

West Sussex Early Years Needs Assessment



About this needs assessment

A “good start” in life is crucial for long-term physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing

The West Sussex Public Health and Social Research Unit have reviewed local and national evidence and have asked families and professionals their views concerning how the needs of children under the age of 5 are being met in the county. This will help understand what is working well, and where things could be improved.

The aim of this report is to:

- Describe the population of children under the age of 5 and their families in West Sussex
- Provide an overview of the wider determinants of health and their impact on under 5s and their families
- Identify current and existing service provision that impact on early childhood outcomes
- Identify gaps, barriers and unmet needs in current service provision
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to ensure the needs of young children are met

The Early Years Needs Assessment therefore, will inform future commissioning priorities for services impacting on the health and wellbeing of young children and their families in West Sussex.



16% of children under the age of 5 in West Sussex are from ethnic minority backgrounds



47,980 children under the age of 5 in West Sussex

The average age of mothers in West Sussex is **30 years**



17.3% of families with a child aged under 5 are lone parent families in West Sussex

15.4% of children under the age of 5 are living in poverty in West Sussex



1.8% of children under the age of 5 are estimated to have a long term illness or disability



There were approximately **8,720 births** in West Sussex in 2014



Overall recommendation:

1.

Improving child development and tackling inequality in the early years of life is **everybody's business**

Key recommendations to a “healthy start in life”:

2.

The pathways between universal, specialist and targeted services should be clear and evidence-based

“I think there is enough information if a professional knows where to look and has good local knowledge. It can be difficult for professionals to know what services are available and how families or professionals can access them”

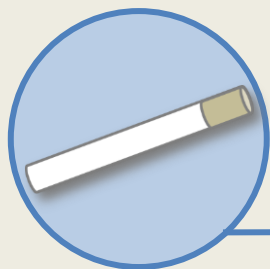
3.

There should be greater emphasis on the mental health of mothers and fathers/primary carers

Resources are very tight for mental health workers for parents, this seems to be one of our biggest areas of weakness, without supporting these parents there is very little we can do to change the lives of the children”

4.

The links between maternity services and specialist drug and alcohol services need to be reviewed as recommended by the West Sussex Alcohol and Drug Needs Assessment

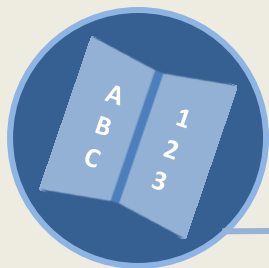


Approximately **9.6%** of pregnant women were smokers at the time of delivery in West Sussex in 2014/15

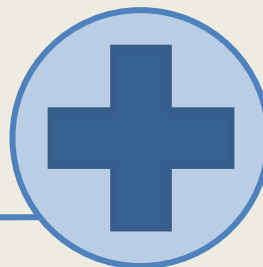
7.3% of children in reception were measured as obese in 2014/15 in West Sussex; fewer than in England (9.1%)



West Sussex lags behind national levels of school readiness, with **63.5%** of children in reception with a good level of development in the county, compared to 66.3% in England



In 2013/14, approximately **710** children under the age of 5 were admitted to hospital due to an unintentional or deliberate injury in West Sussex



Key recommendations to a “healthy start in life”:

5.

Every opportunity to reduce maternal smoking and smoking in households with infants and young children should be taken

6.

More needs to be done to reduce maternal and childhood obesity by supporting communities to make positive changes to lifestyle

7.

High quality and evidence-based strategies to improve school readiness across West Sussex should be prioritised

8.

Recommendations by Public Health England for three key action areas to reduce unintentional injuries should be implemented

Key recommendations to “tackle disadvantage”:

9.

There should be a shared understanding of inequalities at a neighbourhood level, and outcomes for those areas should be monitored

10.

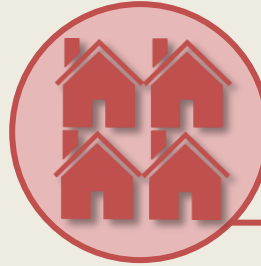
There should be greater investment into those children and families with the greatest need, particularly young parents

11.

The greatest potential for early identification of those who need additional support lies in universal services

12.

Access to speech and language support should be timely and parents/carers should be supported in relation to the home learning environment



There are **four small areas** in West Sussex that are amongst the 10% most deprived areas in England. These areas all fall within Arun

At any one time, there are approximately **1,175** under 5s in need of support from social services, **245** under 5s with a child protection plan in place, and **115** under 5s who are looked after in West Sussex



“Speech Therapy is a much needed resource, having group meetings to establish if help is required isn’t always best. Some parents don’t want to be amongst other parents. I understand that this is the best way to see a lot of children as there are few Therapists”

There were **240** births to women under the age of 20 in West Sussex in 2014; more than a quarter of which were to women living in Arun



Key recommendations to “tackle disadvantage”:

13.

