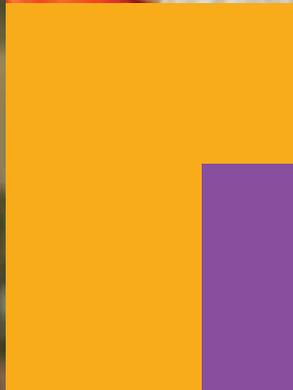
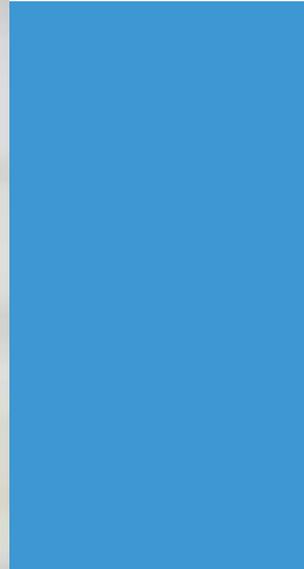


Best Start in Life strategic plan



 **BEST
START
IN LIFE**

2026 - 2029



Contents

Vision	4
What families told us	5
Where we are now	6
Priority 1 Helping young children thrive	8
Priority 2 Helping children learn, talk, play and communicate	9
Priority 3 Helping young children and their families with health and wellbeing	10
Priority 4 Helping families access the information and support they need	11
Cross cutting themes	12
Key enablers: What helps us deliver the Best Start in Life	13
Delivery and governance	14
Links to other strategies	15



Vision

In Brighton & Hove, we want every baby and young child to grow up healthy, happy and ready to learn. We will make sure parents and carers can easily access trusted support and information from pregnancy through the child's early years, with strong relationships at the heart of our work.

Why Best Start in Life?

Every child in Brighton & Hove deserves the chance to grow, learn and thrive and this starts from pregnancy right through the early years. These first few years are when a child's brain is developing at its fastest, and the experiences children have in the first 1001 days help shape how they build relationships, manage their emotions, and learn new skills as they grow.

When families have the right support, children flourish, but we know that some families face extra challenges, such as financial pressure, stress or not knowing where to find trusted advice. These things can make it harder for children to reach their full potential.

Across the country, including in Brighton & Hove, some children start school already experiencing inequalities in their development. Nationally, by 2028, the

government wants **75% of children to reach a Good Level of Development**. To ensure this happens, families need to be able to access trusted services, good quality early education and childcare, and support from pregnancy onwards.

