by 2040. Progress against the agreed actions will be published annually, along with reporting on CO₂ emissions from the Council's own activity.

Everyone in Havering has a part to play in reducing CO₂ emissions, from driving less to reducing heating, gas and electricity usage. We believe that children and young people are some of the greatest ambassadors for climate action and a number of the areas we are focused on involve working with them and schools. Examples include:



- work with schools to help them make their buildings more energy-efficient;
- creating travel plans with schools, that encourage walking and cycling instead of using cars (see Active Travel, below);
- tree planting; and
- encouraging people to use less plastic, including through the promotion of water refill stations.

We are also replacing old Council-owned vehicles with new electric ones and over the coming months 61 EV Charging Points will be installed across 10 Council operated car parks, with a further 74 charging points being installed in publically available on street sites across the borough.

We will support the reduction of transport emissions across the borough to become a carbon neutral authority. Much of this work will be done through the delivery of transport projects and programmes that provide residents with alternative options to travel, besides the car, including initiatives that encourage more walking and cycling. Through the School Travel Plan programme, single occupancy car use for "school run" journeys for participating schools is already down to 16% compared to 39% when the programme started back in 2009.

Active Travel

The Council has a target for 65% of residents to be walking, cycling or using public transport by 2041. To help meet this target, Havering delivers an annual Local Implementation Plan (LIP) programme in which schemes and projects are delivered that support sustainable transport.

To further support the Climate Change agenda, an Active Travel Strategy has been drafted and consultation commenced in Autumn 2024. The strategy sets out the Council's long-term vision for improving walking and cycling infrastructure in Havering. As part of the consultation, a specific Children and Young Person's survey has been developed to better understand the hopes and aspirations of young people in the borough.



Road Safety

The Mayor's Transport Strategy, published in 2018, sets out the goal that by 2041 all deaths and serious injuries will be eliminated from London's transport network. In 2018, the Mayor launched his Vision Zero Action Plan which sets out a series of specific actions to tackle the sources of road danger, with a shift in emphasis from tackling historic casualty reduction trends to a holistic approach to targeting road danger.

Through its annual Local Implementation Plan programme, the Council is delivering schemes that support the Vision Zero agenda. In 2024/25 over £500k is being spent on schemes to reduce casualty rates across the borough and £100k has been allocated specifically to delivering Road Safety Education initiatives in schools, including Theatre productions around road safety.

The safety of children in our care and care experienced young adults

Another of our pledges to children in our care and care experienced is that We will look after you and treat you well. Specific commitments include:

- We will make sure you live in a safe place, where you are well looked after and is suitable for your needs. We will check on the quality of care you receive.
- We will only move you from your home or placement if it is absolutely necessary, or if it is deemed to be in your best interests. If you do need to move, we will ensure we explain clearly the reason for this
- We will make sure that when you prepare to move to the 'Leaving Care Team' at 16 years old, or leave our care, there is a suitable plan in place. We will make sure you understand what is going to happen when you become of leaving care age and that you are involved in any decisions or plans.
- We will provide you with the support you need when you leave care to become independent and be the best you can be in adult life. This includes learning to manage money, paying bills, learning to cook, preparation for work and taking care of yourself.

Children in care have their care plans reviewed at regular intervals to ensure the home they are living in continues to meet their needs. As children approach age 16, we work with them to develop a Pathway Plan which sets out how they will be supported to live independently. This too includes regular assessments of their current and future accommodation needs, as well as financial entitlements and support with budgeting.

Transition to Adulthood

We know that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is a challenging time for many young people. For those who receive services from us as children under the age of 18, it can feel worrying to know that those same services will not be in place, or may look different, after they turn 18. This includes young people in the care of the local authority, those with special educational needs and disabilities, and those young people we are working with due to risks of exploitation. This is a priority area in our Starting Well Improvement Plan, with planned actions to include:

- Reviewing and updating our response to contextual safeguarding, vulnerable adolescents and transitional safeguarding; and
- Reviewing processes for the transfer from children's services to adult services (both social care and health services) and re-establishing a Transitions Panel and action plan to deliver improvements.

