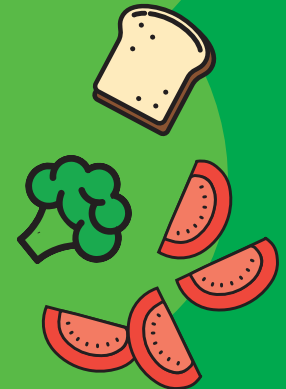
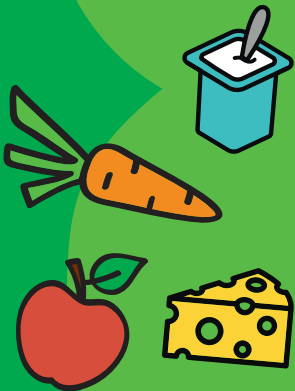


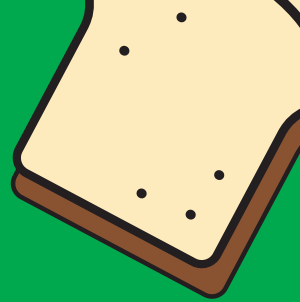
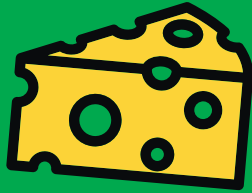


# Healthy Habits Activity Cards

For Early Years Settings and Groups

READY, STEADY, GROW!





# Hello



## Welcome to your Healthy Habits Activity Cards!

It's no secret that good nutrition and physical activity during pregnancy and the early years are important for children's development and long-term health. But, with so much information, advice and resources out there, it can be hard to know what's 'right', and what you should focus on in your work with families with babies and young children.

These cards break this important subject area down into very simple, low-cost/no-cost activities for you to try in your setting to **encourage families to start healthy habits early**. The activities will work just as well with groups of children, or with children along with their parents / carers.

At the end, you'll find a link to the Better Start Bradford website where you can find further reputable resources - both locally and nationally - including information about local food banks and schemes, plus local training opportunities for staff.

### Enjoy the process and keep things simple

While most of the activities presented here have an 'end result' (whether it be creating a rainbow of fruit and vegetables or holding yoga poses) **the process and the journey is the most important thing**: experiencing new things, touching, tasting, feeling sensations, exploring, learning new words, and having fun.

Use the cards for ideas and inspiration and adapt as you think best – you know what works in your own settings and groups.

### Important note about food safety

Some of the activities involve preparing real food for children to eat. If you decide to undertake these activities, it's vital that:

- You follow guidance on food hygiene and preparing food for young children.
- Everyone – adults and children – wash their hands before touching any food to prepare it.
- You do not leave children unattended at any time while preparing or eating food.
- You check if anyone in your group or setting has any allergies, specific conditions or dietary requirements and get further advice and support as required from your Health Visitor, Dietitian or GP.

If in doubt, avoid these particular activities.



For further detailed information on food safety for early years settings, please scan this QR code



# Nourish

**ACTIVITY ONE:**  
Fruit and Vegetable Rainbow

**ACTIVITY TWO:**  
Simple Yoga Poses

# Feed

**ACTIVITY ONE:**  
Food Painting

**ACTIVITY TWO:**  
Foody Faces

# Grow

**ACTIVITY ONE:**  
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The Bean Game

# Move

**ACTIVITY ONE:**  
The Baby Week Wiggle

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Puddle Jumping



# Nourish

Good nutrition is key during the first 1,001 days (pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life) and eating a healthy, varied diet – including plenty of fruit and vegetables – is the best way to achieve this.

The following activities are simple, fun ways to nourish body and mind, and can easily be replicated by families at home.

