

# Our lasting IMPACT

for children and families



## Why it matters:



90%

of a child's brain is developed by the time they start school - shaped by their early experiences



1 in 5

children in the UK lives in poverty



2x

as many children from the poorest backgrounds are obese



2x

as many children from the poorest backgrounds have tooth decay

# Closing the inequality gap starts in childhood

The foundations of virtually every aspect of human development - physical, intellectual and emotional - are laid in early childhood. Childhood experiences shape our whole life, affecting how healthy and happy we are, our life chances, and even how long we live.

And yet millions of children in the UK are not getting the start they deserve. Children growing up in poorer areas are more likely to experience inadequate nutrition, obesity, tooth decay, low self-esteem, poor educational achievement and reduced employment prospects.

The good news is that this inequality, which blights the lives of so many children, is not inevitable - and its negative impact is entirely preventable.

HENRY helps families overcome the damaging and lasting effects of disadvantage. By embedding our approach within local communities, we are helping close the gap in health and social inequality and transforming children's lives now and in the future.

HENRY has given me confidence and ambition to grow as a parent. My children now have a much brighter future

# Every child deserves the best start

## Our support transforms children's futures.

Parents want the best for their children. But it isn't always easy to know what 'best' looks like in the early years, or to change entrenched family habits to create a healthier and happier home environment.

Our job is to provide the kind of support that helps parents make 'best' a reality. Every day, we are helping some of the UK's most vulnerable and deprived families provide a great start for their children – from breakfast time to bedtime – so they flourish throughout childhood and beyond.

HENRY's support focuses on the whole child, recognising that physical and emotional wellbeing go hand in hand. Children who are emotionally secure and grow up with good self-esteem are more likely to have a healthy attitude to food. Enjoyable and

interactive mealtimes promote children's language and social development. Children who grow up in an active family are likely to sleep better and in turn are more able to concentrate, learn and make the most of life. And those who eat healthily are more likely to have the energy to play, learn and thrive.

Our work is embedded in the homes and communities we serve, whether that's a local neighbourhood or a whole city. Over the past ten years we have supported thousands of parents to change family life for the better in all sorts of ways, including improved nutrition, emotional wellbeing, parenting skills, breastfeeding and becoming more active.

By making family life healthier, happier and less stressful, every child we reach is more likely to enjoy a brighter future.





93%

of families lead a healthier lifestyle



40%

of families eat fewer meals in front of the TV



75%

of parents have improved emotional wellbeing



82%

of parents are better at holding boundaries

# “I’m now the mum my children deserve”

Living with postnatal depression left Bushra Afzal, a mum from Kennington in London, unable to cope. Feeling isolated, she joined a HENRY programme at a local children’s centre.

“After the birth of both my children, I was diagnosed with postnatal depression. Surrounded by children, milk and nappies, I was entirely fed up of everything. At home I felt claustrophobic. When I went out I felt panicky. I couldn’t find a way forward.

“I was in a constant state of worry about not being able to meet my children’s needs. Other than my husband, I had no family nearby to share my feelings with. I felt isolated and alone.



“HENRY gave me the energy and confidence to change our home life. For the first time, I realised there were things I could do to make our lives happier, healthier and easier. Now the children have set mealtimes and bed times. We all eat more fruit and vegetables than before, and the TV is always turned off during dinner. I’ve limited the children’s screen time and we spend much more time outdoors.

“The programme went far beyond healthy eating. Being active, managing children’s behaviour and understanding their feelings were all covered. The positive atmosphere in the room was contagious. It motivated me to the point where I couldn’t wait to get home and put into practice what I’d learnt.

“Before the programme I’d get frustrated with the children. Shouting at them only made me feel guilty afterwards, and did little to change their behaviour. HENRY helped me to understand how to manage my own feelings and how to empathise more with theirs.

“Being part of the HENRY programme has helped me to understand how to manage different situations. I’m no longer anxious about whether I’m doing enough for my children – HENRY has shown me that I am. I’m now the mum my children deserve and that feels nice.”



## “Discussing my concerns with a HENRY speech and language therapist was a turning point”

Jo Manning and her partner, from Walthamstow, were feeling increasingly worried about their son's speech. A drop-in speech and language consultation put them on the path to the support they needed.

“Looking back, I now realise how lost we were. My son's speech had regressed to only a couple of words. It was like he was happy in his own little world and didn't seem to need anyone else, including us as parents. I discussed my concerns at a HENRY speech and language drop-in session at my local children's centre. It was a turning point. We got the support we needed and a sense that we weren't alone.

