



# Worcestershire Best Start in Life **Action Plan**

2024 – 2026

# Contents

<b>Section 1: Overview</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 2: The Need for Action</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 3: Our Response</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Section 4: Governance</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 5: Best Start in Life Action Plan</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Section 6: Measuring Impact and Outcomes</b>	<b>11</b>



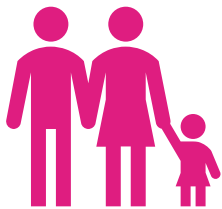
# Section 1: Overview

Giving every child the best start is fundamental to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities. During the early years, our brains lay the foundations for the emotional health, physical wellbeing and social skills needed to live a healthy, happy life.

In 2021, a national policy paper was developed ([The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days](#)), which outlines 6 areas for action to improve the health outcomes of all babies in England. The Best Start in Life Action Plan is Worcestershire's response to this national ambition, to improve outcomes in the early years for babies, infants and families.

Providing high quality services and support in the early years positively impacts a child's lifelong potential and can also reduce demand for public services by **responding to needs early**. Not focusing on early intervention could leave individuals requiring more support later in life. By **working together across organisations and communities** (the system), we have a better chance of achieving our ambitions for our younger children and families.

## Why the early years are so crucial:



**A loving, secure and reliable relationship with a parent or carer supports a child's:**



emotional wellbeing



brain development



language, development and ability to learn



capacity to form and maintain positive relationships with others



## The best outcomes for families happens when parents are:

- Not socio-economically disadvantaged
- In supportive relationships, and not experiencing domestic abuse
- Enjoying a well balanced diet
- Managing stress or anxiety
- Not smoking, consuming alcohol or misusing illegal substances
- Not in poor physical, mental or emotional health

# Section 2: The Need for Action

Giving a child the 'best start' begins before birth, with good pre-conception and maternity care. Pregnancy and the early years offer a unique opportunity to shape the lives of our children: if a child receives appropriate support during their early years, they have a real chance of maximising their potential.

**29%** of mental health conditions throughout life are attributable to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)



In the UK, postnatal depression affects more than **1 in every 10** women within a year of giving birth. It can also affect fathers and partners.

People in deprived areas are more likely to have low birth weight babies and premature births.



Approx **80%** of brain development takes place by the age of 3



Tooth decay, obesity rates and language delays are more likely in areas of social disadvantage

Locally, the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is **67.8%**, this drops to **48.1%** for those receiving free school meals (22/23)



In Worcestershire, **9%** of women are smoking at time of delivery. This ranges from **3%-21%** when comparing the most and least deprived areas (22/23)

## What do Families Need?

Community engagement with families in Worcestershire highlighted the need for a clear and accessible **single point of access** to local support for families, especially in the first 1001 days. Feedback gathered throughout the 2022 Start for Life Needs assessment also identified key themes including the need for accessible service offers, support for Dads, mental health support, the benefits of community assets such as libraries, and the struggles related to the cost of living crisis.

Engagement responses to the question 'What would make it easier for you to access services and support for your family?' included:

*"More face-to-face support. Prevention rather than letting it get to crisis before we get help"*

*"More advice for families on the cost of living and support groups for parents such as cooking on a budget, understanding bills and budgeting."*

*"To be made aware of support available locally whilst waiting for referrals to come through"*

# Section 3: Our Response

## A new Best Start in Life (BSiL) Partnership

There are many services in Worcestershire currently supporting children and families across a number of organisations. However, these can often appear disjointed and may not have the resource to take a whole system view. The new **Best Start in Life Partnership** will plan, develop and progress a programme of work to provide a **systemwide approach and preventative lens**, to identify how we can deliver the Best Start in Life priority in Worcestershire.



### Priority work programmes

Key priority areas have been identified by local stakeholders. Workplans linked to these key themes will review and identify areas of best practice, gaps, and required areas for development. Through the integration of these work programmes we aim to increase communication, joint planning and partnership working to strengthen our systemwide preventative approach to improving outcomes for babies, infants and families.

### Key Partners

The Best Start in Life Partnership and workplans include key partners from our local system:

- **Worcestershire County Council**
- **NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)**
- **Herefordshire and Worcestershire Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS)**
- **Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust**
- **Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust**
- **Voluntary and community sector organisations**
- **District/Borough council representation**
- **Healthwatch**



# Section 3: Our Response

## Best Start in Life Partnership: Key Approaches:



Working as an integrated system to **reduce inequalities**



Identifying and supporting **families at risk** of adversity, complexity and vulnerabilities as early as possible



Whole family and community **centered approaches**



Taking a holistic approach to address the **wider determinants** of the Best Start in Life

## To ensure Worcestershire families have the Best Start in Life, we aim to achieve:

A healthy pregnancy for parents and babies

Effective support for families to thrive and develop well

Increased mental wellbeing and resilience of parents and infants

Early identification and provision of appropriate support for vulnerable families and those with complex needs

A clear accessible integrated offer of support, which is promoted and accessed by those that require it most

Prevention of adverse childhood experiences, child morbidity and mortality

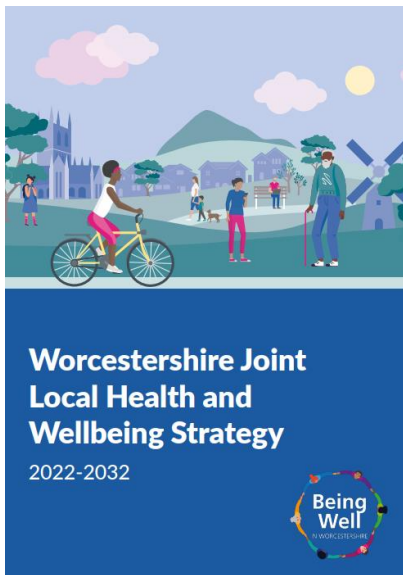


# Section 4: Governance

The BSiL Partnership reports to the Worcestershire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). The BSiL Partnership will also feed into wider partnerships such as the Early Help Partnership Board as required to inform agenda items.

