

Report of:	The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health; Director of Public Health (South Tees)
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	19 July 2023
Title:	Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	Children and young people
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
Urgent:	No
Why:	Not Applicable

Executive summary

The report presents an overview of the importance of Breast Feeding (along with current data) and the benefits to both mother and child and the wider community. The report sets out how the adoption of the Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland would increase local breastfeeding rates and reduce health inequalities.

The report gives an overview of what it means for South Tees to become a Breast Feeding Borough and the benefits for Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The report sets out the ten commitments that will be delivered through the existing and well-established Infant Feeding Steering Group across South Tees to increase breastfeeding rates, reduce bottle (formula) fed culture and normalise breastfeeding across the civic, community and service levels to support the best start in Life for Children across South Tees.

The recommended decision for the Executive to approve the adoption of the Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration as a Local Authority and agree to promote themselves as a Breast Feeding Borough by implementing the ten declarations, is the best option to increase breast feeding rates across South Tees, whilst also preventing the worsening of health inequalities.

The implications of the recommendations have been considered by the appropriate officers of the Council and is set out in the main body of the report.

Purpose

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the executive of the Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration which has been developed in alignment with the Council's 'Health and Wellbeing' recovery plan and the wider Public Health South Tees Strategy.

Background and relevant information

2. Across South Tees we recognise the difference that early experiences and responsive parenting can make to an infant and young person's health, well-being, and future life chances. Those who breastfeed are likely to have better maternal health and wellbeing and bond better with their baby. As breastfed children get older, they also have better attachment with their parents and build better relationships with others (UNICEF 2018).
3. Many think the benefits of breastfeeding are purely nutritional; not realising that breastfeeding also protects the health of mothers and their children. Reductions in the risk of infants developing illnesses and protection against childhood diseases later in life are well researched. Evidence also suggests that breastfed babies benefit from improved brain development (WHO, 2016).
4. Despite the evidence to support breastfeeding, rates at birth across South Tees remain stubbornly lower than the England average as well as there being a significant drop off between birth and 6-8 weeks as demonstrated in the table below.

	Middlesbrough	Redcar and Cleveland	England
Breastfeeding rate at birth (2018/19)	48.1%	49.6%	67.4%
Breastfeeding rate at birth (local data 2021/22)	57.4%	58.9%	Not available
Breastfeeding rate at 6-8 weeks (2021/22)	33.9%	31.5%	49.3%

5. As well as low breastfeeding rates, there is a strong bottle (formula) feeding culture in the UK which can be demonstrated when comparing the numbers of formula fed and breastfed children within South Tees (appendix A).
6. According to UNICEF as many as 8 out of 10 women in the UK stop breastfeeding before they would like to, and many women experience barriers to breastfeeding that are completely out of their control. Professor Amy Brown therefore states that in order 'to change breastfeeding, we must therefore change how breastfeeding, and mothering is perceived in our society by removing structural barriers rather than

- targeting the individual alone. We must create an environment where breastfeeding is normal, accepted and protected.’
7. Further to this UNICEF highlights the need to acknowledge that infant feeding is a public health imperative for which the government, policy makers, communities and families all share responsibility.
 8. Therefore, changes are needed at a population level to support the normalisation of breastfeeding to ensure that in the future more families feel comfortable and confident in their feeding choices.
 9. By creating a declaration on breastfeeding, the aim is to make breastfeeding the norm across South Tees.
 10. The declaration will include 10 commitments developed in consultation with local families that will promote action at a civic, community and service level to normalise the breastfeeding agenda and focus directly on change within the local authority to promote a breastfeeding friendly culture for all. This will include changes at a policy level as well as developing a public facing campaign to increase the visibility of breastfeeding across South Tees.
 11. The proposed ten commitments are as follows:
 - i. Representation at a senior leadership level in the form of breastfeeding champions.
 - ii. As a gold standard all relevant services associated with the care of families are accredited or working towards accreditation of the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (*N.B. R&C Health Visiting Service are going for BFI Gold in 2023, R&C Family Hubs are BFI accredited, requiring a reassessment before going for BFI Gold, Harrogate and District Foundation Trust (HDFT) Healthier Together Service are BFI Gold accredited*).
 - iii. Provide ongoing community support services that are accessible to all in South Tees.
 - iv. Ensure that families have access to the correct information and resources and can ask for support.
 - v. Act as a best practice employer for breastfeeding and support employers across South Tees to become breastfeeding friendly workplaces.
 - vi. Deliver breastfeeding awareness training to upskill a variety of work forces in South Tees.
 - vii. Ensure that events held on council property or by the council are breastfeeding friendly.