Organisations should ensure that families in temporary accommodation, or with no fixed address, are able to access services and maintain service usage

“I had problems registering in West Sussex when I didn’t actually have a permanent site before. So, they said, you have to, give an address. Because I didn’t have an address in West Sussex they made that difficult”

14.

Education, training and employment advice and support should be easily accessible for parents/carers from a variety of settings and organisations



At any one time, approximately **350-400** households with dependent children are living in temporary accommodation in West Sussex; and approximately half of those are in Crawley

15.

Programmes which support parenting and aid understanding of child development should be continued and expanded, with some targeted services for young women

“I think some of the courses have been absolutely fantastic. I've learnt all about attachment, which, certainly, with my children, I didn't really know a lot about. I've read quite a bit independently following on from that”

“I think West Sussex has services to meet needs but they are difficult to find out about. Children and family centres are a great place for accessing information but it would be beneficial for more integrated work with pre-schools and nurseries”

“I know that family centres are there. I don't know exactly what goes on there. Other foster carers could be like that as well. So it might be, because most of the foster carers have emails, they (CFCs) could email what is going on at the centres, different things, so that they know”

“I find it useful being around people of my age that are going through the same thing, like young parents. We give each other advice and stuff and helped each other, that's why I like to come in”

Key recommendations for **“the importance of communities and partnerships”**:

16.

The 2 – 2 ½ year integrated review provides an opportunity for early assessment of progress and identification of additional need; this review should be widely supported to help inform service planning and delivery

17.

Parents and carers should have a good understanding of what is on offer in their local area and how to access services; this could be enabled with clear branding of early years' services

18.

Commitment from senior management is needed to encourage community and asset based approaches, including co-production

Professionals and families thought that:

"I have noticed over the last 10 years, increasing numbers of grandparents and child minders accessing our services due to the number of parents who are returning to work. I think some of the older grandparents who are in this position may also need some sort of support"

"I was a bit wary of going. I didn't know who was going to be there. I didn't know if I was going to be judged for being a young mum. You just don't know what to expect really. And until you do, like it is scary but eventually I did it and once I did I was so glad because it wasn't that bad at all"

"I feel West Sussex does well to provide services for families that they do not have at home such as physical play areas for families that don't have gardens, resources for families on a low income and opportunities for children and adults to socialise and learn from each other"

"I used to go and get X weighed there weekly – that was the thing that encouraged me; I would time my weigh-ins if it was like a walk-in-clinic, you can go and see the health visitor, have them weighed and then talk to them if you have other issues. Then after that I would go to Bumps and Babes. So I would sort of, so I was doing everything at once"

"I think there are a large number of settings doing a great job with networks of professional support"

"One other thing that arrived after Baby had left was a library card from him, and that was from the local authority. West Sussex sent that to me with a cover letter, a really lovely letter, saying how important it is to read with a child, and that all children in care are given this card, and you don't get charged for late books... I thought it was very good, especially as he was a newborn, but who's to say I didn't have someone else in my care who was older that, for the newborn, made me think, "Oh, what a good idea. Let's all go?" So I thought it was superb"

"I find it useful being around people of my age, that are going through the same thing, like young parents. We give each other advice and stuff and helped each other, that's why I liked to come in"

"...Literally within hours, the midwives were here. I'm not Mum, but it was if I was Mum, and they were so helpful. Then that got transferred from the midwives to the health visitor, and again, absolutely fantastic"

More information?

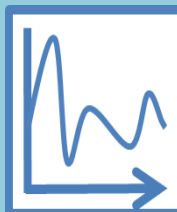


Online

See the needs assessment in full, a report on the interviews conducted with teenage parents and Eastern European families and a comprehensive summary on our website:

jsna.westsussex.gov.uk

Explore



Explore local level data by children and family centre or local authority and compare with national data with our Children and Family Centre Profiles, also available online. Examine trends over time in West Sussex.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all the people who have contributed their time, experiences and views to produce this report.

Useful Resources

- The Marmot Review [“Fair Society, Healthy Lives” \(2010\)](#) aimed to identify the most effective evidence-based strategies for reducing health inequalities in England. The report emphasised the importance of giving every child “the best start in life”.
- The [National Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network](#) summarises key data and information relating to the health of children, young people and maternal health.
- In particular, the [Early Years Profiles](#) shows how a local area performs against key indicators in line with the priorities and outcomes identified in the transformation of the health visiting service implementation plan.
- The [West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board](#) leads on improving the co-ordination of commissioning across the NHS, social care and public health services, in line with the [2015-18 Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#).
- The [Healthy Child Programme: Pregnancy and the First 5 Years of Life](#) focuses on a universal preventative service, providing programmes of screening, immunisations, health and development reviews and advice around health, wellbeing and parenting.