

## **Give Every Child the Best Start in Life – Starting Well**

### **Why is This a Priority in Solihull?**

- Low birth weight (defined as a birth weight under 2.5kg) is a good indicator of the current and future health of the baby. In 2012 in Solihull 7.9% of babies were born with a low birth weight, which is slightly higher than the England average (7.3%).
- Whilst smoking at the time of delivery is marginally better than the England average (12.4% versus 12.7% in 2012/13), there remains a need to reduce the numbers of mothers smoking through pregnancy yet further.
- Although breast feeding rates were declining in 2011/12 there has been a steady upward trend in 2012/13 with numbers now approaching national average levels. A continued focus on breast feeding is needed to maintain this upward trend.
- There is scope for the uptake of pre-school immunisations to be improved, particularly in the five-year booster (including whooping cough) and Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR).
- Early years development is ranked third out of all local authorities with 69% of children achieving good levels of development; however there is a 30% gap in achievement across Solihull.
- Children with Disabilities, Looked After Children, children subject to a child protection plan and children living in poverty have greater level of needs.
- Domestic abuse can affect a child's development, and is a significant factor for Looked After Children and Child Protection cases.
- Teenage pregnancy is a key measure of health inequalities and child poverty. Teenage parents are at an increased risk of postnatal depression and poor mental health in the three years following birth. Their children experience higher rates of infant mortality and low birth weight, Accident & Emergency admissions for accidents and have a much higher risk of being born into poverty.

### **What Do We Need to Do in Solihull?**

- Improve the quality of maternity services with a focus on the provision of holistic support for families during ante-natal and post-natal periods.
- Maintain targeted investment and support in early years development.
- Prioritise evidence based parenting support programmes.
- Provision of high quality children's centres that meet needs of local communities.

- Provision of good quality early years education and childcare.
- Improve mental health and emotional wellbeing particularly in vulnerable groups.
- Support parents and children / young people during periods of transition.
- Establish healthy behaviours around diet and physical activity at an early age.
- Improve access to and choice of long acting reversible contraception (LARC), leading to increased uptake providing more effective contraception and reducing unplanned pregnancies.