Brighter Futures Strategy Action Plan 2026-2028

Brighter Futures SP1: All children are enabled to achieve their potential

Lead: Director Education and Children's Commissioning
Delivery Group(s): Best Start in Life Steering Group, 11-25 Partnership, Local Area SEND Partnership

AMBITION 1.1: Improve educational attainment for all vulnerable children and young people

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer(s)	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 1.1a Develop the Best Start in Life Plan with contributions from education, health and social care and other key partners			
School Effectiveness Team will support Early Years Providers and Family Hubs staff in providing training to lead the evidenced based programmes in Home Learning Environment to support parents with learning at home, they are also providing training for Early Words Together, PEEP, 'Making it Real' and Wellcomm	AW	June 2026 – July 2028	
The Better Start in Life (BSIL) initiative from DfE & Central Government will be delivered through the BSIL plan due to be completed by the BSIL Steering Group.	AP	June 2026 – July 2028	
Using the Children, Families and Youth Grant funding identify personnel to undertake school-age childcare duties from DfE to support the delivery and sustainability of school-age childcare, including HAF	AP	June 2026 – July 2028	
METRIC The proportion of children in Thurrock achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the academic year 2027-28 is at least 78.6%.	AP		
METRIC Disadvantaged children have benefitted at least equally from this improvement, that is, that the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the 2027-8 academic year is at least 66.9%	AP		
METRIC Increase the proportion of 9month-4 years old attending early education and childcare settings	AP		
METRIC Increase the amount of school age childcare and wraparound care	AP		

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer(s)	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 1.1.b Improve quality and timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and annual reviews			
Improve contributions from Health and social care ensuring relevant professionals are invited to contribute to plans/ annual reviews including Preparing for Adulthood (PfA).	AW / TM DCO / DCSO	June 2026 – July 2028	
Improve timeliness of EHCPs through recruitment of EHCP coordinators and Senior SEND Officers.	AW	June 2026 – July 2028	
Improve the use of technology to increase output of EHCPs and annual reviews.	AW	June 2026 – July 2028	
METRIC % of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks and annual reviews are completed within timescales	AW		
METRIC % of annual reviews completed within timescales	AW		
DELIVERABLE 1.1c Increase proportion of children with SEND in mainstream schools through the implementation of the White Paper changes and monitor the use of the HNPCA grants			
Monitor the use of the HNPCA grants to ensure more children with SEND remain in mainstream schools in Thurrock.	SW	June 2026 – July 2028	
METRIC Increase the proportion of children with SEND in mainstream schools	AW		
DELIVERABLE 1.1d Implement the SEND Reform Plan focusing on the 5 pillars			
Develop and approve the SEND Reform Plan approved by the DfE	ML/AW	June 2026 – July 2028	
DELIVERABLE 1.1e Improved transitions for CYP with SEND - to ensure CYP with SEND and or other vulnerabilities have a well-planned and effective transition to the next stage of the education.			
Continue to improve YN-YR, Y6-7, Y11-12 transition especially for vulnerable groups.	AP/ KKB	June 2026 – July 2028	
Cross cutting ambition - Transitions into adulthood for SEND young people	KKB/IO	June 2026 – July 2028	

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AMBITION 1.2: All children are able to access education

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer(s)	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 1.2a Increase the proportion of vulnerable children including SEND / EYs accessing Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF)			
Levelling up – Holiday Activity & Food Programme delivered to FSM eligible/SEND Vulnerable children on our behalf by Activate Essex	KC	June 2026 – July 2028	
Encourage EY schools/ settings to apply for the Essex Activate Movement Mark	KC	June 2026 – July 2028	
METRIC Take-up of Movement Mark	KC		
DELIVERABLE 1.2b Develop a model for an integrated Youth & Adults Education & Skills Offer			
Inspire and TACC are working in partnership on an educational and training offer for residents having amalgamated both teams under one Head of Service.	KKB / KD	June 2026 – July 2028	
The new Thurrock Employability and Skills Plan to be completed and presented to Brighter Futures	KKB	Autumn Term 2026	
DELIVERABLE 1.2c New provision that addresses the skills gaps in Thurrock is procured through a range of funding streams			
METRIC % reduction in educational attainment gap KS2 **% reduction in educational attainment gap KS4**	KKB		

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AMBITION 1.3: Support young people to gain qualifications, skills and experience to progress into sustained employment