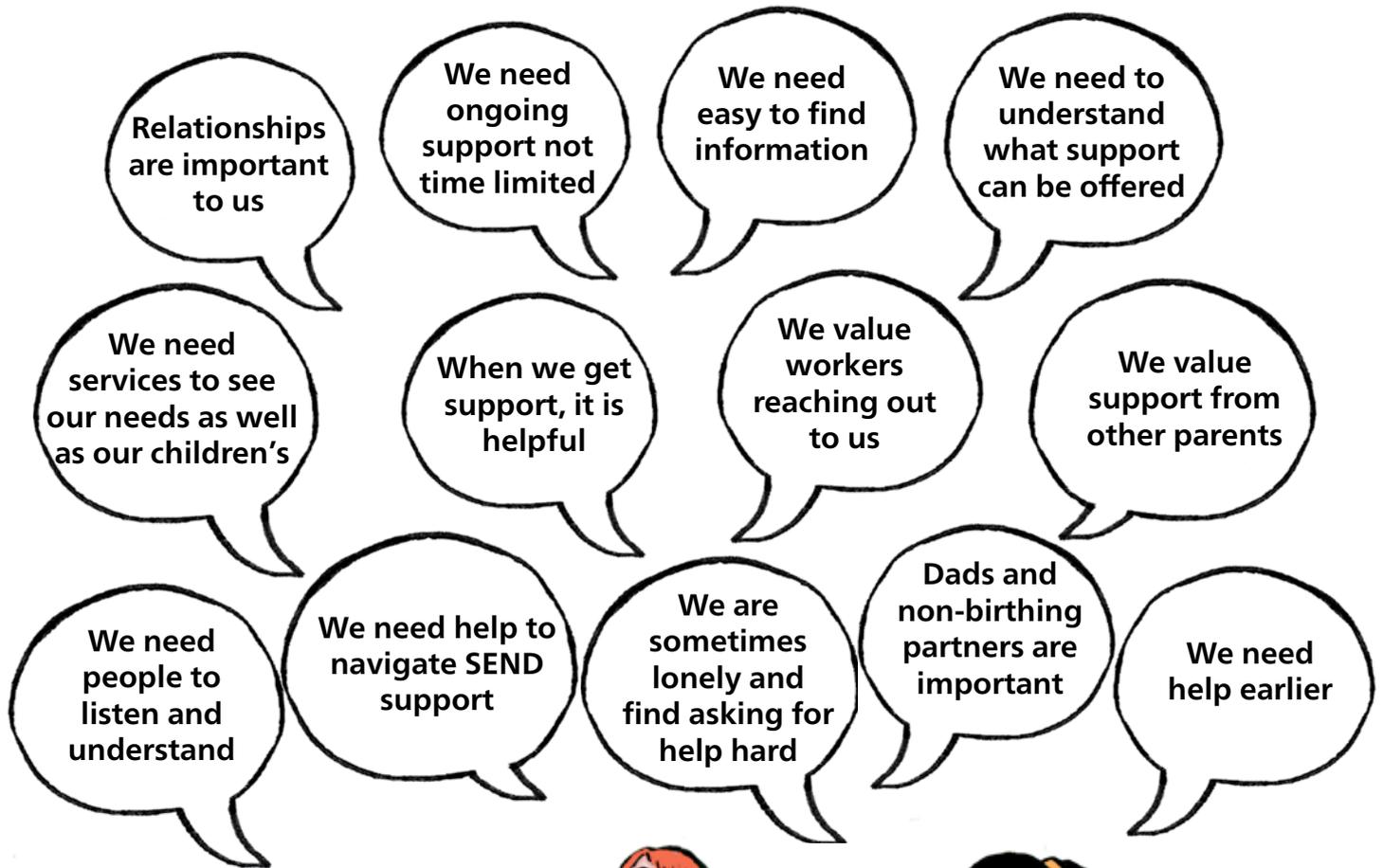
Brighton & Hove is committed to helping families with young children by bringing together our Best Start Family Hubs, early years services, health teams, childcare providers, reception classes and community groups. **Our Best Start in Life strategic plan** is designed to make sure families can get the right help at the right time, without having to navigate a complicated system.

This Plan also supports national efforts to make childcare more affordable and accessible, strengthen family services, and ensure the early years workforce is confident and well-trained. Local councils, including ours, play a key role in reducing inequalities and supporting children's early development and family wellbeing.

By investing in the earliest years of children's lives now, we are building a healthier, happier future not just for them, but for our whole community. Together, we want to ensure every child in Brighton & Hove has the very best start in life.



