



Stories of Impact

Insights and Learning from Ten Years of the
A Better Start Southend Programme

A Better Start

- **£215 million** national Test and Learn programme.
- **2015 to 2025.**
- Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.
- **5 A Better Start sites:** Blackpool, Bradford, Lambeth, Nottingham, Southend-on-Sea.
- **£36.9 million** for early years children and families in Southend.
- **6 ABSS wards:** Kursaal, Milton, Shoeburyness, Victoria, Westborough, West Shoebury.
- **Aim:** To make Southend-on-Sea the best place in the country to bring up a child and be a parent.

Diet and Nutrition

Social and Emotional Development

Communication and Language

Community Resilience

Systems Change



Stories of Impact

The Stories of Impact Reports:

- The Context of A Better Start Southend
- Supporting Infant Feeding in Southend
- From Birth to School
- Parental Resilience
- Family Voices
- The Impact of COVID-19
- The Inside Story of ABSS
- Systems and Ecosystems
- Summary of Learning and Recommendations



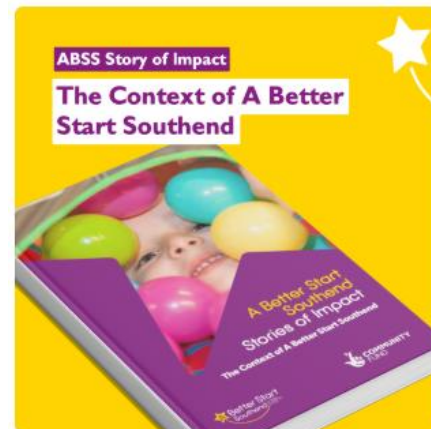
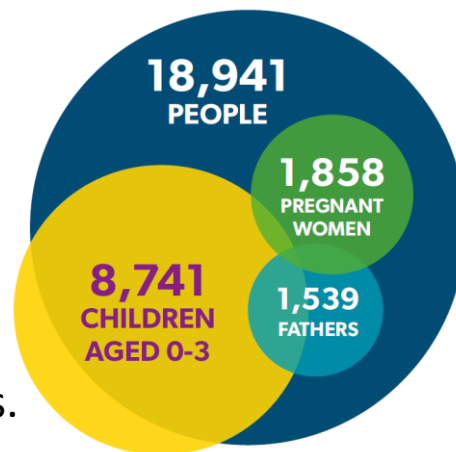
abetterstartsouthend.co.uk

Stories of Impact Reports
Vlogs and videos
Family Resources
Details of Projects and Services
Reports and Publications
Local Services Map (City Family CIC)

The Context of ABSS

- **42%** of Southend children under 4 live in areas in **30% highest deprivation** nationally (IMD, 2019).
 - Every early years child (100%) in Kursaal and Milton wards lives in 30% highest deprivation
- **75%** of ABSS beneficiaries live in an area in **30% highest deprivation** nationally.
- **24%** of ABSS beneficiaries live in an area in **10% highest deprivation** nationally.

- Deprivation and wider determinants of health impact child development.
- COVID-19 and Cost-of-Living Crisis added strain for families.
- ABSS was an opportunity to work in partnership with families to change lives.