Through our SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy, we will also develop new Preparing for Adulthood information, guidance, and enhanced support for children, young people, their families and professionals, to ensure that planning and support for children and young people with SEND has an unrelenting focus on these children's outcomes in terms of employment, independent living, community inclusion, and health.



Children in Care and Sufficiency Strategy

The government's 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' Strategy focuses on greater ambition for care-experienced children and young people, with proposed changes to legislation to improve access to stable homes and housing. Alongside this, a published review of the children's social care placements market described the growing challenge local authorities face in finding suitable homes for children in care. The report highlighted the significant issue of profiteering amongst the largest private placement providers - something that all local authorities, including Havering, are experiencing and continue to face.

Our new Children in Care and Sufficiency Strategy is being drafted for 2024/25 onwards and this will fundamentally set out how we aim to provide good homes for children in our care, that meet their needs.

Specifically, the strategy describes our plans to:

- Ensure children achieve permanency within a family at the earliest opportunity;
- Ensure more children in care live within the borough;
- Ensure children have access to well-trained foster parents;
- Ensure our foster carers feel valued through the introduction of the Mockingbird support model;
- Ensure young people aged 16 and 17 can live with trained adults who can provide supported lodgings, enabling young people to remain within a family setting for longer;
- Ensure children with special and complex needs have the right services to meet their needs;
- Create a Havering children's home offer, to provide the right care in the right place at the right cost; and
- Ensure children in care receive the support they need to reach their educational potential.





Priority 4: For children to be Heard

“
**WE NEED TO MAKE A PETITION
SO IT CAN BE DISCUSSED IN THE
PARLIAMENT. ALL THE
CHILDREN CAN WRITE
HANDWRITTEN LETTERS TO
GOVERNMENT TO MAKE AN
IMPACT**

Priority 4: For children to be Heard

Our fourth wish for children and young people in Havering is that they are heard. We want children to be actively involved in decision making that affects them and to have real influence on the outcomes of those decisions, whether they concern services provided to children and their families, or the local environment in which they live and attend school.

This does not mean that children and young people will always get the outcome they want (especially if it is not in their best interests) but we will respect their right to express their views, and to have these considered and taken seriously. We will make sure that we feed back to children and young people who have given their views on the outcome of any decisions taken, and the reasons for these.

We believe there are multiple benefits to civic engagement, for individuals of all ages, and we continue working to increase the number of children and young people who engage with us and developing further opportunities for this to happen.

What children and young people have told us

In June 2024, prompted by a discussion about exams, Havering's Youth Council explored the topic of how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on education. Emerging themes included:

- Young people not feeling they had been able to talk about their lived experience of the pandemic - that life had moved on, without really acknowledging what had happened;
- The impact of the Black Lives Matter movement;
- Feeling that the education system needed to be reviewed, and going back to pre-Covid 'normality' was not working;
- That young people have different needs now and cultural differences that are not adequately reflected in today's curriculum;
- That since the lockdowns some young people found the structure of school and being in a classroom more difficult;
- Some were finding it difficult to communicate face to face and felt more comfortable behind a screen;
- Some young people were experiencing or seeing homophobia; and
- Some young people's GCSE subject choices were being impacted by the availability of teachers for those subjects;
- A lack of support, emotionally and academically, for children arriving in the country and going through the lengthy process of obtaining British citizenship, alongside managing schoolwork.

Youth Council had the following recommendations to share with decision makers and those in power:

- Listen to young people and adapt services to meet their needs;
- Listen to them about revising the education system to include and embrace more cultural and gender difference;
- More work is needed to support young people post Covid – upcoming generations will be affected for many years to come;
- Recognise that teachers are leaving the profession, and that young people have limited choices as a result.



Resident Engagement and Participation

The Council's Resident Engagement and Participation Strategy 2024-27 was developed following a review of engagement provision. This sets out our intention to better capture the voice of young people and work with them to form better services.

The strategy sets out six key principles to improve the current engagement offer, which are:

- We ask
- We listen and involve
- We know 'one size doesn't fit all'
- We learn
- We come to you
- We are open, honest and accountable

The strategy will continue to evolve as we engage further with children and young people on this topic and improve our organisational understanding of how we can engage more with local children and young people, on their terms.