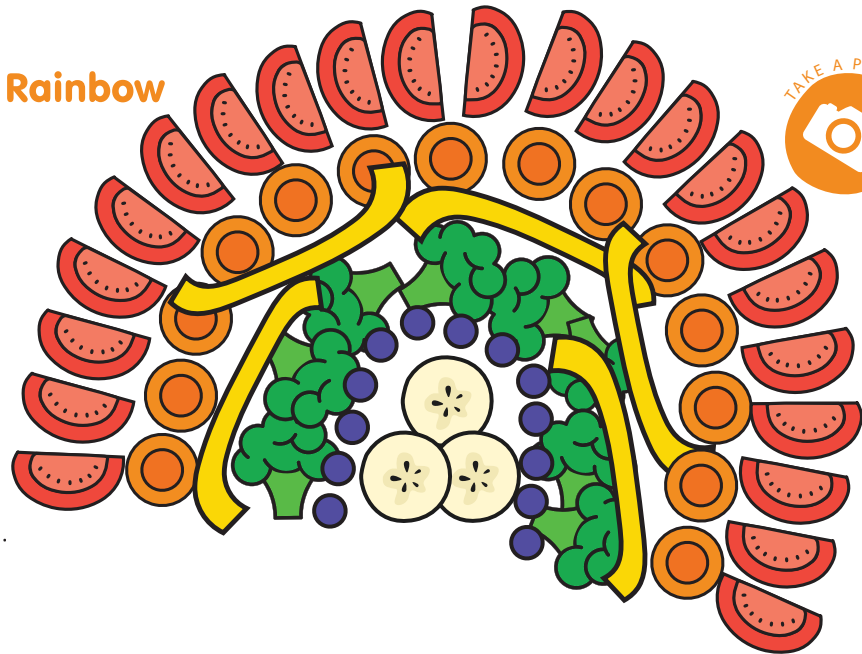


## Activity One: Fruit and Vegetable Rainbow

**Suitable for: Babies and children who can safely enjoy finger foods**

Eating a variety of foods helps us get the essential nutrients, and using colour is a great way to achieve variety in fruit and vegetables.

Fruit and vegetables are bright and colourful, and creating a rainbow of different fruit and vegetables is a fun and visual way to demonstrate variety, while being an attractive meal or snack that will entice people to tuck in.



### Things you will need:

A variety of fruit and vegetables. Here are some suggestions for each colour of the rainbow:

**Red** – Tomatoes, red apples, red peppers, watermelons, pomegranates.

**Orange** - Carrots, orange peppers, mangoes, oranges, mandarins.

**Yellow** - Honeydew melons, yellow peppers, pineapples, peaches.

**Green** - Apples, avocados, celery sticks, courgettes, cucumbers, lettuces, sugar snap peas, rocket or baby spinach.

**Blue/Purple** - Blackberries, blackcurrants, red cabbage.

**White/Beige** - Bananas, lychees, mushrooms, cabbage, cauliflower.

*Bear in mind that you will need progressively fewer of each colour as you go down the list.*

- A knife.
- Child-safe knives and cutting boards (optional, if you want to get the children involved in cutting the fruit and vegetables).
- A large tray to create your rainbow on.
- Plates.
- Some curious and hungry children.

*If you decide to use grapes, these **MUST** be cut in quarters lengthways as they can be a choking hazard.*

### How to do it:

- Wash your hands and ask the children to wash their hands.
- Gather your fruit and vegetables and ensure they are washed.

*Do they feel bumpy or smooth? Are they big or small? Can you name any? Can you group them into colours?*

- Cut the fruit and vegetables into bitesize pieces, starting with the red ones, and place them in an arc on your tray. Continue to arrange the fruit and vegetables in arcs beneath the first one, following the rest of the colours: orange, yellow, green, blue/purple, ending with white/beige.

### Enjoy the process and keep things simple

If you don't want to make a rainbow, you can just choose a few different fruits and vegetables and talk about colours, shapes, textures and flavours, and encourage children to choose, eat, touch, smell, taste and talk about them.

If you are not able to prepare food, how about using pictures of different fruits and vegetables to create a rainbow collage?

Consider using books about rainbows to complement this activity... there are so many to choose from.



### Can you sing a rainbow while you're chopping?

- Give each child a plate and encourage them to select fruit and vegetables from each colour of the rainbow.  
*Name the fruit and vegetables, their colours, and even their textures as this is great for young children's speech and language development. Encourage parents / carers to do the same.*
- Enjoy your delicious rainbow feast as a healthy snack.



## Activity Two: Simple Yoga Poses

**Suitable for: Babies and children who can confidently stand**

Although there is no fixed definition of 'wellbeing in the early years' it is understood that to be happy and healthy, babies and children should be supported to develop their physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills.

By encouraging them to adopt healthy habits early, we can teach babies and children how to nourish their whole selves, build resilience, and practice self-care and mindfulness, now and for the rest of their lives.

The following simple movements can help with all of this, and can be done at the start or end of a session. Choose one, or try them all over time.

