

## St. Helens Council

### Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel

3 December 2018

#### Infant Feeding Update

## 1. Purpose

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Scrutiny Panel regarding:**

- i) the latest breastfeeding rates in St Helens,
- ii) delivery of the previously agreed actions in the Infant Feeding Strategy 2016-19
- iii) delivery of the actions recommended by the Scrutiny Infant Feeding focus group,
- iv) our proposed plans for 2019 and beyond

## 2. Background

**2.1 It is well known that breastmilk in the first six months of life is best for babies**, with real health benefits for both baby and mum. Breast milk reduces risk of infections, obesity and supports brain development for baby and reduces risk of some cancers, heart disease and obesity for mum. Breast milk is free, it's readily available and breastfeeding can help strengthen the bonding between mum and baby. The availability of breast pumps also mean that dads, partners and family and friends can also help with feeding.

**2.2 There can be many real barriers to breastfeeding.** The decision to breastfeed or not can be a very sensitive one in a society that on one hand tells mums that breast is best, yet at the same time normalises bottle and formula feeding. Individual women can feel very pressured and judged about their choices regardless of the reasons for them. In St Helens we observed that half of the women who chose to breastfeed their babies had stopped by 6-8 weeks. Local insight has told us that social norms, lack of family support and environments that do not welcome breastfeeding are all barriers.

**2.3 The St Helens Infant Feeding Strategy 2016-2019** identified four priorities to improve breastfeeding rates in St Helens and included a detailed action plan. The priorities were:

- To build **strategic awareness** and support for the infant feeding agenda,
- To build a **social movement** for change,
- To provide appropriate **information and support** to women and their families and
- To ensure the **training and data** support this process.

The Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny panel reviewed the local action in detail and found examples of good practice. A workshop on breastfeeding also resulted in a number of scrutiny recommendations that were agreed alongside the original action plan.

**This report provides the scrutiny committee with an update on the following**

- The latest data and trends on breastfeeding in St Helens
- Progress against the original strategy action plan
- Progress against the scrutiny recommendations

- Plans for 2019 and beyond

### 3. Breastfeeding in St Helens – Data and Trends

#### 3.1 Breastfeeding Initiation

- St.Helens breastfeeding initiation rates have increased by 6.7% from 48.6% in 2010/11 to 55.3 in 2016/17 (Table 1).
- Our initiation rate of 55.3%, whilst an improvement, is still significantly below the national and North West rates (74.5 and 64.5% respectively).
- There has been no breastfeeding Initiation data available from 2016/17.

**Table 1 Breastfeeding Initiation**

area	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>St. Helens</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>57.1</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>55.3</b>
Halton	48.6	51.1	52.3	51.6	52.8	54.1	54.6
Knowsley	38.4	41.8	40.8	-	47.7	44.3	48.4
Liverpool	52.6	51.2	50.9	53.2	53.8	53.6	55.0
Sefton	55.8	54.1	54.0	56.8	56.0	53.1	57.9
<b>England</b>	<b>73.7</b>	<b>74.0</b>	<b>73.9</b>	<b>74.0</b>	<b>74.3</b>	<b>74.0</b>	<b>74.5</b>

#### 3.2 Breastfeeding at 6-8 Weeks

- St Helens rates of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks remained below 25% to the end of 2017/18.
- The rate of 21.8% in 2017/18 was amongst the lowest in England (national rate was 42.7%).
- Confidence in data quality has been low due to inconsistent recording and completeness. Work has begun with Northwest Boroughs to address this.
- The first two quarters of 2018/19 saw small increases in the 6-8 week rates to 24.2% and (provisionally) 25.8% respectively. This puts us on track for achieving our locally set performance target of achieving 24% for 2018/19.