Mind Of My Own and SHOUT



One of the ways we have been working to deliver our WISH for children to be Heard is through our use of the Mind Of My Own suite of apps, which support the participation of children and young people.

The One App empowers young people to participate in their lives and communicate their views to a trusted adult. With simple pictures and child-friendly language, it is designed for children and young people to share experiences, feelings and views on topics that reflect important moments in their lives.

We initially implemented the One App for use by children in our care and have since rolled out its usage more widely across Starting Well, along with similar apps for use by younger children and those with additional needs (Express), and children using Youth Justice services (Xchange).

In 2022 we built upon the success of these tools further by delivering our first large-scale survey of children and young people in Havering: 'SHOUT we are listening'. The survey received more than 1,000 responses across a range of topics which have helped to inform the development of this plan, as well as being used to highlight key issues of importance to children and young people with the relevant audience. For example, feedback concerning crime and safety was shared widely with local partners including the police and Transport for London (TfL).

In 2023/24, for the first time, children and young people in Havering were invited to take part in our budget setting, with our 'SHOUT about the money' survey, which received more than 420 completed responses. The feedback received was used to inform some very difficult financial decisions by the Council's Cabinet and a number of proposals to reduce or change services were not taken forward. We know how important it is to feedback on how the results of consultations have been used, and produced a [short video](#) to let children and young people know their views has been heard and taken on board.

'SHOUT about Libraries' has been another example of the Council engaging children and young people in difficult decisions. The survey, which asked for views on our Libraries Strategy, ran from July to August 2024 and received more than 1,200 responses. Reports were being prepared at the time of writing this plan.

We are grateful to the thousands of children and young people who have taken the time to share their views with us, as well as Havering schools for continuing to support our commitment to ensuring children are heard.



Havering Youth Wellbeing Census

The Havering Youth Wellbeing Census is a key part of the Council's commitment to increasing engagement with children and young people, as well as understanding more about the state of wellbeing in adolescents.

The first wave of the Havering Youth Wellbeing Census took place in Summer 2023. The census used the #BeeWell survey which was originally developed as part of the #BeeWell programme, an initiative originating in Greater Manchester that combines academic expertise with youth-led change to make the wellbeing of young people everybody's business. The census was delivered in Havering with support from UCLPartners, a health innovation partnership committed to improving adolescent mental health.



The #BeeWell survey themes include 'emotions', 'meaning, purpose and control' and 'understanding yourself' as well as exploring what drives wellbeing, for example, health and routines, hobbies and entertainment, and relationships.

Additional questions were incorporated to meet locally identified needs as voiced by Havering's young people and the local organisations and services that support them. Topics added included:

- Climate change
- Vaping
- Crime
- Accessing support
- Travel to school
- Schoolwork related stress

Ten Havering schools took part, with 2,287 young people across Year 8 and Year 10 completing the #BeeWell survey, representing 36% coverage of this age group.

Results from the first wave of the census have been published in our neighbourhood dashboard, forming an invaluable evidence base. They are being used by the local authority and partners in health and education to understand how, as individual services and as a partnership, we can take action that will support improvements in the wellbeing of young people.

The Havering Youth Wellbeing Census and #BeeWell approach is about empowering young people to lead change and this short video produced by students at Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls is just one example of how, with support from their schools, students are doing exactly that.

Havering Youth Council

The Havering Youth Council is made up of young people aged between 11 and 18, and inclusive to the age of 25 if the young person has additional needs or a disability, who live or receive education in Havering.

Youth Council is an independent body of young people, who are apolitical. It's aims are to:

- give young people a voice;
- create opportunities for young people to become involved in democratic processes within the local community, regionally and nationally;
- enable young people to identify the issues that affect their lives in a negative way and determine what they need to do to effect change;
- raise participation and achievement levels for ALL young people;
- promote equal opportunities in Havering for all young people;
- treat all young people fairly, with respect and ensure that they will be listened to.



Youth Service offer

The Youth Service provides a range of opportunities for young people to grow and develop new and existing skills, make a positive contribution to their community and where relevant (through our targeted offer), reduce involvement in risky, antisocial or criminal activities.