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer(s)	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE: 1.3a Deliver on the Thurrock Employability and Skills Plan which prioritises progression into apprenticeships and Supported Internships whilst focusing on vulnerable cohorts of young people.			
Support SEND learners to ensure they can access internship, apprenticeship programmes and work experience.	KKB	June 2026 - July 2028	
Work with our departments in the LA to deliver work experience and Supported Internship opportunities for vulnerable NEET young people.	KKB	June 2026 - July 2028	
METRIC % increase in apprenticeships, kick start and internships	KKB		
DELIVERABLE: 1.3b Deliver on the Thurrock NEET Strategy which identifies support for young people not in education, employment or training by providing wrap around support, focusing on enabling young people to realise their potential through support from a 'trusted adult'.			
Embed and evaluate the NEET strategy that supports Thurrock young people whilst enabling the local authority to fulfill its statutory duty.	KKB	June 2026 - July 2028	
METRIC Reduction in NEETs from baseline	KKB		
METRIC Reduction in SEND NEETs from baseline	KKB		
DELIVERABLE: 1.3c Deliver on the Thurrock Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Strategy which prioritises educational outcomes of young people through stakeholder engagement, innovative educational and training programmes that are tailored to individual needs.			
Refresh the PfA Strategy	KKB/IO	Autumn Term 2026	
METRIC % young people progress towards a job/better (better outcomes for children) compared to baseline	KKB/IO		

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Brighter Futures SP2: Children are able to access the services they need and be healthy, focussing on prevention and early intervention

Lead: **Public Health Principal, Thurrock Council**
Delivery Group(s): To be established

AMBITION 2.1: All children start school ready to learn

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 2.1a Delivery of high-quality parenting support			
Delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes such as Triple P	CM	From June 2026	
METRIC: Increase in perceived confidence in parenting strategies			
DELIVERABLE 2.1b Continued delivery of 0-5 services including high performance against the mandated contact points			
Development of existing Healthy Families Service incorporating new national guidance	LL/NELFT	From July 2026	
METRIC: Increase in the % of mandated reviews undertaken within relevant timeframes			
DELIVERABLE 2.1c Delivery of a range of wellbeing activities at Family Hubs			
Continue to provide opportunities for services to be delivered from Family Hubs	CM	From July 2026	
Embed voluntary sector activities funded by Transformation Funding into the Family Hub network more strongly	LL	From June 2026	
METRIC: Increase in Family Hub registrations	CM	From June 2026	
METRIC: Increase in range of activities offered	CM	From June 2026	
DELIVERABLE 2.1d Deliver Supervised Toothbrushing programmes in 3-5 year olds in eligible settings and promote good oral health in all children			
Explore development of current Early Years Oral Health team to continue post-December 2026	MP/GA	June 2026	
METRIC: Maintenance of supervised toothbrushing in all current settings			
METRIC: Increase in toothbrushing confidence reported by children and parents/ carers			

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AMBITION 2.2: All children achieve a healthy weight

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 2.2a Deliver actions within the Healthy Weight Strategy Delivery Plan to address childhood obesity			
Development and delivery of a robust delivery plan addressing the priorities within the Healthy Weight Strategy relating to the children and young people's workstream	LL/AMD	From June 2026	
METRIC: Increase in proportion of Reception and Year 6 aged children achieving a healthy weight			
DELIVERABLE 2.2b Improve advice and support during pregnancy			
Explore investment into Family Hubs midwife position	LL/MSEFT	From June 2026	
Increase awareness around eligibility for Healthy Start vouchers	LL/AMD	September 2026	
METRIC: Increase in uptake of Healthy Start vouchers			
DELIVERABLE 2.2c Increase support and resources to promote breastfeeding as part of the Healthy Babies offer within Family Hubs			
Invest in new specialist infant feeding coordinator post to strengthen support for families	LL/NELFT	July 2026	
METRIC: Increase in breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks			
DELIVERABLE 2.2d Deliver initiatives to increase physical activity in children, including activating neighbourhoods and spaces, increasing active travel to school and overcoming barriers to getting active for groups and communities that experience these.			
Fulfil commitments in the Place Based Expansion Programme	HH/JR/LS	From June 2026	
METRIC: Increase in proportion of physically active children			

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AMBITION 2.3: All children are protected from illness and disease