“As my son disappeared into his own world, we had been trying harder and harder, bombarding him with complex activities with ever-increasing enthusiasm. The therapist suggested simple ways to engage him that we hadn't thought of. We concentrated on keeping things calm, reducing background noise, sticking to a few simple words and responding to eye contact as well as words.

“Within a few days he was using the word ‘come’ and would look us in the eye when he wanted something. Within a couple of weeks he had several new words. We now try to make time each day to play games with him and make sure

he's included in everything we do – from making breakfast, to cleaning and gardening. At the moment his favourite thing is cooking – he loves mixing ingredients.


“My son is being referred to see if he is on the autistic spectrum, but whatever the outcome, because of the support we've had, we know we're doing our best to help him. His confidence has grown and I love the special proud smile he has when he's achieved something. One of the best things about all the progress is the impact on our relationship – put simply, I feel I am able to be his mum again.”

# Ten years of impact

**700**  
communities supported




**77%**  
of mums still breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks



**4 in 5**  
parents feel more effective at holding boundaries



**3 million**  
fewer hours of screen time for children



**2 in 3**  
parents feel more confident in their role



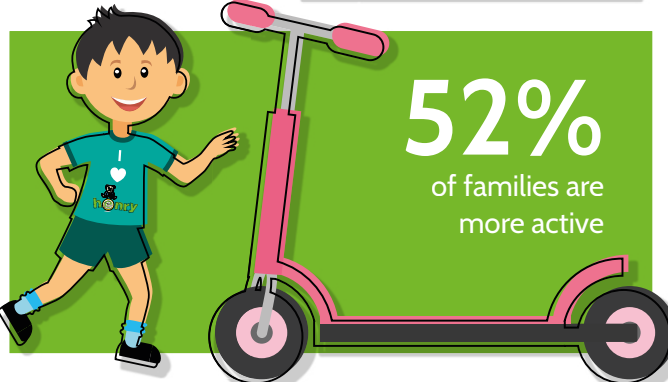
**34,000**  
children given a better start



**23,000**  
families supported



**52%**  
of families are more active



**13 million**  
extra portions of fruit and veg eaten by children



# and counting...



## 5 million

extra hours of physical activity for children

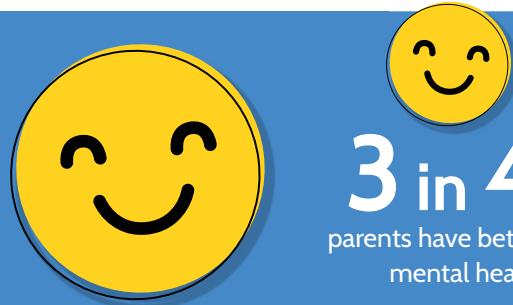


## Twice

as many children eat 5-a-day

## 15,000

practitioners trained



## 3 in 4

parents have better mental health

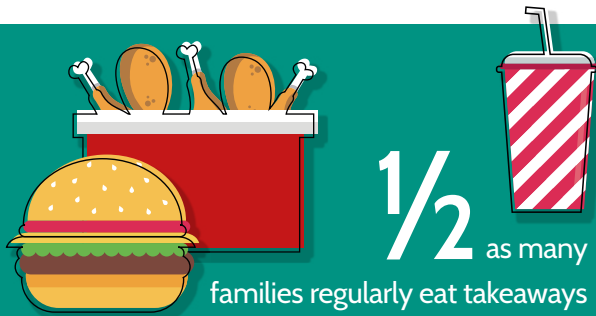
## 40%

of families eat fewer meals in front of the TV



## 15 million

fewer sugary snacks and drinks eaten by children - enough sugar cubes to fill 1½ Wembley Stadiums



## 1/2

as many families regularly eat takeaways

## 5,000

mums supported with infant feeding (including breastfeeding)



WEMBLEY STADIUM





# “Volunteering for HENRY has become my passion”

Mona Shah, a mum from Bradford, was determined to break the family legacy of poor eating habits. Inspired by the programme and the impact it had on her own family, Mona decided to volunteer for HENRY and support families living in her community to achieve a healthier lifestyle.

“HENRY’s focus on giving children the best start immediately appealed to me. I’m overweight and I didn’t want that for my son. My upbringing was entirely focused on food. Food was entertainment, a way to show love and given as a reward – which



explains my own relationship with food and poor eating habits. I had to break this cycle for my son. When he was about to start eating solid food, the HENRY programme felt like a good place to start.