The Youth Service aims to deliver an inclusive service that is available to all young people in Havering. The team are based at the MyPlace centre in Harold Hill; the Councils' flagship multi-million-pound youth and community centre, which opened in 2012.

Just a few examples of the range of activities and support delivered by the Youth Service include:

- SAFE (Social Activities for Everyone) – a mixed youth club for 13- to 18-year-olds;
- Junior Revellers and Senior Revellers – for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (aged 11 to 15, and 15 to 18) to make friends and take part in sports, arts and crafts;
- Transitions - a 5-month programme supporting young people transitioning from primary to secondary school; and
- Off Street Detached Youth Club - providing a safe space to spend time with friends or make new ones away from the streets, and gain support from the youth work team.

There are also a number of targeted programmes, including Go Girls - a self-esteem and confidence building programme for young women aged 13-18 years old, and Good Fellas - a group for young men 13-18 year olds, fostering positive relationships to develop responsible behaviours and guide them in making healthy decisions related to their emotional and social development.

Children, young people and their parents or carers can find out more on our [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) sites.

Safeguarding Young Advisors

Havering's Safeguarding Young Advisors are aged 15 to 24 and have been recruited by the Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership. Their role is to:

- Help influence change in their community;
- Engage other young people on safeguarding issues;
- Ensure the interest of young people when it comes to decision-making;
- Connect with other young people's groups, forums and networks to promote the issues that matter to them;
- Speak with children and young people to find out how services can help improve outcomes for them; and
- Take part in training and put together information in a youth friendly way.



The rights of young children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 describes how: *Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.*

As children grow, so does their ability to understand their lives and make decisions, a process that varies based on individual experiences, education, and maturity. This gradually increasing ability to make reasoned decisions is called evolving capacities. The UNCRC states that parental guidance should align with a child's evolving capacities; younger children require more protection due to not fully grasping the consequences of choices, while older children can handle more responsibility.

Evolving capacities should not be used to dismiss a child's perspective. The child's views can provide valuable insights into what matters to them and influence what adults consider to be in their best interests. Involving children, considering their views, and allowing them to make mistakes boosts self-confidence and maturity, helping them to avert risks, while denying a child's feelings and opinions makes them feel insignificant and unable to protect themselves. These concepts are central to the way we work in Havering and ensuring the youngest of children know that they matter.

Responding to the voice of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

We know there is more to do to respond to the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Some of the actions being take forward through our SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy include:

- Embedding a culture of participation, communication, and engagement at every level of the SEND and AP system, ensuring children and young people with SEND and their families are equal partners in the design, delivery, and implementation of improvements to the support and services available in Havering, as well as discussions about their own support;
- Co-producing with children and families a 'SEND Working Together Charter', or equivalent. All those working with children and young people with SEND and their families will understand how the charter principles will help ensure families' experiences of the SEND system are respectful and supportive;
- Working with children and young people with SEND, their families, and professionals, to agree what it is we want to ensure all our children and young people with SEND have and achieve, so they have the best quality of life they can. This will be captured in the area's SEND Outcomes Framework produced in collaboration with the Council for Disabled Children. This framework will be used to guide decision making on SEND and evaluate how well the local SEND system is delivering these outcomes for Havering children and young people.



The participation of children in care and care experienced young adults

Another coproduced pledge we have made to children in our care and care experienced young adults is: We will listen to you about things that are important to you and your life, and about the care that you receive from us.

In practice, this means:

- Always making sure children and young people are involved in decisions made about their life, including with access to Mind Of My Own, their Youth Influence and Participation Co-ordinator and Independent Reviewing Officer;
- Being honest with them about things that have happened in their life and the decisions made about their care;
- Acting on what they say, and telling them what we have done and when we have done it;
- Arriving on time when attending meetings and visiting them at home (and calling if we are going to be late);
- Telling them about their rights and entitlements as a child in care, including access to an Advocate, an Independent Visitor and how to complain or share views; and
- Providing them with an interpreter, where needed, to ensure they fully understand discussions about their care and are able to tell us their thoughts, feelings and wishes.