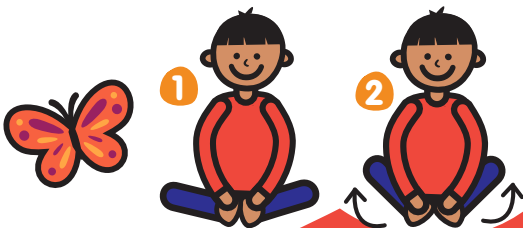
### Before you get started:

- Ask everyone to take off their shoes and socks so they can receive sensory information through their feet to help them feel grounded.
- Ensure everyone is comfortable, with plenty of space.

### Butterfly Pose (for children and adults):

- Sit on the floor or on a cushion.
- Bring the soles of your feet together and try to sit up as straight as you can.
- Hold onto your feet with both hands and gently move your knees up and down as if your legs are butterfly wings. *What colour might your butterfly wings be?*

**Benefits:** Improves sitting balance and posture, develops and aids pre-writing skills.



Buzz  
Buzz



### Buzzy Bee Pose for children:

- Encourage children to breathe in and then make a buzzing sound like a bee – BZZZ!
- Once they have the idea of buzzing, see if they can put their hands over their ears and try buzzing again. Does the buzzing sound louder or softer? Does it feel nice?
- Remind children not to do more than 3 breaths in a row or else they may feel dizzy.

### Buzzy Bee Pose for adults:

- Find a comfortable place to sit, relax your shoulders and close your eyes.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, keeping your lips sealed.
- Breathe out making an 'M' humming sound until you need to breathe in again.
- Repeat for as long as feels comfortable, and try putting your hands over your ears to intensify the sound.
- Finally, sit quietly for a few breaths and see whether you notice a change in your mood – hopefully you should be feeling more relaxed!

**Benefits:** Increases focus and concentration, lowers the heart rate, relieves anxiety and promotes calm.

### Tree Pose (for children and adults)

- Stand with your feet hip width apart, stretching your arms out either side like branches on a tree.
- Now imagine the wind is starting to blow... take a few deep breaths and begin rocking from side to side.
- As you breathe out, try twisting your body and moving from one foot to the other. Can you make your branches blow in the wind?
- Try this with one foot off the ground. Can you keep your tree standing?

*Benefits: Develops balance, strengthens core muscles, improves concentration.*



### Enjoy the process and keep things simple

Just introducing some mindful movement or breathing into the day will contribute to children's physical and emotional wellbeing – creating perfect yoga poses is not the most important thing here.



### Growing Flower Pose (for children and adults)

- Begin the pose by curling up in a ball – like a tiny seed. Stay in this position for a few breaths. How does your body feel?
- Drum your fingers on the ground in front of you to replicate the sound of raindrops.
- Now slowly uncurl like a growing flower. Move onto your knees before coming up to standing.
- Stretch your arms out to your sides and above your head – just like flower petals. See if you can bring your hands together above your head so your palms touch.
- Pause for a moment in this final position to take some breaths. How does your body feel in flower pose? What colour are your petals?
- Slowly curl back to the floor and become a seed again.

*Benefits: Encourages creative thought, aids mindfulness, improves muscle strength and stability, increases awareness of the whole body.*





# Feed

During the early years, babies embark on a journey of feeding discovery, from breast or formula milk to starting solids and enjoying family mealtimes. Feeding babies and children is not just about helping them to grow and develop physically, it also creates an opportunity for:

- Bonding and nurturing
- Increased social interaction
- Protection against illness
- Shared mealtimes
- Modelling healthy food choices

And so much more...

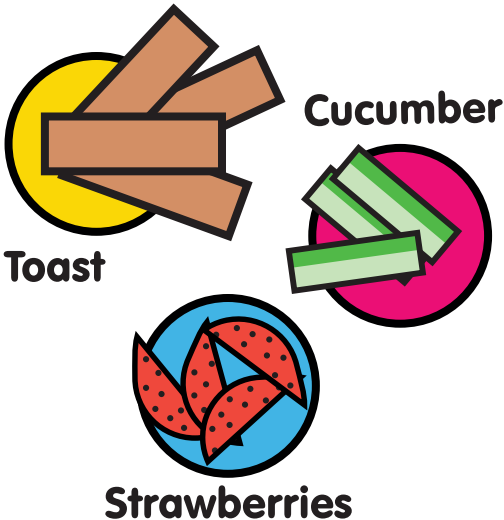
# Starting Solids

When babies reach around 6 months of age they may be ready to try solid food. This is a huge developmental milestone and an opportunity to have fun exploring new flavours and textures.