37,741
individual sign-ups
to services

12,524
classes, workshops
and sessions

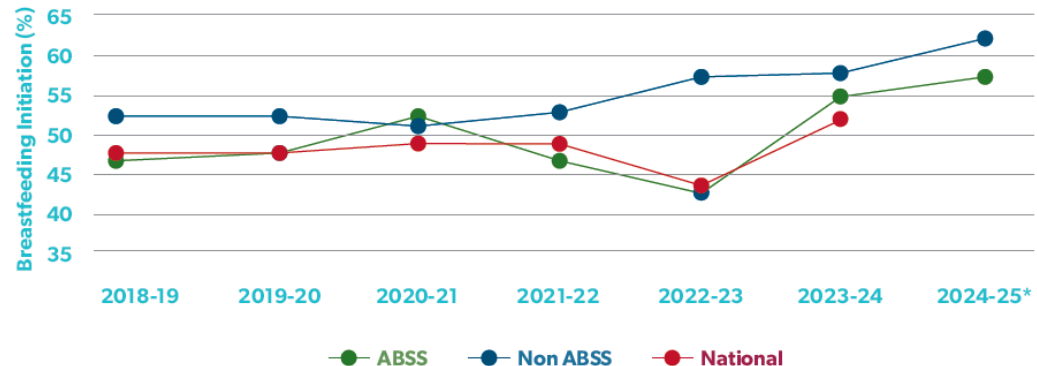
Supporting Infant Feeding in Southend

- Person-centred approach and trusting relationships built parental confidence.
- Joined-up services, referral pathway and strategic roles enhanced uptake of services.
- Peer support networks were critical for breastfeeding and strengthened community resilience.
- Cultural shift needed for breastfeeding to be normalised by the public.

One to One Breastfeeding
Group Breastfeeding
3-4 Month Contact
Southend Supports Breastfeeding
Infant Feeding Lead Advisor
Public Health Midwife

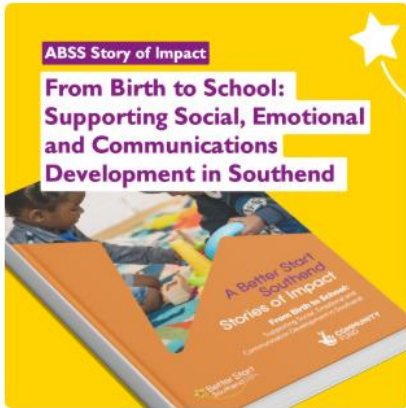


Increase in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks in ABSS wards



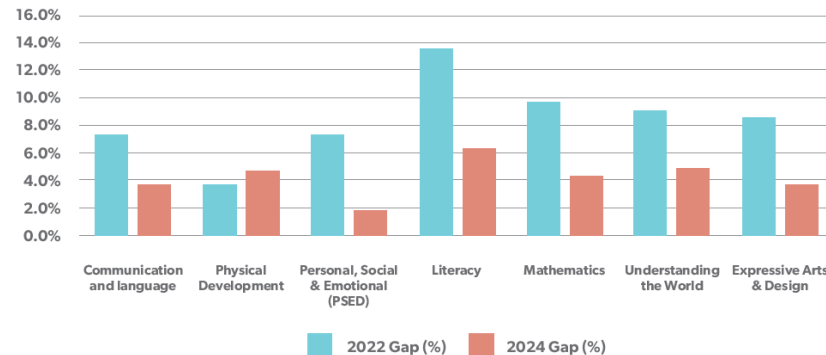
From Birth to School:

Supporting Social, Emotional and Communication Development in Southend



Let's Talk
Umbilical Cords
Storysacks
Talking Transitions
Early Maths Matters

- Reduced the need for intensive clinical speech and language support
- Increased collaboration to improve tailored support and smooth transition into school
- Built parents'/carers' knowledge and confidence to support children's development
- Reduced the gap between ABSS and Non-ABSS wards for Good Level of Development at age 5



Child Development

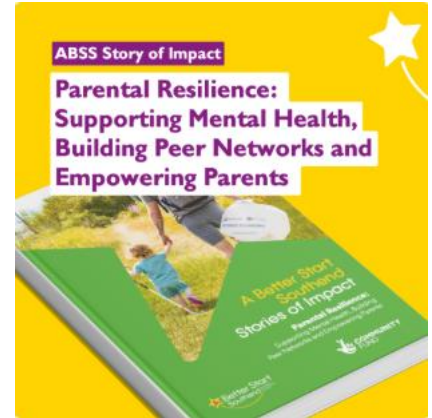
School Readiness

"He was pretty much nonverbal before.... He literally only spoke a couple of words, and by the end of the third week he was asking 'where is it?' or 'who is it?'... He improved massively just by the activities and videos they sent me."

Parental Resilience:

Supporting Mental Health, Building Peer Networks and Empowering Parents

- Holistic services, using a strengths-based model met the full spectrum of families' emotional, social, and practical needs.
- Supporting families to build on existing strengths promoted self-directed and sustainable change.