What families told us



FAMILY VOICE

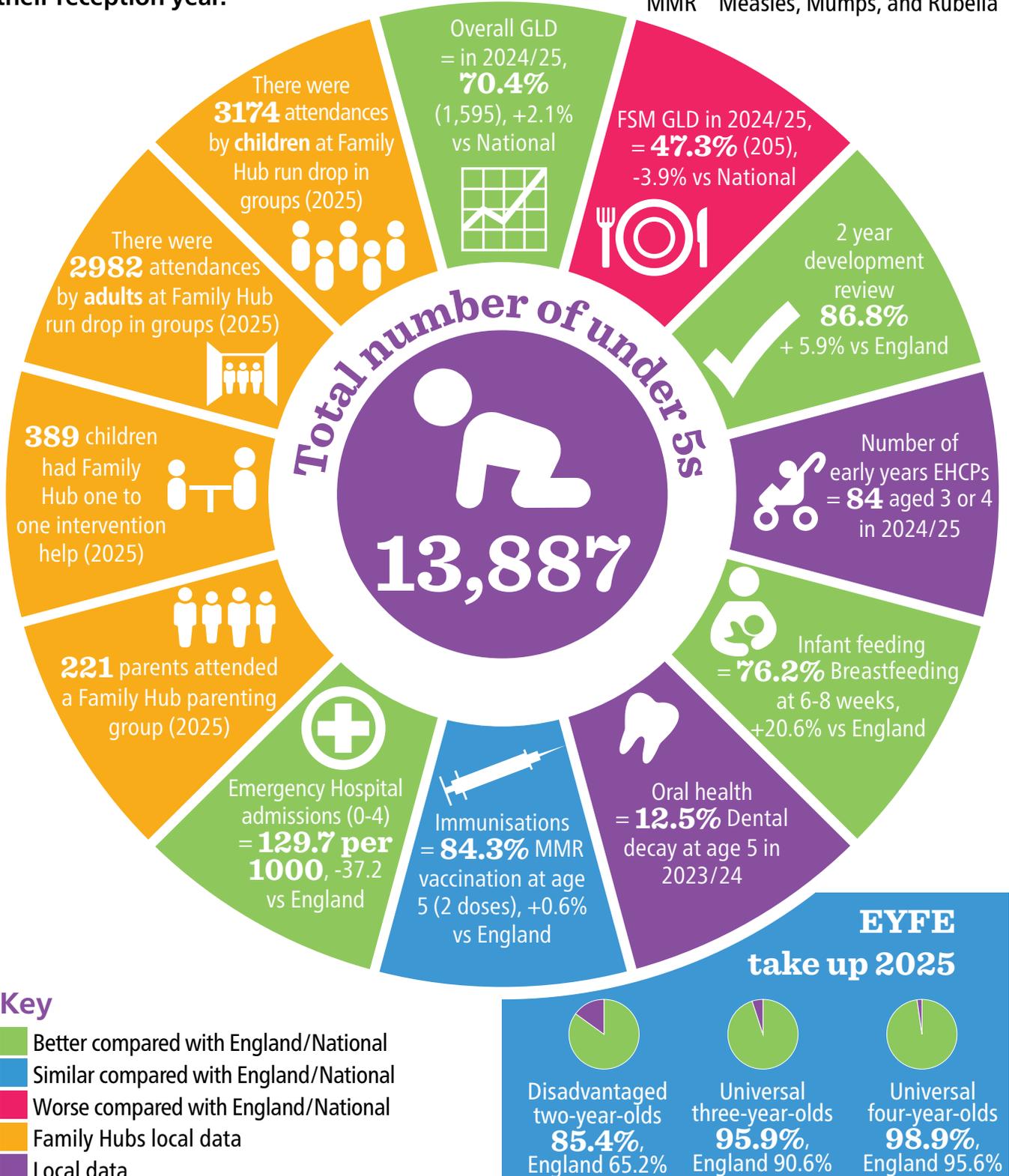
Where we are now

Our local statutory target

Brighton & Hove is working to ensure **78.6%** of all children and **58.7%** of disadvantaged children reach a good level of development by 2028. This will be measured at the end of their reception year.

Abbreviations

- EHCP Education Health and Care Plan
- EYFE Early Years Free Entitlement
- FSM Free School Meals
- GLD Good Level of Development
- MMR Measles, Mumps, and Rubella



Over the last three years, Brighton & Hove has been making changes to improve how we support children and families, from pregnancy through to 19 years (and up to 25 for young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)). We have developed four main Family Hubs, with additional spoke sites, so families can access joined up support close to home.

We focus on what each family needs and work in a way which puts relationships, trust and understanding at the centre of everything we do. We work closely with health services, early years settings, and voluntary, community and faith groups to make support easier to access. We have also aligned Health Visiting with Family Hubs and successfully expanded free childcare for young children, helping more families get the support they need, when they need it.

The Family Hubs are the central point for delivering services to families which include:



Navigation and signposting



Volunteering



Midwifery



Council run nurseries



Parenting



Reducing parental conflict



Infant feeding



Special Educational Needs (SEND) support



Early language support



Whole family work



Perinatal mental health



Support to access childcare



Cost of living, food and employment support



Health Visiting



Parent infant psychotherapy



Health and wellbeing



Housing

Over the last year we have worked with our partners to review what is working well for children and families from conception to five and what we need to do to improve.

Throughout our journey we have engaged with children and families to adapt and improve our offer and this Best Start in Life strategic plan will enable us to continue this work.

Priority 1

Helping young children thrive

We want to give every child in Brighton & Hove the strongest possible start. This means stepping in early to support children's health, wellbeing and learning, so they can grow with confidence. We know that children's early experiences shape their future,

and that some families face challenges which make it harder to get the support they need. Our aim is to make sure every family can access the right help early on, including early years education, so all children have the chance to thrive.