At this stage, babies will still be receiving most of their nutrition from milk, meaning that trying new foods and becoming familiar with eating should be the focus of any new activities.

## FUN FACT

It may take lots and lots of tries for a baby to get used to new foods, flavours and textures. They might make funny faces, but that doesn't mean they don't like it!



## 3 signs a baby is ready to introduce solid food:

- They stay in a sitting position and hold their head up unsupported.
- They pick food up and put it in their mouth by themselves.
- They move food to the back of their mouth and swallow it.

## From the following suggestions, fruit and vegetables are great ones to start with:

- Soft or cooked vegetables, such as green beans, red pepper, broccoli, butternut squash.
- Starchy foods such as rice, potato, sweet potato, porridge.
- Pulses (such as red lentils), eggs, fish and meat (be allergy aware).
- Dairy or dairy alternatives, such as cottage cheese, tofu, plain full fat yoghurt, plain soya yoghurt (be allergy aware).

## Some suggested finger foods:

- Rice cakes
- Toast
- Cucumber
- Chapatti
- Strawberries
- Tinned peaches
- Plantain sticks
- Mashed apple
- Cooked pasta

For more advice on weaning - from the NHS - scan the QR code



# Activity One:

## Food Painting

**Suitable for: Babies and children who have started solids**

Exploring food with all five senses in a happy, calm and fun environment encourages babies' and children's curiosity and confidence.

Learning through play helps build familiarity and can lead to an increased acceptance of new foods. Sometimes a baby/child may have tried a food at home and disliked it, but can find that the food becomes more appealing in a new setting, surrounded by friends and trusted adults.

### Things you will need:

- A large roll of paper (you can pick up cheap rolls of paper for children's art at budget shops, or lining paper in DIY stores), large sheets of paper or a large builders tray.
- Small pots (optional).
- A range of clean utensils: new paint brush, whisk, potato masher, spoon, pastry brush - the more variety the better.
- Colourful foods to use as 'paint', such as yoghurt, cooked and mashed sweet potato, berries.

### How to do it:

**Prepare to get very messy - and enjoy it!**

- Cut a length from your roll of paper and place it (or a large sheet of paper or a builders tray) on the floor.
- Wash your hands before preparing any food. On the paper/tray place a variety of different foods in small pots with the utensils.
- Introduce babies or children to the activity, demonstrating how the utensils can be used to mark-make on the paper/tray using the different foods as 'paint'.
- Let your imagination run wild – anything goes in terms of marks, shapes and patterns!

**Top tip: A broccoli stalk makes a fantastic paintbrush.**





## Activity Two: Foody Faces

**Suitable for:** Children who are confident in eating a variety of tastes and textures

Ideally, young children need three small meals each day with two healthy snacks in between.

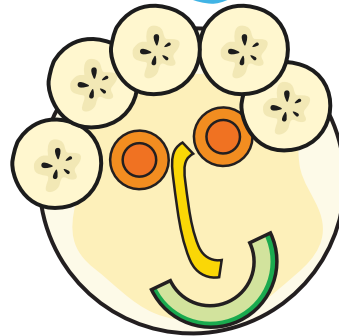
Faces made from rice cakes or other starchy carbohydrates, such as plain, unsalted crackers or tortilla wraps, make an excellent healthy snack and are fun to make too.

### Things you will need:

- Rice cakes / other starchy carbohydrates such as plain, unsalted crackers or tortilla wraps.
- Cream cheese.
- A selection of chopped fruit and /or vegetables, for example:
  - Slices of banana
  - Blueberries
  - Strawberries cut in quarters
  - Slices and /or shavings of carrot
  - Slices of cucumber and half slices of cucumber
  - Cherry tomatoes cut in quarters
  - Lettuce or cress
- Plates or platters to serve them on.