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 2.3a In partnership with colleagues, delivery of the local childhood immunisations action plan to improve uptake of maternal and childhood immunisations			
Take identified actions to reduce inequalities in vaccination uptake and increase overall uptake	BC/NHSE/NHS Essex ICB	From July 2026	
METRIC: Increase in uptake across MMRV and MenACWY vaccination programmes			
DELIVERABLE 2.3b Increase resources within schools and for those educated elsewhere to support with harmful behaviours such as vaping/smoking and gambling harm			
Recruitment of specialist worker from Open Road to tackle vaping behaviours (alongside substance misuse)	RL/Open Road	July 2026-June	
Roll out of training to schools and other professionals working with children around understanding gambling harm	RL/Gambling Harm UK	From July 2026	
Improve quality of information provided in school communications and via website on these topics	RL/Open Road/Gambling Harm UK	September 2026	
METRIC: Schools reporting increased confidence to support behaviours			
DELIVERABLE 2.3c Continue to develop sexual health provision for young people in Thurrock in line with the regional STI action plan and the Thurrock Teenage Pregnancy Strategy delivery plan			
Delivery of actions within the regional STI action plan	BC/Brook	From June 2026	
Delivery of actions within the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Delivery Plan 2025-2035	LL	From July 2026	
METRIC: Increase in the proportion of 16-24 year olds screened for chlamydia			
METRIC: Reduction in inequalities in teenage conception rates across Thurrock wards and sustaining progress in reducing teenage pregnancies.			

AMBITION 2.4: All children receive care at the right place and right time

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 2.4a Deliver improved health services for children and young people in line with the Population Health Improvement Plan for Essex			
Develop neighbourhood-based models of health care with a focus on integration and prevention.	NHS Essex ICB	From September 2026	
METRIC: To be developed	NHS Essex ICB/Thurrock Primary Care Networks		
DELIVERABLE 2.4b Improve performance of initial health assessments for children looked after (CLA)			
Delivery of the new model of IHAs for CLA in Thurrock	NHS Essex ICB/NELFT	From June 2026	
METRIC: Increase in the percentage of Initial Health Assessments completed within required statutory timeline			
DELIVERABLE 2.4c Delivery of CORE20+5 work to improve care for children with long term health conditions			
Continued focus on CORE20PLUS5 programmes of work, including the 5 clinical priority areas of asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, oral health and mental health.	NHS Essex ICB/Thurrock Primary Care	June 2026-	
METRIC: Reduction in hospital admissions for epilepsy			
METRIC: Reduction in hospital admissions for diabetes			
DELIVERABLE 2.4d Increase access to free dental care for all children			
Continued delivery of Dental Access pilot in partnership with dental practices and schools, enabling increased numbers of children and young people to access free dental care	NHS Essex ICB/NHSE General Data Services Contract	June 2026-	
METRIC: Reduction in hospital admissions for dental extractions due to caries			

Brighter Futures SP3: All children live safely in their communities – with a focus on Child Exploitation

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Lead: Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help (Thurrock Council)
Delivery Group(s): Thurrock Community Safety Partnership, Family First Partnership, Essex Violence & Vulnerability Unit, Gang Related Violence Group

AMBITION 3.1: Use intelligence to identify and intervene early with targeted and tailored intervention packages to reduce the harms of exposure to exploitation

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
Deliverable 3.1a Strengthen early identification frameworks using intelligence-led responses			
Develop and adopt a consistent, multi-agency exploitation risk screening tool to help practitioners recognise early indicators allowing risks to be seen and addressed/disrupted quickly. This includes hotspots, patterns of behaviour, emerging groups of concern and cross-border links.	JB	December 2026	
All agencies adopt clearer information-sharing pathways to ensure relevant intelligence is shared promptly. This enables swifter action, improved coordination and reduced duplication.	JB	September 2026	
Utilise local data and strategic needs assessment developed under the serious violence duty to inform specific areas of focus	CM	September 2026	
Understand and analyse the data in relation to Stop and Search activity, to identify if there is disproportionality from minority ethnic groups.	JB	September 2026	
Deliverable 3.1b Embed training, development and exploitation awareness across the workforce and partners			
Provide training for all partners on exploitation, trauma, adolescent safeguarding, risk assessment, cultural humility, and relational practice ensuring consistent standards across the system.	TW	September 2026	
Provide training and support to schools to educate and support children before they become exploited or involved in local gang activity, including the continuance of the Walk Online roadshows for schools	JB	September 2026	
Ensure commissioned services for drug and alcohol misuse, smoking and vaping prevention and sexual health, understand the signs of exploitation.	JP	September 2026	
Ensure that the Brighter Futures Board is aware of the Serious Violence Duty and understand where there are links to delivery of this.	CM	September 2026	
Deliverable 3.1c Tailor intervention packages around and co-designed with the child/young person			