Say it Louder Forum and Total Respect Training

The Say It Louder Forum provides a voice for care experienced young people aged 12 plus. The aim is to bring together young people and service providers, to give views and ideas to improve services, and to influence decision makers. This is with a view to actively working to create change and to co-produce opportunities to improve outcomes for children in care.

Total Respect is a training programme delivered by our care experienced young people. The training focuses on the understanding of children's rights, exploring assumptions about care experienced people and learning from the experienced of those delivering the training.





Priority 5: For children to be Treated fairly

“ TO ME IT WOULD BE, LIKE, ACCEPTANCE. WHETHER IT BE MENTAL HEALTH OR NATIONALITY BASED, LIKE JUST GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF PEOPLE THAT AREN'T THE SAME AS YOU BECAUSE WE'RE ALL DIFFERENT, AND YOU HAVE TO KNOW THAT ”

Priority 5: For children to be Treated fairly

Running through our vision and our WISH is a commitment to the children and young people of Havering: that we will do everything we can to ensure they are treated fairly. We know that there are groups of children who, like adults, experience disadvantage and at times discrimination, in a range of different ways. Children have told us this and sadly, we can see the evidence in our data. This section of our plan sets out just some of the ways in which we are taking action to make Havering a fairer place.

What children and young people have told us

In our first, coproduced, SHOUT survey, we explored the topic of discrimination - or as children asked us to describe it: 'hate'. When asked whether they had experienced hate directed towards them, of the 650 children and young people who responded, approximately:

- 26% had experienced hate due to race;
- 18% due to age;
- 13% due to religion;
- 12% due to disability; and
- 10% due to sexuality

Discrimination was also an area covered by the Havering Youth Wellbeing Census and this highlighted some further inequalities, such as:

- Girls reported experiencing discrimination more than boys across all types of discrimination apart from religion (this included race, skin colour or where they were born, gender, disability and sexual orientation) – with gender discrimination itself showing the greatest difference between the two groups;
- Children with special educational needs and children eligible for free school meals had more experience of discrimination than their peers across all forms of discrimination that were covered by the survey.

Disproportionality

The inequitable experiences that children and young people have told us about are also reflected in key datasets, both nationally and in Havering. For example, we know that Black and Global Majority children are overrepresented within care, the Youth Justice system, and among pupils who are suspended or excluded from school.

A report by MBRRACE-UK, published in May 2023, also highlighted persistent disparities in maternal health, with data showing that women from Black ethnic backgrounds were four times more likely to die during or up to six weeks after pregnancy compared to White women.

We will not shy away from these facts.

We will continue to examine how the structural racism that exists in society impacts on children and young people today. We will reflect on how we and our partners – both as individual organisations and the wider 'system' that supports children - can be part of the solution, and not the problem.



Health Inequalities

The term 'Health Inequalities' refers to the unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within our society. Such differences arise because of the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age – all of which influence how we think, feel and act, and can therefore impact both our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Healthcare inequalities are about the access people have to health services, and their experience and outcomes from accessing (or not accessing) them.

At a local level, Integrated Care Boards are able to bid for health inequalities funding from NHS England to deliver projects and schemes that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.

In Havering, health inequalities funding has been allocated to a number of projects that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people.

Specific projects include:

Improving access to talking therapies for children and young people with neurodevelopmental conditions

Aims to increase the opportunity for young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to access talking therapies, where they are presenting with common mental health conditions such as anxiety, low confidence or low mood.

Improving mental health outcomes for young homeless people

Aims to empower educational settings to better support young homeless people and families, and provide opportunities for interventions within the community.

Asthma Schools Coordinator

Support every school within Havering to become Asthma and Allergy Friendly through the recruitment of an Asthma and Allergy Friendly Schools Co-Ordinator.

Children's weight management pilot - piloting 'HENRY Healthy Families: Growing Up'

An 8-week holistic family lifestyle programme for families with children aged 5-12, which supports healthy emotional and physical development as well as a healthy weight.

Infant Feeding Coordinator

Recruiting a post within the Early Help Service to facilitate an improved offer of support to parents around infant feeding, focusing on: development of a breastfeeding peer support programme; co-production of an antenatal breastfeeding workshop; and Children's Centre UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) accreditation – Stages 1 and 2.