We will work together to:

- Focus more support in the areas where families need it most, so all children have the same chance to thrive
- Identify any developmental needs as early as possible, so families can get the help they need when they need it
- Make sure every child can access high quality early learning, including those facing disadvantage or with SEND, alongside providers and school based nurseries
- Offer proven, high quality parenting and home learning programmes that help children and families learn and develop well, with a focus on parent-child interaction and the importance of home learning

How will we know we have made a difference

- Families in disadvantaged areas have more locally available programmes to support parenting and home learning
Measure: Attendance at parenting and home learning
- Staff can signpost families to appropriate support as soon as it is identified
Measure: Navigator data
- Families access the high quality early learning they are entitled to
Measure: Early Years Free Entitlement take up including children with SEND
- Families who are accessing home learning and parenting programmes report improved outcomes
Measure: Impact data for those attending parenting and home learning

Priority 2

Helping children learn, talk, play and communicate

The way young children learn, talk, play and communicate starts at home. Everyday moments like chatting together, sharing a book, or playing help build children's

language, social skills and confidence. These early experiences also help prepare them for nursery and school, where high quality early education can make a big difference too, especially for children who may need a little extra support.



We will work together to:

- Help children develop their speech and communication early, with extra support for children more likely to experience early language difficulties, including those facing disadvantage or with SEND
- Offer proven early language programmes to support speech and language development and build strong home learning routines including the importance of limiting screen time in the early years
- Ensure all early years settings provide language rich, high quality learning environments, supported by national standards and staff training
- Support reception teachers to help children develop strong speaking, listening and early reading skills, giving them the best start at school

How will we know we have made a difference

- Create a Speech and Language Pathway to be used by health teams, early years settings and Best Start Family Hubs
Measure: Pathway developed and numbers accessing speech, communication and language support
- Families who are accessing home learning and parenting programmes report improved outcomes
Measure: Impact data for those attending parenting and home learning programmes
- Early years staff access training and support for language and communication development
Measure: Numbers attending training and support and environment audits
- Reception teachers access training and support for language and communication development
Measure: Numbers attending training and support

Priority 3

Helping young children and their families with health and wellbeing

Keeping children and families healthy and happy in their early years helps them thrive and sets them up for life-long wellbeing. We

want to make sure every child has the support they need to enjoy a healthy start in life.



We will work together to:

- Support children and families to understand the importance of physical activity and healthy eating
- Ensure that parents and carers have access to information and advice about the importance of childhood immunisations with a focus on groups who do not currently immunise
- Ensure that staff across Best Start services are trained to provide information and advice on health topics with a focus on asthma, oral health and toothbrushing
- Support parents and carers to access high quality mental health information, advice and support during pregnancy and beyond

How will we know we have made a difference

- More children at the end of reception will be a healthy weight with an increased number of children active for at least one hour a day

Measure: National child measurement programme

- Families are well informed and take up immunisations

Measure: Increase in take-up of all childhood immunisations including seasonal flu

- Best Start staff access training and support on health topics including asthma and oral health

Measure: Numbers attending training and support, increase in primary schools achieving the Asthma Aware or Asthma Friendly Award

- Parents and carers accessing the mental health and wellbeing information, support and services they need

Measure: Parents and carers report timely access to effective support

Priority 4

Helping families access the information and support they need

We want it to be simple for families to get the help they need as their child grows. Our Best Start Family Hubs will be at the heart of this, bringing together support for pregnancy,

health, early education and family help all in one place. We are working to make these services more joined up, easier to access and better connected, so families do not have to navigate a lot of different systems to get the right support.



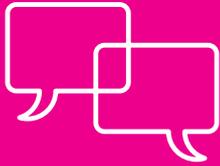
We will work together to:

- Make sure every family can easily access all the support and groups available in their local Best Start Family Hub whether that is online, visiting the Hub, in the community or by speaking to someone in person
- Ensure families can access information about proven high quality parenting and home learning programmes that help children learn and develop well
- Reach out to families who might find it harder to access support and offer friendly, practical help including support from other parents and carers who have been there too
- Ensure staff are trained to support every family with a child starting school and they have the information to help them be reception ready

How will we know we have made a difference

- Families can access Best Start Family Hub services
Measure: Navigator data and group and interventions attendance data
- Families accessing home learning and parenting programmes are reporting improved outcomes
Measure: Impact data for those attending parenting and home learning
- Families have access to peer support and outreach in their community
Measure: Parent Champion data
- Families have access to information to support starting school
Measure: Numbers attending training and support, starting school toolkit developed

Cross cutting themes



Family voice

We want to make sure everything we do is shaped by the real experiences of families. Family and child feedback helps us understand what it is really like to raise babies and young children in Brighton & Hove, and guides us in providing the services they need.



