

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 14 January 2016
REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Public Health
PORTFOLIO: Health and Wellbeing
SUBJECT: Halton Infant Feeding Strategy 2016-19
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report presents a new infant feeding strategy, which outlines Halton's approach to infant feeding over the next 4 years. The strategy aims to create a culture and services that support families and carers within the Borough to make informed healthy choices when feeding their baby and young child, to ensure the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes are achieved.

This Strategy will contribute to Halton's Readiness for School Indicator. Encouraging parents and service providers to enable infants and young children to breast feed, be weaned and commence solids at the appropriate age leads to well-developed facial muscles and speech and language skills which in turn means young children are ready for school.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the Infant Feeding Strategy and recommendations.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 How a child is fed in their first year of life leaves a lasting impact throughout their life. Good nutrition enables optimal growth to be achieved, allowing a child's body and brain to grow, building important physical functions such as neuro-connections in the brain and the immune system. An infant's diet influences their future ability to self-regulate their appetite, their likelihood of becoming obese, and their subsequent risk of developing conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Their susceptibility to conditions, such as gastroenteritis and constipation are also influenced by their diet.

3.2 Conditions that relate to diet are impacting upon the health of Halton's infants. In recent years there has been a slow increase in the number of women who breastfeed but there is still a long way to go to catch up with the rest of England. Similarly the rates of obesity remain a priority for Halton, while childhood obesity rates

have improved for year 6 children, reception age children remain higher than the England average.

3.3 In order to optimise the health of Halton residents the infant feeding strategy aims to achieve the following three overarching outcomes:

1. Create a culture of breastfeeding in Halton so that the number of infants who are breastfed and the duration of breastfeeding increase.
2. Increase the number of infants who are introduced to solid foods at or around 6 months of age.
3. Increase the awareness of parents and the general public of healthy feeding practices for infants; and change behaviour accordingly.

A full and detailed action plan underpins the strategy and measures the achievement of the aims and outcomes.

3.4 **Recommendations**

The main recommendations in the infant feeding strategy are:

1) For health and social care organisations and leaders to prioritise infant nutrition and the prevention of obesity.

2) Critical to the success of this strategy is partnership working across health and social care, and between community and hospital settings.

3) Continue to fund an infant nutrition coordinator role.

The infant nutrition agenda runs across disciplines, and the role of the infant nutrition coordinator is central to driving this agenda forward across disciplines.

4) Commission baby friendly health and social care services.

Endeavour for commissioned services, such as maternity services to be performance managed against their breastfeeding outcomes.

5) Create a culture of breastfeeding in Halton so that the number of infants who are breastfed and the duration of breastfeeding increase.

a. Make breastfeeding the norm

b. Raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding amongst the general public and increase its acceptability

c. Ensure that women have the information, support and skills to breastfeed

d. Achieve and maintain UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative

6) Support staff to breastfeed upon returning to work following maternity leave, through breastfeeding policies and supporting local businesses to adopt similar policies.

7) Increase the number of infants who are introduced to solid foods at or around 6 months of age, through partnership working with health visitors, children's centres and the health improvement team

8) Increase the awareness of parents and the general population of healthy feeding and drinking practices for infants; and change behaviour accordingly.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The strategy addresses some key issues to improve the short and long term health of infants in Halton. As such the recommendations will cover a broad scope of policy areas across the council, CCG and health and care partners.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There may be financial implications in the implementation of recommendations within the strategy which will be assessed and managed within the Halton Healthy lifestyles board and through partner agencies for which the implication affects.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

All issues outlined in this report focus directly on this priority.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The short and long term health of children and young people directly influences their educational performance and chances of employment. Therefore in the long term the issues outlined in this report will impact directly on this priority term.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

All issues outlined in this report focus directly on this priority

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no risks associated with the development and implementation of this strategy.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 This is in line with all equality and diversity issues in Halton.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

To provide a coordinated approach to improving infant nutrition for Halton residents.

10 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None.

11 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

January 2016 -2019.

12 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.