Children's Diabetes Team

Funding a part time nurse specialist to support the reduction of waiting times and improve outcomes for children with diabetes through the completion of pump education, improving the percentage of patients using pumps and provision of continuous glucose monitoring.

Responding to the Havering Youth Wellbeing Census

Providing additional capacity and funding for Havering Youth Service to support a Youth Steering Group / Network which will empower and support young people to identify and commission small projects aimed at improving the wellbeing of their peers.



Disadvantage in Education

The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is a significant issue, with children from less well-off homes starting school behind their classmates and falling further behind as they progress through primary and secondary school.

This gap is influenced by various factors, including home and school environments, which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crises. Many head teachers have reported an increase in children coming to school hungry, highlighting the on-going impact of these crises.

Research shows that educational factors also contribute to the gap, such as inadequate school funding, uneven access to quality teaching, unfair admissions policies, school absence, and inequalities in access to private tuition.

The Department for Education defines disadvantaged pupils as those eligible for free school meals in the past six years, those looked after by the local authority, or those who have ceased to be looked after due to adoption or other orders.

In 2024, the attainment gap at Key Stage 2 between disadvantaged pupils in Havering and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally was greater than the national gap and the previous year. However, at Key Stage 4 (Attainment 8), the gap in Havering was smaller than the national gap and had improved from the previous year.

Havering has implemented two key projects to support disadvantaged pupils. The first project, in collaboration with the Mayor of London's office and the Violence Reduction Unit, focuses on communication and language skills. It includes a small group intervention programme (Talk Boost) for young children, wider training for teachers and Learning Support Assistants, and efforts to improve parental engagement.

The second project, in partnership with the Education Endowment Fund, aims to identify and spread effective practices in adaptive teaching techniques across primary and secondary phases. This project involves schools with attainment gaps that are wider than the gap nationally.

Supplementing the above is continuing professional development for senior curriculum leaders and subject leaders. We are also ensuring that SENCOs are informed of projects and that these are aligned, due to the relationship between SEND and disadvantage.

Children who are in the care of the local authority receive support from 'Virtual Schools' and from September 2021, the Department for Education extended the role of Virtual Schools to also promote the education of children with a social worker. This cohort has been identified as another group of children who face significant barriers to education as a result of their experience, most commonly abuse or neglect. These are children on a Child in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) plan. The aim of the Virtual School is to champion the educational attendance, attainment and progress of these children and young people, by working collaboratively with social workers, school professionals and the wider network.



Our Youth Justice Service

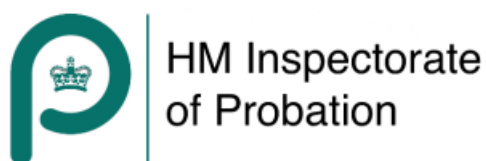
Havering's Youth Justice Service Strategy 2024-2027 has been written with explicit consideration of The Youth Justice Board strategy for delivering positive outcomes for children by reducing offending and creating safer communities 2024- 2027. The Youth Justice Board's Strategic Plan 2024-27, outlines how the Youth Justice Board seeks to achieve a Child First approach in the youth justice system with the vision of:

'A youth justice system that sees children as children first, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society.'

To achieve this, Havering's Youth Justice Board is committed to following an evidence-based approach and drawing on evidence of what works in creating positive outcomes for children. Our plan sets out the strategic direction of Havering's Youth Justice Service and in particular, its work to:

- Provide Leadership and Governance;
- Reduce Re-offending;
- Address and tackle disproportionality;
- Improve Education Training and Employment outcomes for children and young people;
- Reduce Substance Misuse and support preventative education and awareness raising;
- Improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND / Speech, Language and Communication, or Mental Health Needs
- Reduce serious youth violence and exploitation;
- Support Prevention and engaging communities;
- Evidence victim uptake in Restorative Justice process and increase the child's understanding of harm caused;
- Improve practice within the YJS and use learning from inspections and thematic inspections;
- Develop a 'Stable and Able' Workforce; and
- Undertake Quality Assurance

As reflected in our 2022 inspection, where Havering's Youth Justice Service was graded 'Good' by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, we are confident that the work we are undertaking alongside our partner agencies will provide a strong foundation to continue to divert children from crime; alongside tackling the over-representation of Black and Global Majority children within the Youth Justice Service, including through the use of Out of Court Disposals.



