

# A Speech, Language and Communication Strategy, 0-5 years, Nottingham City



Lead Department:  
People's Directorate (Education)



# CONTENTS

<b>Vision Statement</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Strategic National Context</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Strategic Local Context</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Needs Analysis Data – An Ambitious Change in the System</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Leading the System for an Integrated Approach for SLC Citywide</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Governance and Accountability</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Impact Measures and Action Plan 2021-2025</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Concluding Statement</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# VISION STATEMENT

The vision for the City is for all of the City's 0-5 year olds to develop speech, language and communication (SLC) skills to the best of their individual potential and preparing them to be ready for school, positively impacting on their attachment, attainment, leisure, mental health, wellbeing, later employment and ultimately improve life chances. The need for this vision has been accelerated by the recent COVID-19 global pandemic.

The vision also incorporates an intention to extend the age range, so that this strategy covers children and young people up to age 25 in the future, in order to reduce inequalities in health and contribute to positive wellbeing, increased life chances in terms of employment and reduction in youth offending.

In 'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days', the Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP states *"Two is too late! We spend billions on challenges in society from lack of school readiness to bullying to poor mental health to addictions and criminality"* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>).

And yet, local Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data evidences that children and young people of Nottingham are not developing in communication and language and literacy to the best of their potential, with scores consistently below the national average.

It is recommended that the core model used for this strategy centres around the Balanced System® Framework<sup>1</sup>. The framework is structured around five strands with outcomes at each of the universal, targeted and specialist levels in each strand.

The vision therefore is for the City to have an integrated offer that delivers outcomes for children and young people through a strategic framework that includes:

- Families and Young People Support
- Enhanced and Adapted Environments
- Developing the Workforce
- Early Identification
- Effective Intervention

The Balanced System® Framework provides a clear focus for joint commissioning arrangements, with a focus on commissioning activities that have a clearly defined contribution to the shared joint outcomes for children and young people. The supporting joint commissioning strategy will articulate the need to commission provisions with a view to achieving equality of opportunity and outcome across the City, ensuring positive outcomes for our youngest children, their families and the wider communities.

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<sup>1</sup>Gascoigne, M (2008 – 2021) <https://www.thebalancedsystem.org>

# STRATEGIC NATIONAL CONTEXT

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) occur in every community with an estimate that two children in every mainstream classroom may have a significant developmental language disorder. However, the evidence suggests that for children born into and growing up in disadvantage, as many as 50% of children entering school may have identifiable SLCN. For a significant proportion of these children, long lasting impact can be avoided through early intervention and prevention approaches.

With parents recognised as a child's first educator, it is imperative that their needs are at the heart of service design and delivery. With an integrated, system-wide approach and a central continuous workforce development strategy linked to SLC, this service design and delivery needs to reflect joint commissioning arrangements from pregnancy, with a seamless transition from Health Visitors to School Nurses and Early Years Settings to schools.

Addressing early language delay is a priority in the government's 'levelling up' social mobility plan. It is a priority of Nottingham City to address these inequalities through our recently published Recovery and Improvement Plan 2021-2024 (<https://www.mynottinghamnews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Improvement-Plan-New-Version-v-6.3.pdf>)

In order to do this successfully, it is incumbent that this strategy links to the following national strategies:

- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care, April 2020)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (Department for Education, September 2021)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
- Health Child Programme: Pregnancy and the First 5 Years of Life (Department of Health and Social Care, October 2009)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-pregnancy-and-the-first-5-years-of-life>
- The Best Start for Life: a vision for the 1001 critical days (Department of Health and Social Care, March 2021)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>
- Bercow: 10 Years On ([www.bercow10yearson.com](http://www.bercow10yearson.com) March 2018)  
[337644-ICAN-Bercow-Report-WEB.pdf](https://www.bercow10yearson.com/337644-ICAN-Bercow-Report-WEB.pdf) ([bercow10yearson.com](http://www.bercow10yearson.com))
- Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication (Public Health England, December 2020)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-start-in-speech-language-and-communication>
- Identification and Intervention for Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years (Marie Gascoigne, Bibiana Wigley and Claire Welburn, March 2020)  
<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/early-years/national-context/early-outcomes-fund-and-a-speech-language-and-communication-pathway/>

