

# Starting Reception



Doncaster  
Council

## Case Study: Doncaster

### Overview

Doncaster Local Authority identified a critical gap in its early years education strategy: the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of the skills children need to make a successful start to school life. This lack of clarity made it challenging to ensure consistency across services and to align support for families, early years settings, and schools.

### Establishing a Shared Understanding

In response, Doncaster convened a multidisciplinary working group composed of professionals from key services: Early Years Inclusion; Health Visitors; Speech and Language Therapists; Family Hubs; School Nursing Services; Public Health.

Rather than creating a bespoke definition, the group reviewed the 'Starting Reception' definition and agreed with the framework, appreciating its clarity and comprehensiveness.

### Community Engagement and Insight

To ensure the definition resonated with the local community and addressed the specific needs of Doncaster families, the Health Visiting Team launched a questionnaire targeting families with three-year-old children. The feedback indicated that parents wanted a stronger focus on emotional well-being as part of the readiness for school.

### Local Adaptation and Strategic Response

Informed by this feedback, the working group decided to adopt the Starting Reception Definition but develop a local Outcomes Framework which was unique to Doncaster's needs. The Framework retained the core headings of the original definition while adding an emotional well-being outcome as a distinct area of focus.

### Implementation

To ensure effective rollout and long-term impact, several follow-up actions have been set in motion:

- Early Years Intervention Workers will be mobilised to work directly with families. These workers will use the adapted framework to provide personalised support
- Health, education, and Family Hub professionals are being trained to use the adapted framework consistently, ensuring joined-up support for children and families across Doncaster.
- The local authority is committed to ongoing engagement with families and professionals to refine and improve the framework over time, ensuring it remains relevant and responsive.