



# Title of report: **Best Start in Life - Good Level of Development (GLD) in children aged 5 years**

**Meeting:** Health and Wellbeing Board

**Meeting date:** Monday 13 July 2026

**Report by:** Julia Stephens Public Health Lead and Liz Farr, Service Director, Education Development

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All wards)

## **Purpose**

To provide an update on one of the key priorities in The Best Start in Life (BSiL) Strategic Plan, name a Good Level of Development (GLD) in children aged 5 years.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **The board considers the report and notes how a GLD effects the life course and the progress on the work being carried out to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of reception class for children aged 5 years in Herefordshire.**

## **Key considerations**

1. The report highlights the progress in the delivery of one of the priorities within the BSiL plan, around children achieving a good level of development at 5 years old.
2. Strategic leads from internal and partner organisations across the system are responsible for ensuring children reach a good level of development and report quarterly to the BSiL/Early Years Partnership Board and the Children and Young People Partnership Board on progress.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a statutory assessment completed for all children at the end of the reception year (approximately aged 5 years). It provides a national picture of each child's development and learning, drawing together practitioner judgements based on ongoing observation and assessment throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
4. The EYFSP assesses children against 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) across seven areas of learning. These judgements are used to: Support transition into Key Stage 1; inform parents and carers about their child's development; provide local and national data about children's outcomes at the end of the EYFS reception baseline assessment (RBA) and are completed within the first six weeks of Reception.
5. A child is said to have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) if they meet the expected standard in all of the following areas:
  - Personal, Social and Emotional Development
  - Physical Development
  - Communication and Language
  - Literacy
  - Mathematics
6. GLD is a key national indicator used to understand how well children are prepared for learning at Key Stage 1. While GLD is not a statutory expectation for individual children, it is an important measure for evaluating the effectiveness of early years provision at local and national level.
7. By 2028, the Government requires 75% (a record proportion) of children to reach a good level of development by the end of reception. This is an increase from approximately 68%, meaning 40,000 to 45,000 more children each year will be better prepared for school and life.
8. Only 51.5% of children who qualify for free school meals reach a good level of development at age five, compared to 72% of children not eligible for free school meals. And only 19.7% of children with any special educational needs (SEN) reach this benchmark, compared to 75.6% of children without SEN.
9. In the academic year 2024-2025, 72% of Herefordshire children, achieve a good level of development overall by the end of Reception. In England 68.3% of children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. Herefordshire has been set a target by the Government of 80% to be achieved by 2028.
10. In 2024-2025 51.7% of Herefordshire children eligible for free school meals achieved a good level of development. In England 51.3% of children eligible for free school meals achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception. The Government has set a new target of 57.2% by 2028.
11. At age 2.5 years children are assessed through a universal health check delivered by the Health Visiting Service. This health check looks at: speech, language and communication development, monitors physical growth and development, early identification social, emotional and behavioural concerns, promotes healthy eating, physical activity and oral health and signposts families to early support service where needed.
12. A new health review was introduced in Herefordshire for children age 3 years to further assess and support the child's readiness for school. This review again monitors the development before school entry and focuses on the review of pre identified early identification social,

emotional and behavioral concerns, preparation for nursery/school transitions, targeted support to improve school readiness and reinforcement of key health messages.

13. GLD can have a significant impact on adult life. Children who progress well at school are more likely to gain qualifications and skills valued by employers, access a wider range of career opportunities, have higher earning potential over their lifetime, experience lower rates of unemployment, improved physical and mental health, greater health literacy, make healthier lifestyle choices, have greater financial stability, improved self-confidence and self-esteem and better resilience and adaptability.
14. To support the most disadvantaged children in achieving GLD, Herefordshire has recruited an Early Years/Key Stage 1 Improvement Adviser for SEND to support schools and help deliver the Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN) training programme, including bespoke Early Years packages. 90 delegates already trained across early years in schools in the county
15. Extra support is being rolled out through the Child Readiness Project, to enhance transition support and more regular Early Years School Network Meetings with strong engagement from schools, alongside the recruitment of a universal Portage worker.

### Community impact

16. A good level of development in children has positive effects on the community because children who develop well are more likely to become healthy, confident, and productive members of society. Some key impacts include:
17. **Better educational outcomes:** Children who are ready to learn are more likely to succeed in school, leading to a more skilled and educated population.
18. **Improved health and wellbeing:** Healthy development in early childhood can reduce the risk of physical and mental health problems later in life, easing pressure on healthcare services.
19. **Stronger local economy:** As children grow into adults with good education and skills, they are better able to find employment, contribute to the workforce and support economic growth.
20. **Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour:** Children who receive positive support and develop strong social and emotional skills are less likely to engage in risky or criminal behaviour.
21. **Greater community involvement:** Children who develop confidence, communication and teamwork skills are more likely to volunteer, participate in community activities and build positive relationships.
22. **Breaking cycles of disadvantage:** Supporting children's development can improve opportunities for future generations and help reduce poverty and inequality over time.
23. In summary, when children achieve a good level of development, the whole community benefits through better education, improved health, stronger social connections, increased economic productivity and safer, more resilient neighbourhoods.

### Environmental impact

24. A good level of development in children can lead to positive environmental outcomes by encouraging sustainable behaviours, increasing awareness of environmental issues, helping create cleaner, greener and more responsible communities.

## Equality duty

25. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
26. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
27. The principles of equality and the reversal of health inequalities are key strands of the plan. The Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 – 2033 was endorsed by the board in April 2023.
28. To be effective in delivering good population outcomes and helping those most in need, the plan calls for intervention by working together at system, place and community levels to tackle issues reflecting whole system priorities as well as specific concerns at the right scale.

## Resource implications

29. None.

## Legal implications

30. In accordance with Health and Social Care Act 2012, health and wellbeing boards are responsible for encouraging integrated working between health and social care commissioners, including partnership arrangements such as pooled budgets, lead commissioning and integrated provision.
31. The functions of the Health and Wellbeing Board are set out in paragraph 3.5.25 of the constitution.

## Risk management

32. There are no risk implications identified emerging from the recommendations in this report. The work to increase a GLD in children aged 5 years, requires system-wide agreement and collaborative working across partner agencies.

## Consultees

33. Consultation on the monitoring and review of GLD is carried out through the Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board and the BSiL/Early Years Partnership Board.

## Appendices

- None.

## **Background papers**

None.

## **Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report:**

BSiL	Best Start in Life
GLD	Good Level of Development
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
SEND	Special Education Needs
RBA	Reception Baseline Assessment