### Enjoy the process and keep things simple

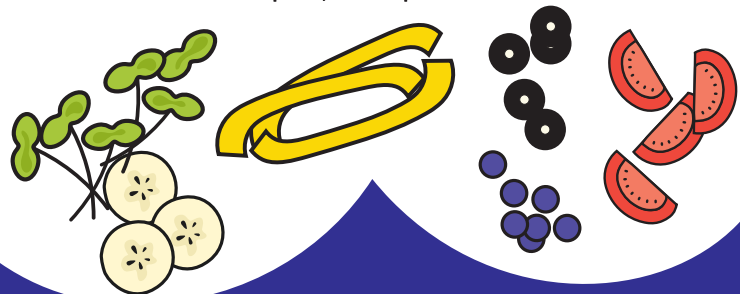
Encourage children to make their mark - creating perfect faces doesn't matter for this activity. By getting children involved in creating their own healthy snacks we provide the opportunity to try new tastes and textures, as well as showcasing their fantastic imaginations.



### How to do it:

- Wash your hands and ask the children to wash their hands.
- Prepare your fruit and / or vegetables and place each one in a different bowl.
- Spread some cream cheese on the top of the rice cakes / crackers.
- Encourage the children to make faces on the rice cakes / crackers using the fruit and /or vegetables:
  - What might they use for eyes?
  - What would make a great nose?
  - What looks like a big smile?
  - Is there anything that can make a big mop of hair?
- Encourage them to let their imaginations run wild.
- Enjoy eating the lovely rice cake / cracker snacks.

**Top tip:** Think of snacks as 'mini meals' – eat them sitting down and from a plate, where possible.



# Grow

**Growing and gardening can be enjoyed by anyone and has many health benefits for people of all ages:**

- **It's good for mental wellbeing**
- **It's a form of exercise**
- **It gets people closer to nature**
- **It encourages healthy eating**
- **It's great for sensory, speech and language development in young children, not to mention social skills**
- **It's fun!**



# Activity One: Grow A Carrot Top

**Suitable for:** All ages with a grown-up to help

If you are using carrots for any of the other activities, this is a great way to use the discarded tops.

It's a lovely introduction to growing for children as they learn how to look after the plant and help it grow.

## Things you will need:

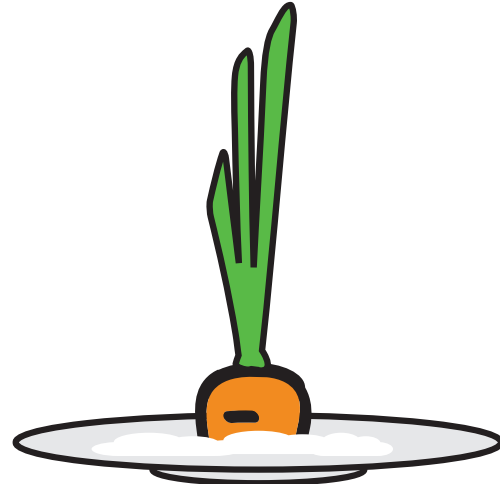
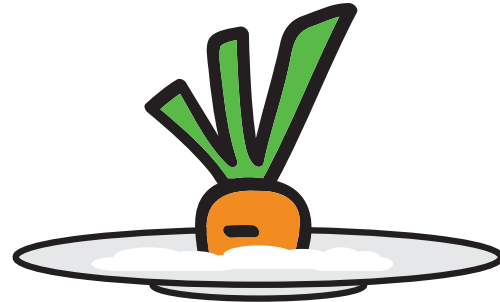
- Carrot tops (about 2-3 cm with some growth remaining on top)
- A shallow dish or saucer
- Cotton wool
- A windowsill
- Water
- A plant pot and soil
- Patience and curiosity...

## How to do it:

- Add a layer of cotton balls to your small dish or saucer.
- Add a light dribble of water over the cotton balls so they are wet but not completely flooded.
- Press your carrot top into the wet cotton balls and place the dish or saucer on a windowsill.
- Be sure to check that the cotton balls remain wet while the carrot top is growing. You do not want it to dry out.
- It will take a few days for the carrot top begin to grow, however, once it starts it will grow quite quickly.

## Has anything changed overnight?

- Once the carrot top has grown - and roots have started appearing at the bottom - you can plant it in a small plant pot in some soil and continue to water it and watch it grow.



## Activity Two: The Bean Game

**Suitable for:** Babies and children who can confidently stand

This game can be played anytime, indoors or outdoors. If parents /carers are present, make sure they join in too!

### Things you will need:

Just your own voice and some clear space, indoors or outdoors.

