

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

*At a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on Wednesday, 15 January 2025 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillor Wright (Chair)  
Councillor Ball  
Councillor T. McInerney  
Councillor Woolfall  
D. Nolan, Adult Social Care  
I. Onyia, Public Health  
L. Gardner, Warrington & Halton Teaching Hospitals  
A. Hindhaugh, Halton Borough Council  
L. Hughes, Healthwatch Halton  
C. King, Halton Housing  
A. Leo, Integrated Commissioning Board  
W. Longshaw, St. Helens & Knowsley Hospitals  
T. McPhee, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust  
A. Moore, Cheshire Constabulary  
H. Patel, Citizens Advice Bureau  
S. Patel, Local Pharmaceutical Committee  
J. Rosser, Public Health  
J. Wallis, Bridgewater Community Health Care NHS  
R. Walsh, Public Health  
F. Watson, Public Health  
S. Yeoman, Halton & St Helens VCA  
K. Butler, Democratic Services

*Action*

### HWB17 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024, having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

### HWB18 ORAL HEALTH

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on child oral health programmes.

It was noted that tooth decay was the most common reason for hospital admissions in the 4-9 year old age group and a North West study found that 1 in 4 children had an average of 3 missed days from school because of dental pain and infection. The study also revealed that almost 4 in 10 children had sleepless nights because of dental pain. Poor oral health was not only a cause of decay in baby teeth but it was also a strong predictor of decay in adult teeth.

Halton had some of the poorest oral health amongst 5 year olds in the North West. A 2021/22 survey found that over a third of 5 year olds had experienced dentinal decay, which was significantly higher than the National average. Children living in the most deprived areas were almost 3 times more likely to experience dentinal decay compared to those living in the least deprived areas.

Members of the Board were advised that the Public Health Team had developed a Halton Supervised Toothbrushing Programme which would be embedded in the Early Years settings as part of the Halton Healthy Early Years Settings Award. This would help to ensure that oral health was seen as an integral part of general health and over time, it was anticipated that the scheme would be rolled out to childminders and schools (up to age 7). The scheme would be rolled out across Halton but limited by funding and therefore the most deprived areas would be targeted first.

Another initiative that was ongoing in Halton was the distribution of fluoride toothpaste and toothbrush packs. This had been funded by the Regional Oral Health Programme and, to date, approximately 1800 packs had been distributed across the Borough which included family hubs, libraries, asylum seeker children, foodbanks and children in contact with social care, including foster carers.

The Board noted and discussed the report and members were encouraged by the ongoing work, in particular, the Supervised Toothbrushing Programme. It was agreed that focus should be given to younger children and it was suggested that the best age to target children was before they started school. The Early Years settings were very supportive and it was hoped, that in time, work would commence with schools. Healthwatch Halton suggested that consideration should also be given to engaging with new parents and educating families at the earliest stage.

Improved oral health care was a National concern and the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) were keen to implement more toothbrushing programmes.

**RESOLVED:** That the Board support the ongoing participation in regional and local plans.

## HWB19 INFANT FEEDING

Members of the Board received a report and

presentation from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the development of the Infant Feeding Services and the outcomes in Halton as a result of the investment from the Department of Health and Social Care through Family Hubs.

The report outlined the benefits of breastfeeding but rates in Halton were significantly lower than the England average, despite slow and steady increases over the past 10 years. Between 2014 and 2023, breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks increased from 21.8% to 25.7% in Halton. The England average in 2023 was 49.2%.

Halton's Infant Feeding Team delivered antenatal infant feeding workshops, contact and visits new parents upon discharge from hospital. It also facilitated breastfeeding groups and "introducing solid food" workshops. The service also worked in partnership with the Family Hubs leads and Early Help officers and together facilitate groups and activities to promote and support breastfeeding.

Halton holds the Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative (BFI) accreditation status and the renewal would be completed in Summer 2025. BFI accreditation demonstrates that settings meet the evidence based standards for supporting optimal infant feeding. In addition to this, a significant focus had been placed on overcoming cultural barriers to breastfeeding in Halton and a number of approaches were in place to change this and these were outlined in section 3.11 of the report.

The Board noted and discussed the information presented and subsequently the following additional information was noted:

- There was no indication that the rising rates was due to expense, it appeared to be more around convenience and health benefits;
- There were 18 fatherhood champions who inform Government policy, one of which was an Infant Feeding Specialist. Dads are supported via the digital platform which gave hints and tips on how dads could support their partner; and
- Infant feeding was second to smoking cessation as the most cost effective intervention. Employers were encouraged to look at their policies for their staff.

**RESOLVED:** That the Board note the importance of the continued partnership working in Infant Feeding Services

across Halton.

## HWB20 UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS MADE ON THE DFE & DHSC FUNDED FAMILY HUB PROGRAMME

The Board received a report and presentation from the Director of Public Health, which provided an update on the progress to date in implementing the DFE and DHSC Funded Family Hub Programme. This included a focus on perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship and a copy of this Strategy was included in appendix 1 of the report.

In April 2022, the DfE and DHSC selected 75 Local Authorities who would become pilot areas for the Family Hubs and Best Start in Life Scheme and Halton was included. Since December 2022, work had been ongoing to develop the principles of the Family Hub Model.

The goal of a Family Hub was to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children by providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can access non-judgemental support for any challenges they may face. Family Hubs provide a universal “front door” to families and offer a “one stop shop” of family support services across social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive “Start for Life” offer for parents and babies.

In December 2022, Halton launched 3 Family Hub sites in Widnes and 3 in Runcorn and these were based in:

- Windmill Hill;
- Brookvale;
- Halton Lodge;
- Kingsway;
- Warrington Road; and
- Ditton.

In July 2024, the Family Hubs launched “Family Hubs Online” which was a digital automation solution that delivered national and local content and services, which could be easily accessed via any device 24/7. Within 5 months, Family Hubs Online had received over 7,000 users and the top 5 pages viewed were: family hubs home; events; HENRY – healthy families; Start for Life and Adults. Further developments were ongoing on the platform and these were outlined in the report.

Halton was awarded funding to transform services across 6 strands which included:

- Transformation;
- Parenting;
- Infant Feeding;
- Perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship
- Early language and home learning environment; and
- Start for Life and parent/carer panels.

It was important to fund Family Hubs, as it was highly cost effective to support early years and the benefits achieved would have an impact on future services.

The report also outlined the successes of Halton's ambitious approach, which as a result had received, local, regional and national acknowledgement.

The Board noted and discussed the information presented to them and congratulated staff on the success of their work. The Chair also shared some feedback from a service user who had spoken highly of their experience and expressed gratitude for the help they had received.

RESOLVED: That the Board adopt the Halton Family Hub Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationship Strategy.

#### HWB21 ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL REPORT (2023-2024)

The Board received the Adult Social Care (ASC) Annual Report 2023/24, also referred to as the Local Account. The theme of this years' report was "prevention and wellbeing".

The report highlighted the work that had taken place over the last 12 months in responding to National and Local drivers of prevention as a catalyst for change in how services were delivered to prevent or delay the need for statutory services.

The report also contained high level data on service usage, spend, customer care and safeguarding.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report.

*Meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.*