Relationship based practice

Strong, trusting relationships are at the heart of the support we offer. When professionals and families build good relationships, it helps create positive change. We want every family including fathers and non-birthing partners to feel understood, respected and supported, and we want our staff to feel confident and safe in how they work.



Inclusion and diversity

Every family should feel welcome and supported. We want our Best Start Offer to work for everyone, including families who may face extra challenges such as special educational needs, language barriers, financial pressures or limited internet access. Our aim is to make sure that every parent and carer can get the help they need in a way that feels right for them. This means recognising each family's unique circumstances and making sure our support is fair, inclusive and free from discrimination.



Poverty aware

Poverty aware practice is understanding, recognising, and responding appropriately to those experiencing poverty. We recognise that poverty is a trauma. The impacts of poverty and housing insecurity are wide ranging and can be most profoundly felt by those who are vulnerable, marginalised or discriminated against, in our society. This will be considered throughout all Best Start services and beyond.



Trauma informed

We recognise that past or current difficult experiences can affect how families feel and cope with challenges. Being trauma informed means we work in ways that help families feel safe, supported and understood, and we avoid doing anything that could cause further stress or harm.



Transitions

Changes can be challenging for young children and their families whether it is moving between services or starting school. Through our Best Start in Life Offer, we aim to make these transitions as smooth and supported as possible by working together to co-ordinate service delivery.

Key enablers:

What helps us deliver the Best Start in Life

To make sure every child in Brighton & Hove has the best possible start, we need strong foundations behind the scenes. These “key enablers” help our services work well together so families get clear, consistent and high quality support from pregnancy to starting school.

1. A joined up, citywide Best Start Offer

We are working to make sure families across the city receive the same high quality support, no matter where they live. All Best Start staff will take part in shared training and use the same tools, so that help for families is consistent and easy to understand.

We will provide clear information about the support available from pregnancy through the early years and work together to ensure families know what trusted help they can access and how to find it when they need it.

2. Strong partnerships and shared responsibility

Children and families are supported by many different teams; health, early years, social care, community groups and schools. We are strengthening how these services work together and share responsibility for improving children’s development and wellbeing. Importantly, parents and carers will have a voice in how Best Start services are designed and delivered.

To reach and support families in Brighton & Hove better, we need to continue the strong engagement with private, community and voluntary sector organisations. These groups are rooted in local neighbourhoods and often have trusted relationships with families, making them essential partners in delivering support.

3. Digital information, advice and guidance

Families need access to reliable, up-to-date digital information and advice in one place. We will use the national Best Start in Life and Healthy Babies branding across our services and Family Help Online to ensure information and support is easy to find and recognise, providing clear, consistent and joined-up messages so families can access trusted guidance quickly and with confidence.

4. Using evidence and data to improve outcomes

Everything we do will be shaped by the best available evidence on what helps children get the strongest start in life. We will continue to use research, local data and best practice to guide decisions and improve outcomes. We are developing a Best Start Dashboard so we can quickly see what is working well and where more support is needed. This includes tracking children’s development, how families are engaging with services, and the impact of evidence based interventions.

Delivery and Governance

A detailed programme plan will sit underneath the Best Start in Life strategic plan outlining key actions, accountability, risks and issues.

The Best Start in Life strategic plan and delivery will be overseen by the Best Start governance structures below:



Links to other strategies

National

Best Start in Life

www.gov.uk/government/publications/giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life

Families First

www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-first-partnership-programme

Young Futures

www.gov.uk/guidance/young-futures-hubs

Local

Brighton & Hove Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2021 to 2026

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-strategy-21-26

Tackling Educational Disadvantage

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/tackling-educational-disadvantage

Anti-Racism Strategy

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/anti-racism-strategy-23-28

Cost of Living Plan

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/cost-living-support/brighton-hove-cost-living-plan

Healthy Lives: Starting Well

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/healthy-lives-starting-well

Brighton & Hove physical activity and sport strategy 2024 to 2034

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/lets-get-moving

Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-strategy-2025-2030