# STRATEGIC LOCAL CONTEXT

In 2019, Nottingham City had a birth rate of 11.4 per 1000 population of all ages and 24,434 children under 5 living in the City. The highest concentration of children under 5 is within the Aspley Ward, which also has the highest predicted SLC need in the City with 57% of 0-4 year olds being predicted to have needs. Across the City, 32.8% of children did not achieve expected levels in Communication and Language and Literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data in 2019 (*Identification and Intervention for Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years, Marie Gascoigne, Bibiana Wigley and Claire Welburn, March 2020*). This analysis was conducted as part of the Early Outcomes Fund project across Nottingham, Leicester and Derby Cities.

Following a Peer Challenge 0-5 years in 2019, the Local Government Association made a key recommendation linked directly to one of our identified Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE). This was to develop a collaborative city-wide Early Years strategy with a focus on Speech, Language and Communication, as this key life skill cuts across health, education and social care as a key theme.

These two externally driven projects give Nottingham an opportunity for SLC to be embedded as a key issue across all workforces, supported by a clear understanding of children's milestones, and funding and commissioning arrangements, in order to improve outcomes and life chances for children and young people of Nottingham. This will be informed by experts who are ambitious for change, supported by parents as key educators and equal partners.



# NEEDS ANALYSIS DATA – AN AMBITIOUS CHANGE IN THE SYSTEM



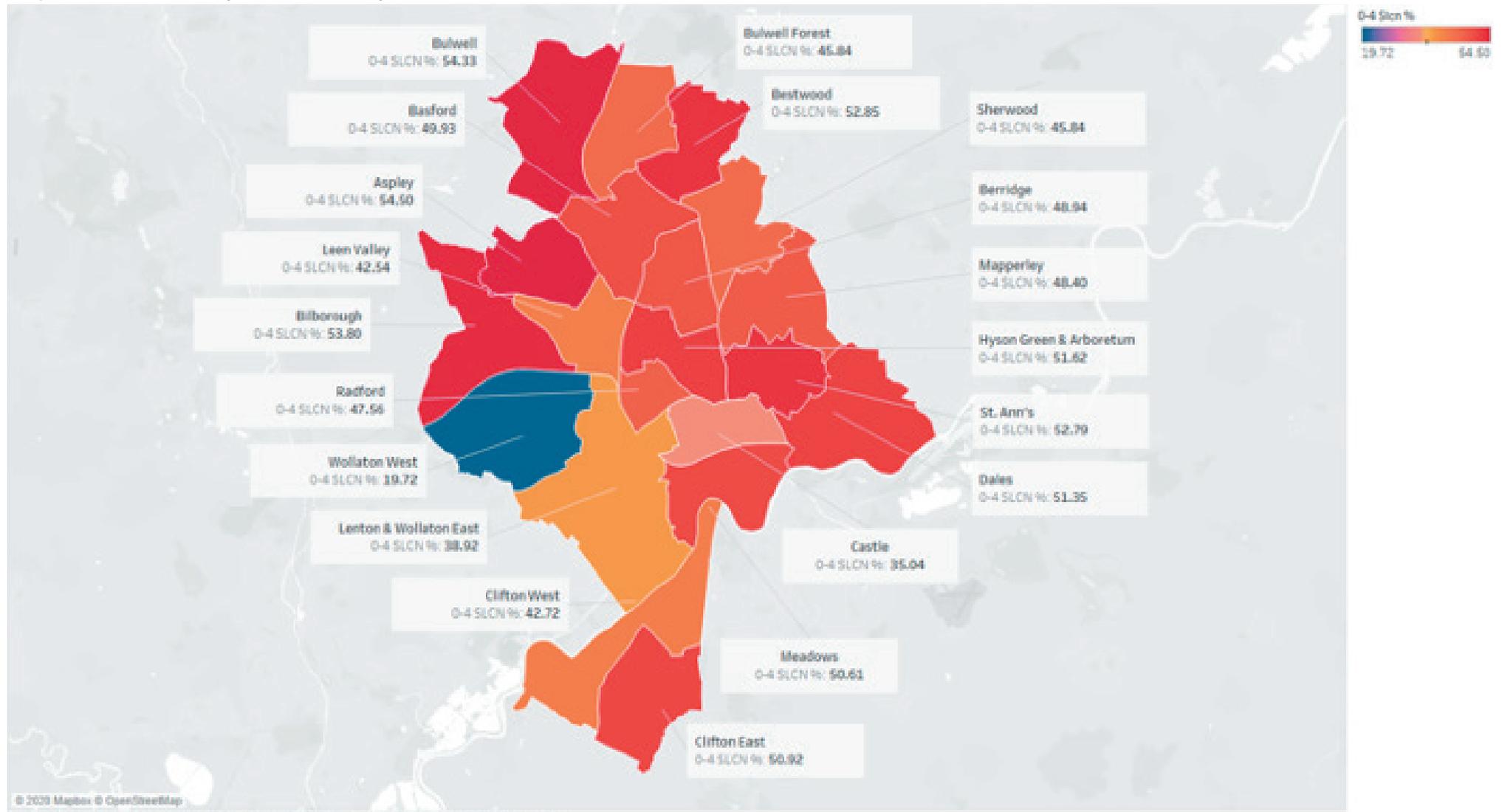
In March 2019, Nottingham City Council Children’s Services undertook some groundbreaking work in partnership with Leicester City Council and Derby City Council, enlisting the support of Better Communication’s CIC to complete a needs analysis using

