

3 March 2021**Agenda Item: 5**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

BREASTFEEDING: UPDATE ON PROGRESS, PREVALANCE, AND TARGETS FOR LOCAL BREASTFEEDING RATES AND BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY VENUES FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise the Health and Wellbeing Board on the Public Health significance of breastfeeding and provide information on breastfeeding prevalence rates in Nottinghamshire and the actions underway to increase breastfeeding prevalence.
2. To request that Health and Wellbeing Board partners continue to support actions to increase the prevalence of breastfeeding and the development of breastfeeding friendly venues across Nottinghamshire.
3. To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with information regarding the implementation of breastfeeding friendly venues.

Information and Advice

Public health significance of breastfeeding

4. The World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and the UK Government, all recommend that babies should be exclusively breastfed for their first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health.
5. Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants. It is safe, clean and contains antibodies which help protect against many common childhood illnesses and provides all the energy and nutrients that the infant needs for the first months of life, and beyond.
6. Evidence suggests that breastfeeding has a positive impact on mother-baby relationships by building a strong physical and emotional bond and it also helps to improve educational achievements and reduces social inequalities.¹
7. The contribution that breastfeeding makes to child health and wellbeing has been recognised in the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee report, *First 1000 Days of Life*, (February 2019).

¹ NHSE England (2015), *National Maternity Review: Better Births* (available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/national-maternity-review-report.pdf>)

8. There is increasing recognition of the part that socio-economic disadvantage plays in infant feeding, with women from lower socio-economic groups having lower rates of breastfeeding. This has been built into National policy with the provision of additional funds for maternity services to support the UNICEF UK Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative (BFI) accreditation in low income areas. The BFI initiative is explained further in **point 16**.
9. In 2012, UNICEF UK undertook a cost analysis of the impact of breastfeeding using only a few of the illnesses where breastfeeding has been shown to have a protective effect. This revealed that a moderate increase in breastfeeding rates could result in potential annual savings to the NHS of around £40 million per year. The true cost savings are likely to be much higher.

Prevalence of breastfeeding in Nottinghamshire; performance against breastfeeding targets in 2019/20

10. There are two key stages at which breastfeeding prevalence data is collected, at birth (initiation) and at 6-8 weeks. Prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth is a key performance measure within the:
 - Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Well Being Strategy, 2018-2022
 - Best Start Strategy, 2021-2025
 - Public Health Outcomes Framework for England, 2020-21
11. Breastfeeding initiation prevalence for 2019/20 in Nottinghamshire was 68.39%, exceeding the local target of 64.5%. This equates to approximately 5 more mothers per month per district starting to breastfeed at birth than in 2018/19 (See table 1 and 3 of Appendix).
12. Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks for 2019/20 in Nottinghamshire was 44%, exceeding the locally set target of 42.5%, (See table 4 of Appendix). This is an improvement on the prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks in 2018-19 which was 42%.
13. Despite these local increases, when compared with its statistical neighbours, Nottinghamshire continues to have lower initiation and 6-8 week breastfeeding prevalence (See table 2 of Appendix).
14. The local 6-8 week target for 2020/21 has been set at 45%, a 1% increase on 2019/20 prevalence. This has already been achieved for Quarter 1 this year.
15. Quarter 2 of this year has seen a drop in breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks. Covid-19 restrictions have resulted in a reduction in the face-to-face support available to women. As a result, local Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) commissioned Infant Feeding Co-ordinators have taken proactive steps to ensure an online/remote service is available to support families during these challenging times.

UNICEF Achievements

16. The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative, (BFI), is an [evidence based, staged accreditation programme](#) supporting maternity, neonatal, health visiting and children's centre services to transform their care.² Support is provided to implement best practice and an assessment and

² UNICEF (2012), *Preventing disease and saving resources* (available at: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2012/11/Preventing_disease_saving_resources.pdf)
 Office for National Statistics (2016), *Infant Mortality in England and Wales* (available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/childhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales/2016>)

accreditation process recognises those that have achieved the required standard. In May 2020, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHT) achieved the BFI Gold Sustainability Award. This demonstrates that local Healthy Family Teams, as part of the NCC commissioned Healthy Family Programme (HFP), have effectively embedded the 'Achieving Sustainability' standards into practice. The award is a recognition that the service is not only implementing the standards, but that they also have the leadership, culture and systems in place to maintain this over the long term.

Developments to increase prevalence for breastfeeding locally

17. NHT, as providers of the Healthy Families Programme, will maintain the UNICEF Gold Sustainability Award demonstrating the consistently high level of service being offered to mothers.
18. Breastfeeding peer support services will continue to be provided as part of the NCC Childrens Centre offer.
19. Increased support will be offered by the breastfeeding support workers/infant feeding co-ordinators on the postnatal wards at Nottinghamshire University Hospital and Sherwood Forest Hospital Trusts.

Breast Feeding Friendly (BFF) Venues

20. Breastfed babies feed frequently and need to be able to feed on demand. Mothers, particularly younger mothers, cite fear of breastfeeding in public as a barrier to continuing to breastfeed. It is important that mothers feel comfortable to breastfeed wherever they choose. The BFF initiative, launched in Nottinghamshire in February 2015, aims to address this.
21. District Councils provide support to enable organisations to apply to become breastfeeding friendly places. Venues are given information and advice on the defined standards they need to meet in order to gain accreditation as a breastfeeding friendly venue. The accreditation assessment is carried out by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHT).
22. Organisations that sign up to be 'breastfeeding friendly' are asked to adopt a positive breastfeeding friendly approach, which includes providing a welcoming, clean and comfortable environment for breastfeeding mums, and ensuring that all staff are supportive of their needs. Venues taking part display window and till stickers letting people know they are welcome to breastfeed, as well as posters and leaflets offering further information and support.
23. In 2019/2020, over 200 venues achieved breastfeeding friendly accreditation. However, the current restrictions implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that many venues are closed, and as such have not been able to gain re-accreditation. This has led to a reduction in the number of venues currently accredited. There will be a drive to update all the venues once they start to reopen again (see table 6 of Appendix).
24. The Breastfeeding Friendly directory is updated quarterly and distributed by NHT to Healthy Families and Children's Centre teams so they can share it with the antenatal women and breastfeeding mothers during contacts.

Statutory and Policy Implications

25. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only),

the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

26. There are no financial implications contained within this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked -

Breastfeeding

- 1) To consider the information shared in the paper in relation to breastfeeding in Nottinghamshire.
- 2) To consider the role the Board can play in supporting the promotion of breastfeeding locally, with a focus on increasing the proportion of women breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks.
- 3) To continue to support efforts in driving and implementing the local breastfeeding action plan to improve breastfeeding prevalence, specifically targeting areas of the county with the lowest rates.

Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative

- 4) To ask partners to support the expansion of breastfeeding friendly venues in each district, in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council.
- 5) To ask District Councils to continue to drive and monitor the implementation of breastfeeding friendly venues in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council.

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Constitutional Comments (LW 16/02/2021)

27. The Health and Wellbeing Board is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (OC20 16/02/2021)

28. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

- All