“That was two years ago, and the impact the programme’s had on me and my family is huge. It helped me to be a better parent and I wanted to help other parents give their children the best start. In Bradford, you see a lot of parents and children struggling. I was determined to support other families, so I decided to become a HENRY volunteer.

“The volunteer training really boosted my confidence and I felt ready to support other parents in my area. I try to reach as many people as possible. I go to parks, schools and children’s centres. I asked the local primary school if I could have a corner of the playground, where I could help parents with ideas for healthy lunches. The response was amazing – they loved it. When I talked to them about the HENRY programme they all wanted to go on it. Soon we started to build up a waiting list.

“Becoming a volunteer also gave me the confidence to get together with local parents to start a weekly playgroup, so I am now able to support even more families.

“Helping other parents within my own community is a positive way I can make a difference to children’s future health. Volunteering for HENRY has become a passion for me. I just love the programme. It has changed my life and helped me make a better future for my son. We are so much more active and happier and I want to help other families to achieve this.”



Children active for  
**5 million**  
extra hours



**2x**  
as many children  
eat 5-a-day



**90%**  
of families would  
recommend HENRY



**100s**  
of volunteers trained  
to support families



# Building healthier, happier communities

Providing a healthy start is easier when families can access support where, when and how they need it, whether they're struggling to feed a new baby, concerned about their child's development or want to change their family lifestyle. Farida Malik, a Health and Activities Worker in Birmingham, describes how HENRY is benefiting local communities.

“As someone working with local families in a deprived area of Birmingham, I know only too well the sorts of issues they are dealing with. HENRY is unique. We never tell families what to do, instead we support parents to recognise their strengths and work towards a healthier and happier family lifestyle, in a way that works for them. We always start with empathy for the issues families are facing, before helping them to identify their own solutions.

“We run HENRY programmes at the St Paul's Trust Children's Centre, at the heart of this multicultural community, but I'm often at local events or outside nurseries at drop-off, letting parents know what we offer and how we could help them give their children the best possible start in life.

“I work with community and health workers in the area who also recommend HENRY to parents. Local parents know where to come and that I'll always support them, even when the programme has finished. Many of them become volunteers who help to support other parents in their community.

“It's the best feeling to see families gradually gain confidence, share ideas, and make small and then bigger changes with very significant results. Parents often proudly tell me that they are now sitting and eating together, being more active together as a family, having regular bedtimes and taking their children to the dentist. Changes that will last a lifetime.”



Programmes delivered  
**700**  
in  
communities and early  
years settings



**23,000**  
families supported



**34,000**  
children off to a  
better start



**2 in 3**  
parents feel more  
confident in their role



# Creating supportive environments for children

We're a national charity with a strong presence in many local areas, and much of our work is delivered by local people in local settings. By embedding HENRY in communities, we are able to reach vulnerable families, so that children are ready to start (and thrive) at school.

Simply providing information is not enough to help families change ingrained habits. Families need skilled support from a trusted practitioner. We've trained over 15,000 health and early years practitioners, each one equipped to support hundreds of local families make and sustain healthy changes. Independent evaluation shows that community practitioners we've trained are more skilled and confident to raise sensitive issues with families (such as children's weight), and use evidence-based behaviour change techniques to support families well into the future.

It's so much easier for families to give their children a good start in life when they grow up in an environment that supports a healthy lifestyle.

That's why we're working to create those environments, especially in deprived areas where the healthy choice is rarely the easy choice. This

includes supporting early years settings, childminders and nurseries to introduce age-appropriate portion sizes, healthier menus and active play strategies. And running dental outreach sessions for children in communities where the vast majority of children have never previously seen a dentist.

It also means advocating for wider policy measures such as banning the sale of energy drinks to children and restricting the promotion and advertising of junk food. Alongside our support for families, these changes will help ensure that future generations of children, wherever they live, will grow up in environments that support a healthy start.



Having HENRY in our community is great. The infant feeding team were empathic, non-judgmental and helped us to get through feeding issues which enabled me to continue to breastfeed. I honestly don't think I'd still be breastfeeding without their support

Kerry Kemp, a first-time mum from Leytonstone



**35%**  
more mums still  
breastfeeding at  
six weeks



**80%**  
of children at our  
outreach dental  
sessions have never  
seen a dentist



**15,000**  
health and early years  
professionals trained to  
support a healthy start



**Shaping  
policy**  
to create healthier  
environments  
for children

# Population-level change: reducing child obesity

Childhood obesity rates have remained unacceptably high over the last decade.

