

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item 4

## HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

3 NOVEMBER 2015

### Health Inequalities – Improving Levels of Breastfeeding

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the panel with an outline of the meeting and introduce a number of professionals who are in attendance to provide evidence.

#### BACKGROUND

2. In August 2014 the Centre for Health and Social Evaluation (CHASE) were commissioned by the Public Health Departments of both Middlesbrough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Council to carry out an exploration of infant feeding and breastfeeding support services. The report contains a wide range of evidence including information on the rates of breastfeeding initiation and rates at 6-8 weeks, the commissioning of breastfeeding services, the support services that are available, details of breastfeeding friendly places, breastfeeding for women from ethnic groups, and partnership working.
3. A copy of the report '*Exploring Infant Feeding and Breastfeeding Peer Support in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland*' is attached at **appendix 1**. Pat Watson, one of the co-authors of the report will be in attendance at the meeting to take the panel through the main findings and the conclusions and recommendations.
4. Representatives of the health sector will also be present at the meeting to discuss the advice and support that is available for women in Middlesbrough, including details of breastfeeding classes, peer support and breastfeeding groups. As part of the discussions Members may wish to ask whether the groups are well attended and seek examples of what more could be done to help, encourage and support women to breastfeed and what more could be done to stop the drop off rates between women leaving hospital who say they are breastfeeding but then aren't at 6-8 weeks.

## **In attendance**

5. The following representatives will be in attendance to provide further information on the topic  
Pat Watson, Research Fellow, School of Health and Social Care,  
Teesside University  
Kay Branch, Midwife Consultant (Public Health)  
Alyson Harker – Service Manager, Health Visiting and School Nursing  
Sarah Winspear – Specialist Health Visitor

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Financial Incentives for Breastfeeding**

6. In 2013 a pilot scheme was launched in deprived areas of South Yorkshire and Derbyshire and funded through collaboration between government and the medical research sector. To qualify for the full £200 reward women would have to breastfeed until their child was 6 month's old. For members of the panel interested in the acceptability of financial incentives for breastfeeding, a research article from Dr Emma Giles from Teesside University, who unfortunately is unable to attend the meeting, is attached at **appendix 2**.
7. The conclusion of which was that those commenting on the on-line UK news articles viewed financial incentives for breastfeeding as unacceptable and that alternative, structural interventions were likely to be more effective. There were concerns that the scheme could not be objectively monitored or adequately funded, that the scheme could be discriminatory and insulting to mothers who wanted to breastfeed but couldn't. It was noted that further information was needed on the effectiveness of health promoting financial incentives (HPFI) in general.

### **Best Practice**

8. At the panel's last meeting, Members were interested in looking at best practice, notably in Sunderland and Blackpool as they are the best performing regions amongst our statistical neighbours and areas where rates have increased.

### **Blackpool**

9. Blackpool have a Star Buddy Scheme where peer supports deliver a universal peer support programme for all breastfeeding mothers and work closely with midwives, health visitors and children's centres. The support provided is mother centred, so women are enabled to make their own informed infant feeding decisions without pressure or judgement. All breastfeeding is valued, even if it is for one feed or one day, so that women are supported to appreciate what they have achieved. Star buddies, having been a breastfeeding mum, provide role models for breastfeeding in an area where the culture has been entrenched bottle-feeding. The Star Buddies also help mothers who introduce infant formula or stop breastfeeding by providing information about different milks, sterilisation and preparation.
10. The service also provides, amongst other things, infant feeding workshops, dedicated neonatal Star Buddy, plus a team of volunteer Neonatal Peer Supporters, the community team offer 1:1 support at home for 8 weeks and

beyond for all mothers who initiate breastfeeding, 7 days per week, breastfeeding groups and volunteers who work in groups in the hospital, antenatal clinics and help with the breastfeeding helpline.

### **Sunderland**

11. In Sunderland breastfeeding support is available via their children's centres. Centres can help by providing a wide range of support and advice from new-born feeding, expressing, weaning and breastfeeding when pregnant.
12. There is a support group, run by local mothers who have breastfed which meets on a regular basis for mums to share experiences and information.
13. It is anticipated that further information will be presented to the panel at the meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING**

14. It was suggested that the panel concentrate on this topic for 1-2 meetings with a view to then moving on to cancer screening. The panel may wish to discuss if any further information is needed on this topic at the next meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

15. That the panel note the presentation and agree any further evidence they wish to receive.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers for this report.

#### **Contact Officer:**

Elise Pout, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Telephone: 01642 728302(direct line)  
e mail: [elise\\_pout@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:elise_pout@middlesbrough.gov.uk)