- viii. Ensure that families have access to breastfeeding friendly places by increasing the number of venues signed up to the breastfeeding welcome scheme.
 - ix. Embed breastfeeding in education from an early age.
 - x. Increase the visibility of breastfeeding in South Tees via a long-term infant feeding campaign using positive images of real local women breastfeeding in South Tees to support families to make informed infant feeding choices.
12. Action to implement the commitments will be led by the well-established Infant Feeding Steering Group (through the South Tees Best Start Partnership) and will link into the current infant feeding delivery plan.
13. Once the declaration is signed and actions are in place to implement the commitments, the Infant Feeding Steering Group will seek to install permanent signage across key sites in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland to recognise that South Tees is a Breastfeeding Friendly Borough.
14. Similar signage has been installed in Blackburn with Darwen (appendix B) along with a public facing campaign to promote breastfeeding, this campaign and signage led to an increase in the continuation of breastfeeding rates at 6-8 weeks.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

- 15. That the Executive approves the adoption of the Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration as a Local Authority.
- 16. The Executive agrees to promote themselves as a Breast Feeding Borough by implementing the ten declarations (appendix C).

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

- 17. It is recommended to support the Breast Feeding Borough Declaration for change to take place at a population level to support the normalisation of breastfeeding and thus, increase breastfeeding rates across South Tees and in turn reduce the bottle (formula) fed culture.
- 18. The programme supports the strategic direction of the Children's Trust in Middlesbrough and the Children and Young People's Partnership in Redcar and Cleveland.
- 19. The budget aligned to this programme is £10,000 from within existing budgets for Middlesbrough and R&C Public Health, which will support the development of the Breast Feeding Boroughs branding, professional images of local people, the continuation of the Breast Feeding Welcome Scheme licence (venues registering as breast feeding friendly), permanent signage and UNICEF Baby Friendly Accreditation.

20. The benefits to breast feeding for the health of the mother and child shows resounding evidence that breast feeding saves lives, improves health, and cuts costs in every country worldwide (UNICEF). Breast feeding protects children from a range of illnesses including infection, diabetes, asthma, heart disease, obesity as well as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (cot death). The benefits to maternal health include protecting mothers from breast and ovarian cancers and heart disease.
21. Breast feeding contributes to significant savings to the NHS. A NICE costing report estimates that Baby Friendly accreditation will start to save a facility money after three years, owing to a reduction in the incidence of certain childhood illnesses. Moderate increases in breast feeding translates into cost savings for the NHS of many millions of pounds, and tens of thousands of fewer hospital admissions and GP consultations (UNICEF Baby Friendly report).
22. Breast Feeding Boroughs will support to normalise breast feeding and increase the rates of breast feeding at initiation and 6-8 weeks. A similar campaign which was successfully delivered in Blackburn with Darwen, resulted in the continuation of breast feeding for months after birth.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

23. There are no other decisions to be made. To do nothing will result in possible decreases of breast feeding rates across South Tees and worsening of health inequalities.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

24. No foreseeable legal impact to becoming a Breast Feeding Borough.

Strategic priorities and risks

25. Strategic Priority: Creating environments for healthy food choices and physical activity
26. **Risk description:** The risks to not adopting and achieving the Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration, will lead to the breast feeding rates across South Tees remaining stagnant and therefore, resulting in wider health inequalities, and poorer health and wellbeing outcomes for children and their mothers. This will result in increasing demands on services associated with children and their mothers, along with budgets.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

27. Not applicable

Financial

28. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as all planned expenditure will be met from within the approved Public Health budget.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Implementation of the Breast Feeding Boroughs Declaration by the Infant Feeding Steering group over the next 12 months, leading to a full Breast Feeding Boroughs status by April 2024.	Anne Rose	April 2024
Executive agrees for South Tees to be Breast Feeding Borough status.	Anne Rose	April 2024

Appendices

1	Data Report – breast feeding rates at initiation and 6-8 weeks for both Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland
2	Breast Feeding Boroughs Blackburn with Darwen
3	Breast Feeding Boroughs – 10 Commitments

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

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