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
Develop our offer of bespoke support packages based on the child's individual needs, circumstances, identity, culture and preferred method of engagement	JB	September 2026	
Develop Engagement Plan to ensure voices of young people are sufficiently captured and influence practice combining the collective partners feedback routes. Use CYP - especially those with lived or relatable experience - to shape materials, workshops and messaging.	TW	September 2026	
Review accessibility of youth services, mentoring programmes and community hubs to ensure all young people have safe, accessible environments where they are listened to, supported and understood. This includes the work of the Youth Commissioner, Young Ambassadors, Young Inspectors, 'Young Voices' Group and SEND Participation Lead.	CM	September 2026	

AMBITION 3.2: Work in partnership across agencies and with families to work with vulnerable children and young people to prevent and reduce the risks of exploitation

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
Deliverable 3.2a Improve data sharing and joint decision-making to ensure multi-agency oversight and accountability with robust partnership governance and stronger planning: (including Health, Education, Police, Social Care and Youth Justice Service)			
Work in partnership with the Essex Violence & Vulnerability Unit, Gang Related Violence Group, CYP Officers, sexual health and substance misuse services to support local initiatives and develop evidence-based practice	JB	September 2026	
Enhance timeliness and quality of multi-agency assessments, EHCPs and strengthen opportunities for joint visits	EM	November 2026	
Work in partnership with the Youth Justice Service and the CYP exploitation team to support contextual safeguarding.	CM	September 2026	
Support a local multi agency response to the monitoring, prevention and disruption of the local gang nominals known to exploit children and young people.	JB	December 2026	
Ensure that there is a partnership response to the Casey Report on CSE	JB	September 2026	
Improve the recording and monitoring of local NRM referrals and outcomes	JB	September 2026	
Metric: Number of referrals to the NRM	JB		

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
Deliverable 3.2b Embed whole-family and relational approaches with governance and accountability through the Families First Partnership Programme			
Use the FFPP to work will parents, carers, siblings and extended networks to strengthen family relationships, increase protective capacity, and reduce conflict or breakdown	JB	December 2026	
Improve process of return-home interviews and follow-up, ensuring insights are shared quickly with partners to shape ongoing safety plans and operational responses.	JB	December 2026	
Uptake of return to home interviews	JB		
Deliverable 3.2c Re-engage children at risk of exclusion or disengagement, embedding contextual safeguarding and building resilience and protective peer networks and increase access to safe spaces and trusted adults			
Develop prevention programmes to be delivered in schools, alternative provisions, youth centres and community spaces exploring healthy relationships, consent, online safety, grooming processes, gang dynamics, county lines, coercive control, resilience, emotional wellbeing and self-worth.	JB	December 2026	
Work in partnership to make public spaces safer - parks, shopping areas, transport hubs, homes of concern, community venues, online platforms and residential areas.	CM	December 2026	
Review engagement opportunities for CYP that are not in an education setting i.e. in Vocational Alternative Provision or receiving tuition / electively educated at home, attending a SEN independent school.	CM	December 2026	
Develop peer groups and activities that create positive social connections - sport, arts, volunteering, leadership programmes, or skills-based clubs	JB	December 2026	
Build contextual safeguarding into the recommissioning of Supported Accommodation and the development of local residential homes including those using Thurrock properties.	JP	December 2026	
Number of entrants into Youth Justice System	CM		

AMBITION 3.3: Support young people to access services that tackle substance misuse

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
Deliverable 3.3a Improve accessibility with clear pathways to and engagement with specialist support			
Review service offer to see where improvements can be made to accessibility eg flexible appointment times, drop-in clinics, outreach support, virtual engagement options	JB	December 2026	
Work closely with partners to ensure services meet young people where they feel safe and comfortable	JB	December 2026	
Recruit and onboard substance misuse young person link outreach worker	CM	December 2026	
Deliverable 3.3b Embed substance misuse specialists in children's services and integrate mental health and substance misuse planning			
Review service offer to ensure specialists can work alongside social workers, Early Help teams, YOS workers and schools to provide advice, intervention and joint case work.	JB	December 2026	
Integrate the work of mental health services, substance misuse teams and exploitation specialists to support holistic planning and create safer outcomes.	JB	December 2026	
Build on the learning from the Community Tobacco Partnership (CTP) pilot in Grays to reduce the supply of illicit tobacco and illegal vapes, disrupt street-level dealing and improve community health and confidence.	CM	December 2026	
Deliverable 3.3c Work with partners to adopt intelligence-led, trauma-informed, harm-reduction approaches			
Work with the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) to best understand local issues and ensure the right services are available.	JB	December 2026	
Monitor exploitation and drug related admissions through analysis of local data via hospital admissions and A&E presentations.	JB	December 2026	