"I feel a lot calmer and more capable of dealing with daily situations. My family are seeing the benefits of my improved mood"

- Perinatal Mental Health
- Family Nurse Partnership/Little Steps
- Early Years Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
- Peer Support Workers for Social Communication Needs
- Sparkles Sensory Story Time
- Work Skills
- YourFamily
- Families Growing Together
- Food On Our Doorstep Club

2,533
Beneficiaries

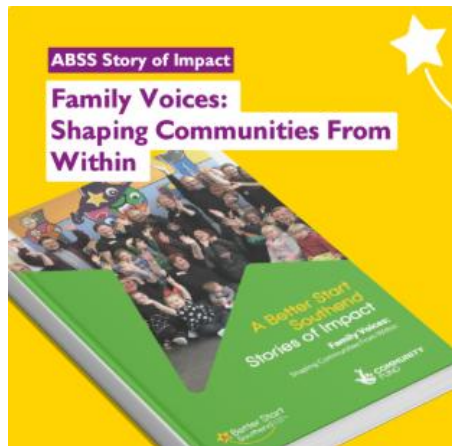
Stories of Impact Vlogs

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a green t-shirt and light blue denim overalls, is sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. She is looking slightly to her left and speaking. The background is a dense green hedge. The video frame is decorated with colorful butterfly and arrow graphics. A white text box with a blue border is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

ABSS Stories of Impact: Families Growing Together Vlog

Family Voices:

Shaping Communities From Within



- Treating parents/carers as equal partners in co-production
 - Shapes more effective and relevant support
 - Helps to shift the culture of service provision to value shared ownership and long-term impact
- Funding and supporting grassroots projects informed by the community delivers more sustainable, adaptable, and impactful services

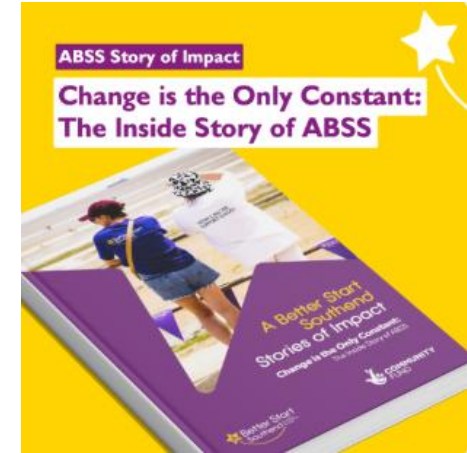
“It has given me the opportunity to better my health and wellbeing and gain additional skills which will benefit me and my children moving forward for years to come”

- Engagement Team
- Co-Production
- Resilience, Ideas and Innovation Fund
- Community Ideas and Development Fund
- Parent to Champion
- Children’s Research