### How to do it:

Get the group to space out a little so they have room to move. Shout out the name of one of the following beans and make the appropriate shape, for the group to follow:

**String bean** – put your arms up straight and make yourself tall and thin

**Broad bean** – stretch your arms and legs out wide in a star shape to make yourself wide

**Runner bean** – run on the spot

**Baked bean** – curl up in a ball

**French bean** – say ‘ooh la laaaa!’

**Jelly bean** – wobble like a jelly

### Enjoy the process and keep things simple

Start with only two or three beans, adding them in as the group begins to remember each instruction.

Why not also let the children have a go at shouting out the bean names for the adults to join in?  
OOH LA LA!



# Move

The power of physical activity – for all of us – cannot be underestimated.

For children in particular, exercise not only improves their overall health and fitness, but it can improve their mental health and brain development as well. It also:

- Builds confidence and improves social skills
- Provides an opportunity to learn new skills
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Helps develop coordination
- Enhances concentration and learning
- Makes them feel good and elevates their mood
- Helps to relieve stress and maintain mental and emotional wellbeing
- Improves sleep and energy levels

We've chosen two really simple, fun activities that encourage movement.





## Activity One: The Baby Week Wiggle

### Suitable for: All

The benefits of dancing and moving to music are so vast, we don't have room to express it all here. Here are just a few:

- It's a fun way for all of us to exercise, and a safe way to exercise when pregnant.
- It allows people of any age to express themselves.
- It's energising, captivating and mentally relaxing – you've heard of people getting 'lost' in a dance?

The Baby Week Wiggle was created for Baby Week Bradford 2023 by Better Start Bradford and BoomChikkaBoom. It's a really easy set of movements, all based on wiggles, that everyone can do.

### Things you will need:

- The Baby Week Wiggle video. (scan the QR code below)
- A bit of space for people to move around in.

### How to do it:

Simply play the video and follow Faye's instructions – it won't take long to pick up the moves, or the words to the special song that goes with it.

Experiment with your own wiggly moves.  
Can everyone:

- Wiggle their fingers?
- Wave their arms in the air?
- Crawl in a wiggly line on the floor?

Search the hashtag [#BabyWeekWiggle](#) for inspiration, and feel free to share your own wiggles on social media!



## Activity Two: Puddle Jumping

### Suitable for: All

Outdoors is the perfect place for children to be physically active, use their imagination and explore, and of course it's great for adults' mental and physical health too.

Puddle jumping itself has many benefits, from teaching children about moving their bodies, developing balance, strength, and agility, increasing their vocabulary and helping them develop speech and language skills.

While many of the activities featured in these cards can be done indoors or outdoors, this one is strictly outdoors - during or after rainfall!

### Things you will need:

- Wet weather
- Wellies
- Raincoat
- Big smiles!



### How to do it:

On or after a wet day, go for a puddle jumping walk within or near your setting. Think about the route or places that will provide you with the most puddles to jump in or over.

At each puddle, ask the children / accompanying parents and carers to decide if they are going to:

- Jump over it
- Wade or splash through it
- Do something else

Ask which worked best and help create some expert puddle jumpers! There are lots of different types of jumping to try: big jumps, little jumps, a run and jump, jumping stars (jacks), jumping with two feet and one-legged hops.

Try these prompts to encourage some great puddle jumping:

- What kind of jump makes the biggest splash?
- Can you jump or kick all the water out of the puddle?
- What happens to a puddle when it's stirred? (Use a foot, hand or stick)

### Enjoy the process and keep things simple

The benefits of the great outdoors can be felt by all, big or small. Whether in wellies, a pram, a sling or on wheels, take the time to step outside.

## Further resources

As there is so much information and advice out there around health and nutrition, we asked local experts to choose their favourites.

These resources can be found by scanning the QR code below and are listed under the following headings:

- Nutrition
- Feeding
- Feeding the family for less
- Physical activity
- Getting outdoors
- Food growing

*These activity cards were developed for Baby Week Bradford 2023. A huge thank you to partner organisations across the Bradford district for sending us their favourite resources and top tips, and for ensuring these activities align with current guidance and best practice.*

[www.babyweekbradford.org](http://www.babyweekbradford.org)



**Better Start Bradford works with families in Bowling and Barkerend, Bradford Moor and Little Horton, from pregnancy to a child's fourth birthday, helping them lay good foundations that will last a lifetime.**

We want to find out what works and share it across Bradford and beyond, focusing on:

- Health and nutrition
- Social and emotional development
- Communication and language

To find out more visit:  
[www.betterstartbradford.org.uk](http://www.betterstartbradford.org.uk)