Brighter Futures SP4: Children and their families experience good emotional health and wellbeing

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Lead: Associate Director - Babies, Children and Young People (NHS)
Delivery Group(s): Integrated Emotional Wellbeing Partnership

AMBITION 4.1: Strengthen our whole school approach, with a view to ensuring all children are thriving and have access to the support they need

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 4.1a Expand Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) across Thurrock			
Roll out mental health support teams across Thurrock to ensure that all our children thrive and have access to the support they need	Commissioning Manager (NHS)	2026/27-2029	
METRIC: Number of children with emotional health and wellbeing issues who have access to MHSTs (Target 70%)	Commissioning Manager (NHS)	2028-2029	
METRIC: Number of children and young people accessing mental health support in targeted areas	Commissioning Manager (NHS)	2026-2029	
METRIC: Number of children and young people who show improved mental health following interventions from MHSTs		March 2029	
DELIVERABLE 4.1b Update and promote the THRIVE model with schools and families.			
Provide information sessions to schools and settings to describe the mental health offer across	NELFT/ICB	2026-27	
Put CYP at the centre of the strategy and using their feedback to guide future services	Commissioning Manager (NHS)	2026-27	
METRIC Fewer number of referrals to MH services are rejected		March 2029	
DELIVERABLE 4.1c Increase access to mental health support for neurodivergent children			
Define options for remodelling existing service offer across MHSTs and CAMHS	Senior Commissioning Manager	2026 - 2027	
Expand ability of MH workforce to meet needs of neurodivergent children	NELFT/ICB	2028-29	
METRIC: Fewer children are absent from educational settings for reasons relating to anxiety and neurodivergence		March 2029	

AMBITION 4.2: Enable parents and carers to model and adopt effective mental health strategies with their children

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 4.2a Create effective signposting for parents and carers			
Design and publish consistent information and advice for strategies to support positive mental health	Commissioning Manager (NHS)	2027-28	
METRIC: Creation of information toolkit/resources for families		March 2028	
DELIVERABLE 4.2b MHST family element – adopting the learning to inform practice across MHSTs			
Expand support offer for parents through MHST roll-out	NELFT	2026-2029	
METRIC: Increase in number of schools with a MHST in place		March 2029	

AMBITION 4.3: Reduce barriers to education because of poor mental health

How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 4.3a ICB and council work jointly with schools and education settings to communicate how children can access help and know what help is available			
Understand and address why children with moderate mental health needs cannot access specialist mental health support	Senior Commissioning Manager	March 2027	
Maximise opportunities for working with the most vulnerable children and identify and implement solutions which improve access to targeted and specialist interventions	ICB/Education	March 2027	
METRIC: Number of targeted communications to schools on resources available		March 2028	
METRIC: Number of referrals to Early MH services		March 2028	
DELIVERABLE 4.3b Embed trauma informed practice across schools and settings			
Review availability and content of trauma informed practice training and promote to schools and settings	ICB/Education	March 2027	
METRIC No of staff who have accessed trauma informed practice learning		March 2028	

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How we will know we are there - Milestones and Metrics	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Progress Update
DELIVERABLE 4.3c Gather and share intelligence on clinical profile of CYP missing education			
Gather and share intelligence on clinical profile of CYP missing education to ensure their needs are known and joint commissioning plans can be put in place to address	ICB/Education	September 2027	
METRIC: No of CYP missing education with plans in place		March 2028	
DELIVERABLE 4.3d Through Families First Partnerships and family hubs, further develop integrated neighbourhood models for CYP			
ICB and LA to develop family hub model in Thurrock and expand support for MH	ICB/Children's Services	2027/28	
METRIC: No of families in Thurrock who have access to neighbourhood health models for CYP		March 2028	
DELIVERABLE 4.3e Neurodivergent children with moderate mental health needs can access support in a timely way			
Ensure children can access mental health support by professionals who understand their neurodivergent presentations	ICB/Education/ Children's Services	2027/28	
METRIC: Number of professionals accessing training		March 2028	