Obesity affects children's health and wellbeing throughout their lives, often leading to poor self-esteem, bullying and anxiety. In the longer term, the consequences are life-threatening as well as life-limiting, with increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

National statistics show that around 10% of children are already obese when they start school aged five. And sadly only 1 in 20 of these children will have returned to a healthy weight by the time they begin secondary school six years later.

Obesity disproportionately affects children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with rates in the most deprived communities more than double those in the most affluent areas.

But in Leeds, it's a different story. Obesity rates are falling, bucking the national trend. Most encouragingly, the biggest drop is among children from the most deprived areas – where HENRY's work is focused.

In 2008, Leeds City Council adopted a citywide child obesity strategy with HENRY at its core. All health and early years practitioners supporting young families have been trained by HENRY to help parents adopt a healthier family lifestyle. For the last 10 years, hundreds of HENRY family programmes have been run in community settings in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

The results provide evidence that it is possible to reduce rates of child obesity.

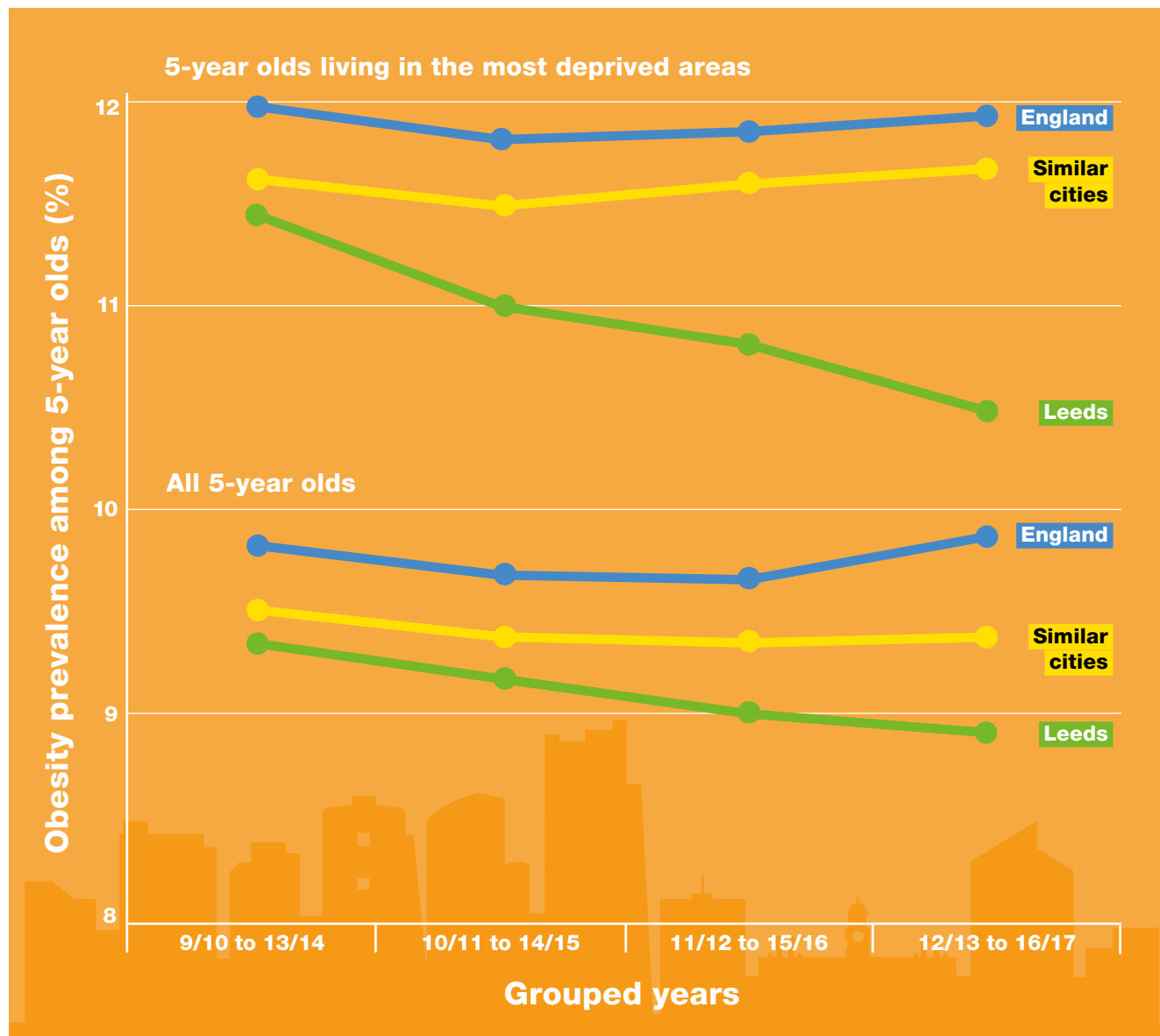


In Leeds, rates of obesity among 5-year olds dropped from 9.4% to 8.8%

The drop was greatest among the most deprived children: 11.5% to 10.5%

In 2017, 625 fewer children starting school were obese – sparing them the damaging and often lifelong physical and emotional consequences of obesity

## Obesity prevalence among 5-year olds in Leeds compared to similar cities and England as a whole



Rudolf et al (2019) Observational analysis of disparities in obesity in children in the UK: Has Leeds bucked the trend? *Pediatric Obesity*





## “I started a programme and ended up with a new life”

Susannah Bailey, a mum from Vauxhall in London, decided to sign up to a HENRY programme because her daughters would only eat a very limited range of food. She had no idea the long-lasting positive impact the programme would have.

“Last year I was in a really bad place. I was in an abusive relationship but it wasn't until I went on the HENRY programme I realised how unhealthy the relationship was. It helped me to understand that me and my children deserved better and gave me the confidence to leave.

“I was living with my two children aged seven and two, and their dad. I had lost all my friends and was isolated from my family. Life felt stressful, the children were very quiet and clearly unhappy.

“When I saw that a HENRY programme was running at the local children's centre, I decided to do it, mainly because the girls were fussy eaters and I was



My youngest daughter was always very clingy. Not anymore. She is now off playing and much more independent. My eldest has come out of her shell and has turned into a real chatterbox who loves being outdoors

