

## Case Study: Newcastle

### Context and Challenges

Newcastle is a diverse local authority, with around 30% of children coming from homes where English is spoken as an additional language. Like many areas across the country, Newcastle has seen a decline in 'school readiness' since the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer children are now starting Reception with the skills they need to succeed. This has been influenced by a range of factors, including the loss of experienced early years professionals from nurseries and childminding settings.

### Welcoming a shared definition

In response to these challenges, Newcastle City Council gratefully received the Starting Reception definition. Having previously struggled to agree on a shared understanding of school readiness, the council found the definition timely and valuable. It was reviewed collaboratively with professionals from early years, education, and public health, all of whom agreed that it was comprehensive and clearly set out the skills children need.

### Promoting the definition

The council has taken proactive steps to promote the Starting Reception definition. It has been shared with all primary school Headteachers, SENCOs, and Early Years Leaders, as well as with private and voluntary nurseries and childminders. The accessible via the council's website.

### Embedding in practice

Newcastle is working to embed the definition into everyday practice. It will feature in upcoming workshops focused on specific areas of development, such as toilet training, to support a consistent understanding of expectations.

### Linking with early intervention

With a strong, council-wide focus on integrated two-year-old checks, Newcastle plans to begin using elements of the Starting Reception definition at this earlier stage. This approach aims to help identify needs sooner and enable more targeted early intervention, ensuring children are supported well long before they start school.