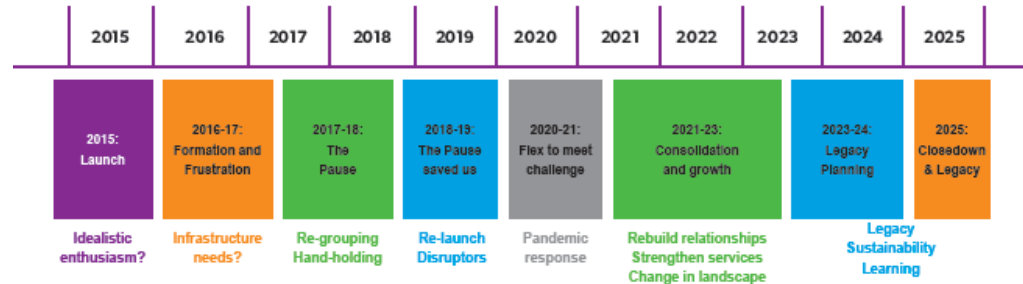


Change is the Only Constant: The Inside Story of ABSS

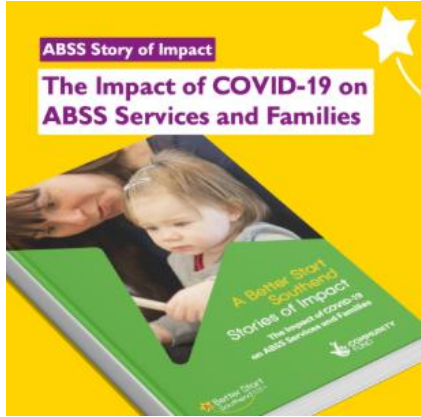
- Innovation, identifying ‘what works’ and building effective partnerships and services takes time and space.
- Locally developed services tend to work better than generic programmes, as they can reflect local experiences and circumstances.
- Moments of disruption can provide opportunity for innovation and for re-shaping service delivery.
- Evidence is key – from underpinning new ideas or services, to identifying progress, to demonstrating the impact of a programme.



Periods of Development of ABSS

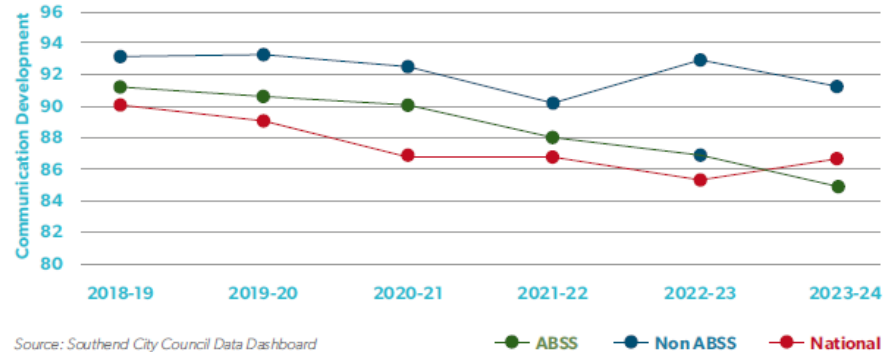


The Impact of COVID-19 on ABSS Services and Families

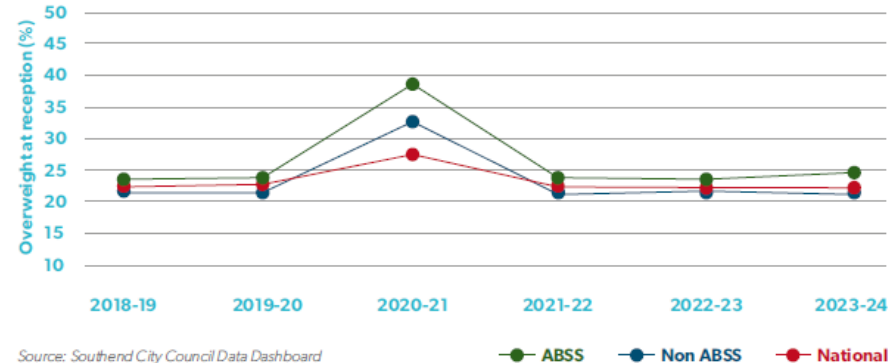


- Agile and responsive services can maintain service continuity and support family resilience through emergency situations.
- Trusting relationships, shared goals and reduced bureaucracy enabled coordinated support for families during a time of national uncertainty.

Proportion of Children on Track with Communication Development (ASQ-3) at age 2 to 2.5 years-old