An inspection of youth offending services in **Havering**

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2022



Violence Against Women and Girls

A key priority for our borough and for the Havering Community Safety Partnership, is tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), in all its forms. Violence against Women and Girls encompasses:

- Domestic Abuse;
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- Forced Marriage;
- Honour Based Violence;
- Prostitution and Trafficking;
- Sexual Violence including Rape;
- Sexual Exploitation;
- Sexual Harassment;
- Stalking; and
- Faith Based Abuse.

Whilst affecting individuals of any age, several of these issues predominately affect younger people. With the exception of Female Genital Mutilation, our work to address these issues does not exclude male victims.

Havering undertook a VAWG Needs Assessment in 2024 which informed a new strategy for 2025 onwards. The strategic vision is to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through the development of policies and procedures to address violence, develop programmes of preventative work, provide high-quality service provision which responds to local needs, and ensure that robust enforcement action is taken against perpetrators.

We have aligned our strategic objectives with those set out in the Mayoral Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy for London, and have set the following aims:

- Preventing and reducing VAWG
- Supporting all victims and survivors
- Holding perpetrators to account
- Building trust and confidence

A comprehensive action plan has been developed alongside the strategy, which includes a number of actions that aim to support children and young people. These include the continued roll out of 'Safe and Together' training to ensure social workers are equipped to achieve the best possible outcomes for survivors and their children whilst focusing on the perpetrator's behaviour; and helping young people to identify the warning signs of VAWG within their own home, their own developing relationships and within the community.

The strategy takes account of the feedback that girls and young women in Havering have provided about their sense of safety in the borough, including specific concerns raised around Romford Town Centre. Through the My Ends Programme, project providers will be asked to deliver female centred programmes that incorporate education, support and risk management of VAWG.

The new strategy will be overseen by our VAWG Strategic Partnership, which includes representation from across the local authority, the Police, Probation, and several local Voluntary and Community Sector partners.

“ **I WISH I DIDN'T WALK HOME FROM SCHOOL AND GET SEXUALISED JUST FROM WEARING SCHOOL UNIFORM** ”



Social Value

Havering Council is committed to delivering social value through its regeneration activities. This means that we are not only building homes for the families of Havering but investing in building the communities around them too.

Social value is a term used to express the wider impacts regeneration can have; not just in terms of money, but also in relation to providing opportunities, spaces and places so that local people – including children and young people - can meet, socialise, innovate, grow and learn in an environment that works for them. You can read some examples of social value in action on the [Council's website](#).

From 2024, we will be further embedding social value requirements in our procurement processes and as part of this, will be considering how, as corporate parents, we can better support care experienced young adults through procurement.

Fair Funding

Havering has seen unprecedented growth and change in its population over the last decade. The number of households with dependent children rose by 28% between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, and children and young people under the age of 18 now represent almost a quarter of the borough's population.

At the same time, Havering also has the second largest older persons population (as a proportion of all our residents) in London. Statistically, children and older people are the two population groups that have the most need for the statutory services that local councils, and our partners such as the NHS, provide.

Incredibly, the formula used to calculate how funding is distributed across local councils still uses population data from the 2011 Census. This means that Havering is placed at a significant disadvantage compared to many local authorities, due to the huge population changes we have seen since 2011.

Put simply, we continue to receive a level of funding that in no way reflects the needs of our population, including our children and young people.

We end this plan with a final pledge. We will continue to state our case and lobby central government for a fair funding allocation that will allow us to deliver the services that our children and young people need and deserve.



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29. [Havering inspection of youth offending services](#)
30. [Social value in regeneration](#)
31. [Working together to improve school attendance](#)



“WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF HAVERING, WHOSE VIEWS, WISHES AND FEELINGS HAVE INFORMED THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PLAN.”