also worried about how unhealthy I was. I thought it would be all about healthy eating, but it was actually so much more. I started a programme and ended up with a completely new life.

“Before, I’d buy freezer food, I would give my daughters huge portions. At night I’d binge on food – it provided comfort, but my weight gain only served to make me feel worse. I didn’t want my daughters to go the same way as me.

“From HENRY, I gained an understanding of portion sizes, and also the confidence and motivation I needed to start cooking from scratch. I involved the girls in cooking and chopping vegetables. We all sit down for dinner together. Making meals together is a real family thing.

“I also learned about boundaries, being in charge in a good way as a parent and avoiding using food to comfort or reward my children.

“My youngest daughter was always very clingy, now she is much more independent. My eldest has come out of her shell and has turned into a real chatterbox who loves being outdoors.

“We are more active and go to the park, even if it is raining. It’s surprising how a programme can change your life. The girls are happier now and I have dropped three dress sizes!

“We are now a secure family unit. I’m so thankful I joined a HENRY programme. I always wanted to do my best for the girls and bring them up in a healthy environment, but just couldn’t take the first step. Little did I know then, signing up for the programme would have as big an impact as it did.

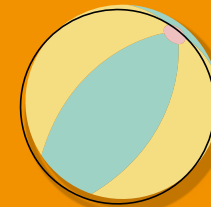
“Now I’m a really good mum. I can provide for my children and keep them safe. HENRY has given me confidence and ambition to grow as a parent. My children now have a much brighter future.”



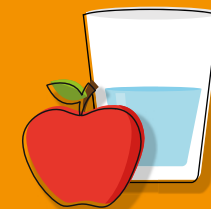
**81%**  
of families have  
healthier mealtimes



**1 in 3**  
parents are less  
stressed



**52%**  
of families are active  
for longer each day



**80%**  
of children eat  
more healthily



# Lasting impact

In local communities across the country, HENRY is supporting disadvantaged parents to provide a healthy, happy start for their children and lay the foundations for a brighter future.

From building strong family relationships and increasing school readiness, to preventing tooth decay and reducing child obesity, HENRY's support helps families to make positive changes that work for them. Changes that make life more enjoyable and less stressful, as well as healthier – enabling families to sustain the progress they've made and keep doing what's best for their children.

The stories and evidence outlined in this report prove that it is working – we are transforming children's lifelong health and wellbeing, and their prospects for education and future employment.

We can only help these children flourish – throughout childhood and beyond – thanks to the generosity of our funders and their belief both in us and in the incredible potential of the families and children we support.

**Be part of this change.  
Help us to give every child  
a great start in life.**

[www.henry.org.uk/supportus](http://www.henry.org.uk/supportus)



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