tools developed as part of the Balanced System® improvement methodology. The ‘understand phase’ included analysis of population and demographic data as well as triangulating with the evidence base to provide a profile of the predicted distribution of needs across the City. The qualitative mapping as part of the process facilitated a systematic capture of the offer for children from all partners. Several stakeholder events took place across the city with key partners, including the voluntary sector and parents and carers, to obtain views and experiences linked to SLC, this is fully documented in the *‘Identification and Intervention for Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years’* (Marie Gascoigne, Bibiana Wigley and Claire Welburn, March 2020) (<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/early-years/national-context/early-outcomes-fund-and-a-speech-language-and-communication-pathway/>)

The work of Better Communication CIC is built around the Balanced System® Framework. Developed over fifteen years of research and practice, the framework is used to underpin both commissioning specifications and provider service models. Local work utilised the service model to establish data on our 0-5 population, levels of poverty, deprivation and attainment were analysed by our project partners Better Communication CIC (<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/early-years/national-context/early-outcomes-fund-and-a-speech-language-and-communication-pathway/>).

The following map has been produced by Better Communication CIC and illustrates predicted level of SLCN in Nottingham, broken down by ward, for 0-4 year olds. 15 of the 20 wards are predicted to have 45% of more of 0-4 year olds with SLCN. This work was undertaken before the COVID-19 pandemic.

% predicted SCLN by ward for 0-4 year olds



© 2020 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap  
 Map based on Longitude (generated) and Latitude (generated). Colour shows details about 0-4 SCLN %.

## Current Early Years Foundation Stage Data

As identified in the ‘*Identification and Intervention for Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years*’ (Marie Gascoigne, Bibiana Wigley and Claire Welburn, March 2020), Nottingham has significant numbers of children that do not achieve expected levels at the end of the EYFS for Communication and Language and Literacy. This suggests there are core SLCN across the board as many provisions are judged as having good or outstanding practice. The report also stated that “*when looking at the same cohort using the Balanced System® prediction of need calculation, higher percentages of SLCN are predicted than those not achieving the expected level in Communication and Language and Literacy. This observation could be attributed to a number of factors including the possibility that practice in the early years is ameliorating the predicted need, the possibility that the predicted need is estimating above the actual need, the possibility that some children being identified as having a ‘good level of development’ in fact do have unidentified SLCN or SLCN that have yet to emerge*”.