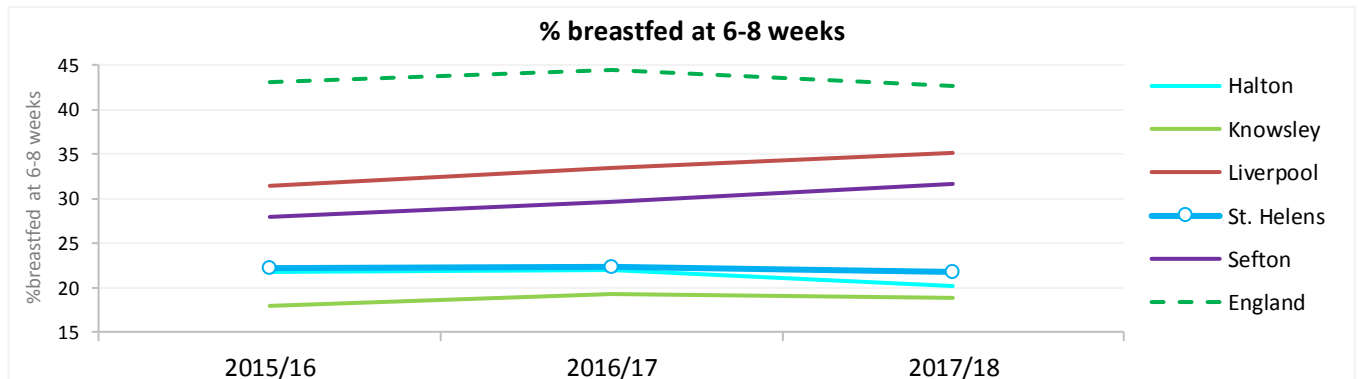
**Table 2 Breastfeeding at 6-8 Weeks 2017/18 and 2018/19**

area	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	2017-18 Annual	Q1 2018-19	Q2* 2018/19
<b>St Helens</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>21.8%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>
Halton	17.4%	21.6%	20.2%	21.6%	<b>20.2%</b>	22.2%	tbc
Knowsley	18.5%	20.3%	13.5%	20.1%	<b>18.9%</b>	20.1%	tbc
Liverpool	34.8%	37.4%	34.6%	33.6%	<b>35.1%</b>	33.9%	tbc
Sefton	29.2%	100.0%	34.8%	29.7%	<b>31.7%</b>	29.3%	tbc
<b>England</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>42.4%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>44.4%</b>	<b>tbc</b>

\* St Helens Q2 2018/19 results are provisional

Failed Stage 3 validation

**Fig 1 Breastfeeding at 6-8 Weeks 2015/16 to 2017/18**



#### 4. Progress Against Current Action Plans

4.1 Progress against the original Infant Feeding strategy action plan is provided in the embedded document below:



1 Infant Feeding Plan  
Progress Update Decr

4.2 Progress against the Infant Feeding scrutiny workshop action plan is provided in the embedded document below:



2 Scrutiny report  
action plan 2018 Proc

#### 5. Plans for 2019 and Beyond

The St Helens Infant Feeding Group was re-established in July 2018, chaired by the new Assistant Director of Public Health, Michelle Loughlin.

Work has been started by the Infant Feeding group to review progress against the action plans, consider actions to be rolled forward, and the trends in the local rates of breastfeeding.

Work has also begun with the Infant Feeding group to refresh the boroughs Infant Feeding action plan in detail for 2019 and beyond.

**Key elements that will be considered during the action plan refresh are likely to include:**

- Data quality and completeness
- Impending reviews of Maternity Services and Antenatal support
- The role of the newly established Infant Feeding Coordinator in North West Boroughs, covering St Helens, Knowsley and Sefton
- Strengthening work with schools, childrens centres and primary care
- Renewal of BFI accreditation at Whiston
- Exploring new ways to create the social movement for change, building on good work we have done already eg Your Milk Your Story, delivering high profile campaigns and messages.
- Building public support within the community to normalise breastfeeding and reduce inequalities
- Opportunities to provide breastfeeding friendly places in our communities and town centre

## **6. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

6.1 Note the improvements made over time in the rates of breastfeeding initiation and at 6-8 weeks.

6.2 Recognise that we still have much work to do to continue our improvement and to improve data quality.

6.3 Note progress made in delivering the actions in the Infant Feeding Strategy 2016-19 and in the supplementary Infant Feeding Scrutiny Action Plan

6.4 Note the steps being undertaken to refresh the Infant Feeding Action Plan into 2019 and beyond.

## **7. Appendix**

**Appendix 1. St Helens Infant Feeding Strategy 2016-2019** (for information)



Infant Feeding  
Strategy 2016 to 2019

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### **Attached to the report:**

- **St Helens Infant Feeding Action Plan 2016 – 2019**
- **Infant Feeding Strategy 2016 – 2019 Action Plan from Scrutiny Report July 2017**
- **St Helens Infant Feeding Strategy 2016 - 2019**