BSiL task groups and workplans will report into the BSiL Partnership quarterly. These task groups will be developed to take the lead on themed priority work areas. The Perinatal Health and Wellbeing task group will also report into the wider Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) Board.

BSiL work areas will align with the priorities and subgroups of the CYPSP.



The Best Start in Life Partnership will report progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) via the Worcestershire CYPSP/ Being Well Strategic Group. This action plan will feed into the delivery of the [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), which the HWBB is responsible for and includes a focus on prevention, the wider determinants of health and tackling health inequalities. Providing the 'Best Start in Life' is a key priority within the Strategy as well as the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Strategy.



# Section 5: Best Start in Life Action Plan

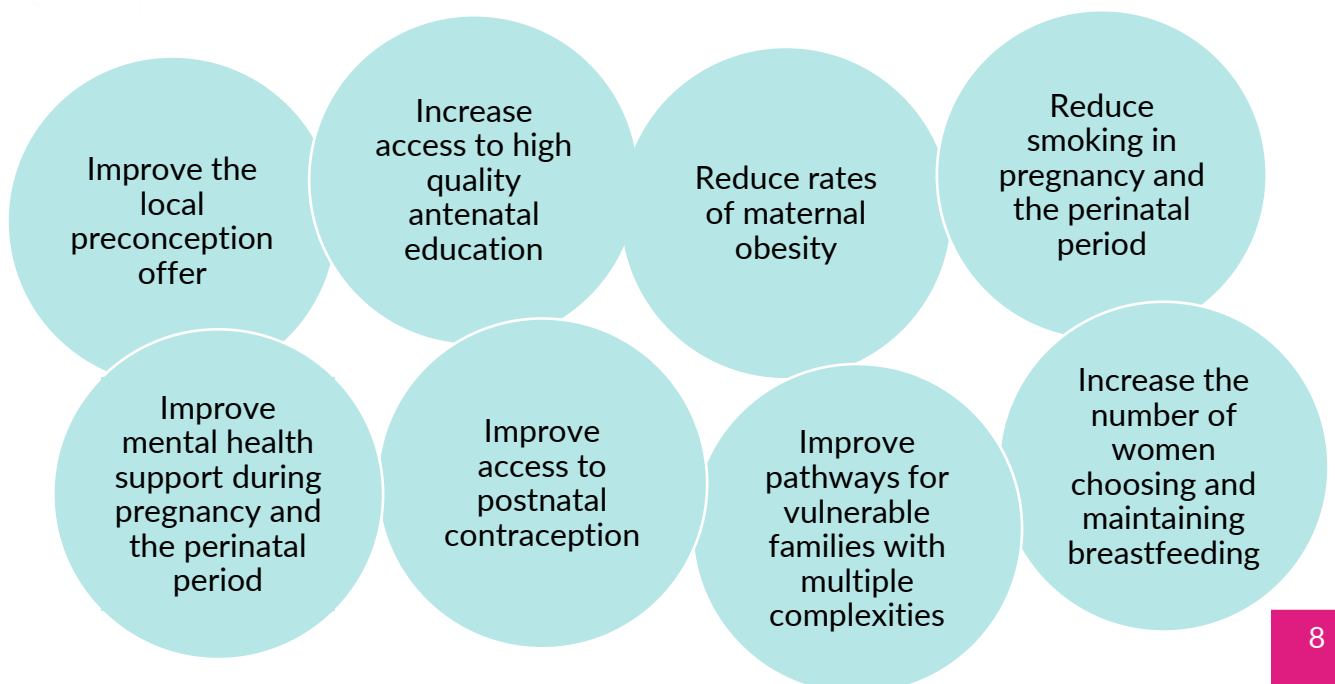
More detail regarding the specific actions being progressed within each objective can be found in a separate document overseen by the partnership, however a high-level summary of each objective is summarised below:

## Key work areas and objectives:

### Systemwide, collaborative actions required to underpin all local Best Start in Life work areas



### Work Area 1: Perinatal Health and Wellbeing





# Section 5: Best Start in Life Action Plan

## Work Area 2: Emotional Health and Wellbeing, Parenting and Attachment

Ensure a clear and accessible offer of universal and targeted parenting support

Promote and support positive parental wellbeing

Increase access to mental health support services for families

Promote and support positive attachment and parent-infant relationships

Ensure a joined-up approach between services offering community signposting to families



## Work Area 3: Start for Life and Family Hubs

Review the current offer of Family Hub support on a district level

Expand and develop local offer of Family Hub information and support

Develop district-based Family Hub Networks and maximise community assets

Upskill the local children and family's workforce to more confidently identify and support holistic needs

Ensure local service offers are clearly communicated and accessible to communities and professionals

# Section 5: Best Start in Life Action Plan

## Work Area 4: Improving Health Outcomes

Improve oral health for children, young people and their families

Develop a systemwide approach to promoting healthy weight in the early years

Ensure children and pregnant women are protected against key vaccine-preventable diseases

Reduce infant and childhood illnesses and accidents

Reduce the number of infants and children living in environments with family members who smoke

Increase uptake of Healthy Start vouchers



## Work Area 5: Supporting Early Speech and Language and Child Development

Increase proportion of integrated 2.5 year checks

Increase early and appropriate identification of speech and language needs in the early years

Ensure families are confident and able to promote positive language skills from birth

Ensure clear, accessible support is available for children with emerging Special Educational Needs and/or Disability

Improve access to quality childcare provision for those that need it most

Enhance the wider family and community offer of support aligned with SEND pathways

