

HOSC paper regarding Breastfeeding peer support service in Barnet

18 October 2018

Background

Officers presented a paper at the May HOSC committee meeting outlining progress in delivering Breastfeeding Support in Barnet. This paper is a progress update including service user feedback.

The breastfeeding peer support service has to date included a mix of paid and volunteer supporters. The service is now part of the health visiting service continuing to deliver the service to residents of Barnet. They deliver training to other professionals and run eight drop in's across the borough as well as providing a telephone support line, facebook page, support in the post -natal wards of Barnet Hospital and one to one home visits as required. This service is funded within the current Central London Community Healthcare Trust (CLCH) contract to 31 March 2020.

Breastfeeding data for Barnet has to date been poor for a variety of reasons including the current lack of 6 – 8 week review by the health visitors and so demonstrating impact for the peer supporter service has been a challenge. Discussions which have taken place as part of the Transformation of the health visiting service have agreed a new set of metrics which will better demonstrate the impact of the service. The service continues to hold UNICEF accreditation at level 2.

Developing a new service model

Following agreement to include breastfeeding support in the transformed service, the commissioner, Clare Slater-Robins, held an engagement event and a preliminary co -design event to establish a service model to meet the needs of Barnet residents now and beyond April 2020. There was good attendance from service users, stakeholders and breastfeeding supporters at these two events with 10 service users attending (7 at the engagement event and 3 at the co -design event). All the breastfeeding support team attended one or both events alongside stakeholders from the voluntary and community sector e.g. Homestart, National Childbirth Trust, Breastfeeding Network, Midwifery and the Clinical Commissioning Group; the Council services e.g. public health, children centres, early help.

The overwhelming view of service users is that they like the service they receive. Some quotes were

“Peer support service invaluable – needs to continue in current format and be expanded. Adequate funding essential for this”;

“I am grateful for the breastfeeding support I received – in the long run the provision of breastfeeding support leads to longer more extended breastfeeding which in the long term saves money as you have healthier children” and

“We leave hospital so soon and if there's no breastfeeding support except health Visitors (who are very stretched) what happens?”.

Most of those present agreed that more volunteers would be required to expand the service with further quotes being

“I needed support and encouragement to keep going especially after a little while when you waiver ... important that it doesn't feel like it's part of the main service – not waving a red book – somewhere with neutral friendly support when needed”

“Keep Barnet Breastfeeding peer support service in its current model – paid coordinator, paid peer supporters, volunteers and invest in recruiting more volunteers and growing the service”.

Stakeholders reported that the service could be better embedded within the early years context with better joined up working suggesting that there should be a coherent message across the borough from professionals such as GPs, Midwives, other Health Professionals, and Children’s Centre staff. It is a service that can be referred into for advice as well as direct support which adds capacity into the system.

Key messages from the 2 events are:-

- The current model works well and is well regarded. It would be desirable to recruit more volunteers to expand its reach and become family hub linked.
- Personal support including home visits are valued
- There could be more emphasis on the antenatal period and an equal offer available at Royal Free and Barnet hospitals.
- There is a need for better data collection of breastfeeding rates to monitor progress and the success of the service
- There needs to be a more joined up approach with other professionals
- There is a need to promote breastfeeding more in the borough e.g. GPs, Cafes, libraries, bus stops, pharmacies, Children’s Centres and websites / social media
- The high quality training offer needs to continue
- That it is a valuable service that adds capacity into the system for parents.

Next Steps

Within the new model for health visiting, the Health Visiting Service will lead and deliver the Healthy Child Programme through the family hubs. The breastfeeding supporter team will increase in capacity to enable paid supporters to lead and supervise the volunteers. The coordinator will lead the promotion, awareness raising and expansion of the service’s reach across the borough as well as recruiting and training the volunteers. She will also oversee the mainstreaming of breastfeeding advice within Barnet ensuring that, through training, advice is consistent and evidence based.

The service has now been removed from the *Better Breastfeeding campaign cuts list* (a campaign group which became active in Barnet during the period when the ending of the service was being considered). It now has further opportunity to consider what will be required and needed beyond April 2020 when the current public health nursing contract ends. The commissioners and CLCH managers will continue to lead using the co-design format with service users, the breastfeeding supporters and stakeholders. The focus will be on spreading the service’s support reach, joined up working with the early years’ system and consistency of advice on breastfeeding from all professionals.

Clare Slater-Robins, Senior CYP Commissioner, Joint Commissioning Unit, LBB

Audrey Adamah, CBU Lead, Central London Community Healthcare Trust

Collette McCarthy, Director of Commissioning, LBB