The table below reflects the EYFSP data over the last 5 years (*due to the impact of COVID-19, there is no local or national dataset for 2020*).

	Good Level of Development				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Nottingham City	58% (+11)	63.5 (+5.5)	66.2 (+2.7)	67.6% (+1.4)	66.9% (-0.7)
National	66%	69.3 (+3.3)	70.7 (+1.4)	71.5 (+0.8)	71.8 (+0.3)
Statistical Neighbours	61.7	64.9	66.6	68	68.7
Difference	-8	-5.8	-4.5	-3.9	-4.9

Average of Communication and Language Early Learning Goals  
(Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking)

	Ward	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
SSBC Wards	Aspley	76.6%	72.9%	75.9%	74.9%	79.0%
	Bulwell	80.8%	80.2%	75.4%	82.4%	74.8%
	Hyson Green & Arboretum	69.2%	71.1%	71.4%	77.0%	77.7%
	St. Ann's	68.7%	76.0%	69.9%	76.6%	77.5%
Non-SSBC Wards	Basford	74.5%	83.5%	86.7%	86.4%	84.0%
	Berridge	71.0%	76.1%	75.8%	79.4%	73.8%
	Bestwood	77.6%	82.3%	84.2%	85.4%	83.3%
	Bilborough	77.6%	76.2%	78.9%	82.1%	84.2%
	Bulwell Forest	87.4%	87.4%	89.9%	89.1%	83.4%
	Castle	77.8%	84.4%	86.7%	90.6%	80.6%
	Clifton East	82.5%	83.5%	79.2%	83.0%	85.5%
	Clifton West	81.3%	86.2%	82.8%	89.0%	88.4%
	Dales	72.3%	74.8%	79.6%	76.4%	81.3%
	Leen Valley	72.6%	83.0%	79.0%	77.8%	83.7%
	Lenton & Wollaton East	74.2%	81.4%	68.8%	80.0%	81.6%
	Mapperley	68.8%	76.2%	78.4%	70.6%	81.7%
	Meadows	68.6%	76.0%	87.2%	84.1%	78.1%
Outside Nottingham	83.5%	89.1%	86.4%	91.0%	85.0%	

	Ward	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	Radford	68.6%	71.9%	78.5%	82.3%	77.9%
	Sherwood	81.8%	80.1%	84.1%	92.4%	81.0%
	Wollaton West	89.2%	89.6%	86.6%	84.8%	93.3%
<b>Average</b>		<b>76.4%</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>79.6%</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>81.2%</b>

## Peer Challenge 0-5 Years (October 2019)

The Challenge Report acknowledged “there are lots of really positive interventions across the Early Years system” in Nottingham which includes Health, Education, Childcare, Early Help and Social care, but “that there is no golden thread” that seamlessly support the child and family. Sharing of data between organisations was not clear and the support universally available for parents was also patchy and unclear.

## SLC Information Pathway

In order to begin to address the recommendations from the Peer Challenge, Nottingham, along with Derby and Leicester, has commissioned our project partner, Better Communication CIC, to develop an information hub (SLC Pathway - <https://pathway.thebalancedsystem.org/>), populated with relevant local and national SLC resources. Launched in March 2021, this pathway tool navigates the provisions available for parents, carers and professionals to help all children and young people develop their speech, language and communication, as well as for those with identified speech, language and communication needs. This “one stop shop” supports parent and



carers with their children's learning journey and ultimately supports school readiness. As stated in the Vision Statement, it is hoped that this strategy will extend to cover children and young people up to 25 years of age in the future and it would be anticipated that the pathway resources also extended in parallel.

