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Energy and a strong commitment to putting children and families first have been recognised in a review of services for young children in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Early Years Social Mobility Pilot Peer Review of Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council was carried out in July and led by Sarah Newman, Deputy Director, Children's Services at Portsmouth City Council.

The review team were asked to focus on three key lines of enquiry in relation to early years social mobility - Leadership; Wider Child Family & Health Services and Partnerships.

The strong leadership and effective multi-agency working across the two local authorities was praised and the commitment to prioritise early years, including speech, language and communication recognised. The report highlighted the positive culture across both authorities and a willingness to share learning and work together to improve outcomes.

Elected members are working well together to ensure there is an effective early year's offer across the two authorities. Although this joint working is relatively new there was a consensus that 'politics are left at the door and it is about children.'

The use of data and commitment to learning and improvement demonstrated by the literacy project [Talking Together](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/talking-together-to-boost-young-children-s-life-chances/) (<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/talking-together-to-boost-young-children-s-life-chances/>) was highlighted.

Following a successful pilot project in Wisbech that was shown to boost language skills 'Talking Together in Cambridgeshire' targets Huntingdon, Wisbech, Chatteris, March, and North-East Cambridge where the language and literacy levels of young children are lower than in other parts of the county.

In Peterborough the START school readiness project was described as 'transformational' with its simple steps to [preparing children for learning and outreach events](#) at Queensgate Shopping Centre.

The team also spoke to a childminder in Peterborough. The cohesive support and advice she had received from a range of early years services had proved invaluable in enabling her to confidently provide care for a child with complex needs over an extended period of time.

Suggestions for further improvement included a greater focus on challenge and scrutiny, ensuring that managers' aspirational targets for speech and language development are shared with childcare providers and boosting the take-up rates for free childcare for eligible two-year-olds.

Simon Bywater, Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee for Cambridgeshire County Council, said: "Research shows the importance of strong language skills, and the impact of language on attainment and enjoyment of school and future life chances. I'm pleased to see that our commitment to support for young children, particularly those in disadvantaged communities has been recognised.

"We are committed to continuing to improve our services for young people and will explore opportunities to work with the Library Service to improve language and literacy and use the Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Social Mobility Opportunity Area as a driver for innovation."

Councillor Lynne Ayres, Cabinet Member for Education for Peterborough City Council said: "I am delighted that the review has

highlighted the positive work we have been doing to support children with their early years development. I'm particularly pleased that both councils were praised for creating a positive learning culture, ensuring that best practice is delivered.

"It is vitally important that children make progress ahead of starting school and just like our counterparts at Cambridgeshire County Council, we are committed to continuing to provide this crucial support. We also never get complacent and will take on board the review's recommendations to ensure we continue to make improvements."