

# Premature birth can lead to an academic double disadvantage for school children

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## Research brief

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- Clinical guidelines do not advocate monitoring or providing extra support to children born preterm after hospital discharge unless they are born under 30 weeks
- However, the likelihood of showing a good level of development at the end of the reception year is reduced by 9% for each successive week earlier that a child is born<sup>1</sup>
- Children who start school a year earlier because of being born prematurely are at an elevated risk of failing to show a good level of development at the end of their reception year<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Pettinger, K. J. et al. (2019) *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. doi:[10.1136/archdischild-2019-317124](https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2019-317124)



Children born preterm are known to be at greater risk of experiencing developmental problems, showing below-average attainment and having special educational needs.

Premature birth can result in a child starting school a year earlier than expected during pregnancy. These children may face a double disadvantage of being among the youngest in their class, as well as having the difficulties associated with having been born preterm.

### Children born close to term not provided with extra support required

Only in rare cases do clinical guidelines advocate monitoring or providing extra support to a child born preterm after discharge from hospital between 30 and 36 weeks. This creates a situation where the majority of parents of preterm children are unsupported in their efforts to help their child's early development. Prematurity is the main reason for parents appealing to their local authority to delay or offset their child's entry into school.



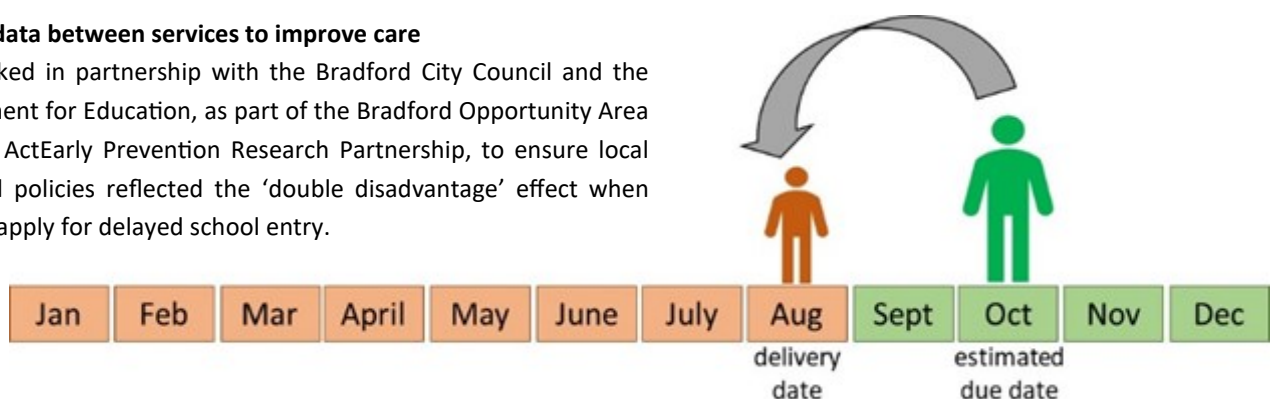
### Using data to identify how services for children can be better aligned and targeted

We explored the relationship between a child's degree of prematurity at birth, and their likelihood of showing a "Good Level of Development" on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) at the end of their Reception year. This was done using data from 10,390 participants in the Born in Bradford (BiB) birth cohort.

Our use of BiB cohort data offered a unique opportunity to investigate whether the effects of gestational age on academic progress were evident earlier in childhood (using the EYFSP) than previously studied. Our research also shifted focus onto children classified as 'moderate-to-late' preterm births (28-36 weeks).

### Linking data between services to improve care

We worked in partnership with the Bradford City Council and the Department for Education, as part of the Bradford Opportunity Area and the ActEarly Prevention Research Partnership, to ensure local Bradford policies reflected the 'double disadvantage' effect when parents apply for delayed school entry.



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