Partnerships and networks involved in the creation of the single digital front door, which is the pathway, included:

- Parents and carers, via school and settings contacts and the voluntary sector, including Rainbow Parents and Carers Forum
- Small Steps Big Changes
- Midwives
- Health Visitors
- School Nurses
- School Admissions Team
- Early Years Settings
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service
- SEND Support Team
- Education Psychology Service
- Social Care
- Early Help
- Public Health Commissioners
- Primary Schools
- Best Start Working Group
- Virtual School



## What is not working so well?

- Commissioning arrangements are not understood by third parties.
- Sufficient data-sharing agreements are not in place.
- Co-production of achieving statutory requirements as taking an integrated approach takes time, and resources. Resources are depleting, and COVID restrictions have had an impact on the way services are able to operate and deliver their services.

## Proposed Collective Aims

- Joint commissioners must ensure that commissioning supports the delivery of a whole systems model including universal, targeted and specialist offer delivered seamlessly from a child and family perspective.
- Data sharing agreements across agencies in order to ensure that the outcome is achieved of no child or family missing out on support from any part of the system.
- Integrated 2 year checks are crucial to providing a robust system of universal identification. Although not mandatory, given Nottingham's level of identified and predicted need, this must be a necessary intervention across the early years system (health/childcare/education).
- A strategic approach to engagement of families in take up of the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer. This supports economic growth, school readiness and identification of need.
- Integration of the 0-5 workforce, with identified baseline training and assessment/understanding of the screening process.



# GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Health and Wellbeing Board currently oversee this strategy. Relevant partners, including parents from across the Early Years System, will work together to monitor progress on improving support for SLC and unlocking barriers by having sight of all commissioned

contracts that link to SLC. This can be achieved through the Children and Young People's Partnership, who currently meet bi-monthly. A lead for this work needs to be identified.



# IMPACT MEASURES & ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2025

A full Action Plan that covers 2021-2025 needs to be developed by partners to accompany the delivery of this strategy. Timelines need to be agreed by all partners by Autumn 2021.

By the end of the Action Plan, the desired outcome will be to have a common embedded culture of understanding of impact not input measurement, a dashboard of impact measures, bringing together impact data across the whole system which informs ongoing joint commissioning of services leading to improved outcomes.

Impact measures to be considered, with realistic timelines to be agreed as part of the Action Plan, include:

- Increased take up of the targeted funded 2-year-old offer.
- Fewer children identified with language delay at the 2½ Year Health Visitor Review.
- Fewer children identified with language delay at the 3½ Year Health Visitor Review.
- Improvement in the percentage of children achieving a good level of development EYFSP attainment.
- Access to a Speech and Language Therapist in a timely manner.
- Integrated Check at 2 for children in settings to be reinstated (this is not mandatory). As part of this strategy, consideration needs to be given by the Local Authority and our Health partners whether to adopt the ELIM, an alternative identification measure for SLCN or continue with current arrangements, with decisions shared with the wider workforce across the early years community.



## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This strategy sets out the vision, the need, and priorities in Nottingham City with some identified success measures for effective SLC support from pre-birth to 5 years.

Through clear governance and accountability of this strategy; integrated ways of working across workforces; effective use of budgets; shared data and early intervention of need we can improve SLC outcomes for 0-5 year olds in Nottingham City.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to colleagues in Leicester City Council (Sue Welford and Monica Hingorani), Derby City Council (Coral Golding and Jo Flannagan) and Better Communication CIC (Marie Gascoigne, Bibiana Wigley, Victoria Riley-Hill and Claire Welburn) who have worked collaboratively with Nottingham City Council as part of the Early Outcomes Fund Project. With further thanks to Jennifer Hardy of Nottingham City Council and Pete Chilvers and Hayley Carter from SDSA for their on-going support in driving the Early Outcomes Fund work forwards.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This strategy is currently at consultation stage. If you require any further information please contact:

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