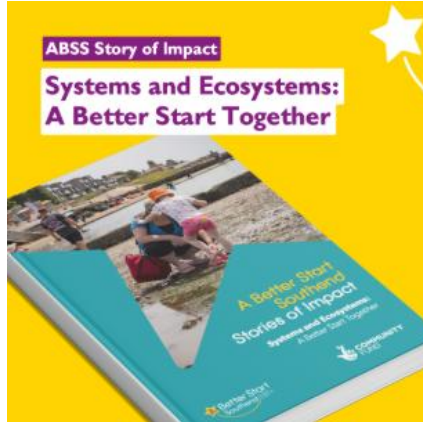


Prevalence of overweight children entering reception

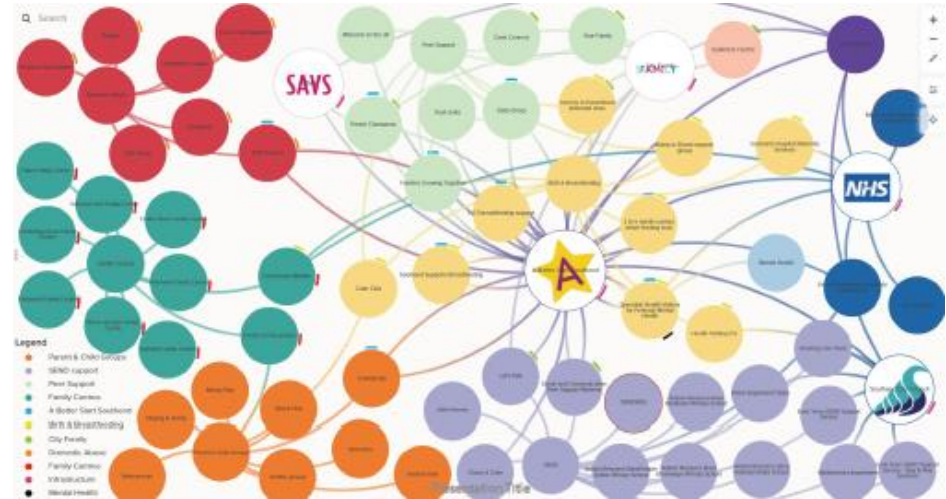


Systems and Ecosystems:

A Better Start Together



- Understanding partners' priorities is an important precursor to changing systems.
- Mapping needs, assets and services is vital to underpin systems change, but should be ongoing, regularly reviewed and renewed.
- Creating formal and informal opportunities for practitioners to share learning increases collaboration, cross-referrals and sharing of expertise and best practice.



“ The value that’s added is more than the sum of its parts, because we’re able to work together. ”

Recommendation 1:

Trusting Relationships and Community-Centred Practice

Relational practice, co-production, and peer support are key to engagement, wellbeing, and lasting community empowerment

- **Focus on non-judgemental, relationship-based practice which creates safe and welcoming environments.**
- **Embed co-production and peer support into design and delivery of services. Recognise that parents are the vehicle for change.**
- **Make services and the organisations who provide them visible through events in the community, which further strengthens relationships and accessibility.**
- **Support the development of soft skills such as increasing confidence to support hard outcomes.**

Recommendation 2:

Flexibility, Responsiveness and Adaptation in Complex Systems

Ensuring system dynamism is essential for positive results. View disruptions as features of a system, and not as a bug.

- **Disruption and system shocks can provide a useful opportunity for learning and innovation.**
- **Through partnership working, identify opportunities to integrate services at strategic levels and at the point of service delivery.**
- **Use the way families engage with and access services to identify new integration opportunities, allowing service delivery to adapt organically to lived realities.**
- **Support flexible leadership, joint decision-making, ongoing learning, and better communication between early years settings, schools, and families.**

Recommendation 3:

Inclusion, Equity and Reducing Barriers

Services must be designed, developed and delivered with family voices at the centre and inclusion in mind, to ensure equity of access to babies and families with the greatest challenges, with barriers minimised or knocked down

- **Co-design culturally relevant services, and forge and formalise community ambassadors to build reach into underrepresented communities.**
- **Continually map and re-map local needs, assets, and services to understand evolving barriers and to support inclusion through responsive service planning**
- **Use data disaggregated by demographic and geographic factors to monitor equity and respond to emerging inequalities in a timely manner.**

Recommendation 4:

Evidence, Impact and Sustainability

Robust evidence is critical to developing and sustaining effective early years services. Evidence must be embedded throughout the lifecycle of programmes, from design to delivery to evaluation.

- **Develop clear outcome frameworks from the beginning, with robust data collection aligned to long-term goals.**
- **Invest in legacy structures, such as City Family Community Interest Company (ABSSs legacy vehicle), that can carry forward learning, networks and services.**
- **Support the formal integration of peer-led roles (such as Parent Champions) to ensure long-term community engagement and sustainability and to include the voices of lived experience.**



Thank you for
listening.

Any questions?

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