

Case study title: Infant Feeding

Date: 7th October 2024

Northumberland Family Hubs has developed its offer in collaboration with health partners, to improve the provision of infant feeding support for families. A significant part of this process has been achieving the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Accreditation for all the Family Hubs.

In January 2023, an Infant Feeding Coordinator was appointed to lead the development of infant feeding support for the Family Hubs and the communities of Northumberland. This involved;

- Scoping the offer available across the various organisations in Northumberland
- Developing and offering appropriate training for the staff in Family Hubs.
- Assessing need and planning expenditure of grant funding to ensure it added value and was sustainable after the initial funding period, where possible.
- Co-developing an offer for Dads (DadTalk) to promote the benefits of breastfeeding, how they can support and building loving & responsive relationships with their child.
- Preparing the application, information, action plan and reports for the accreditation process, in addition to planning the logistics of the two-day assessment.
- Proposing and developing a pilot programme of support, which reflected gaps identified in partner service offer.

In March 2024 we successfully achieved our stage 3 UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation, with very positive feedback from the families that access our services. During the assessment UNICEF conducted interviews with mothers and they 'reported a 100% happiness and kindness rating when attending and communicating with the staff and service.' Some other comments that were made by families were "This is my 3rd child – I never breastfed before, one of the workers said do you know we run breastfeeding groups – I was pregnant and at a 'learning through play group' with my 2nd child – that conversation planted the seed" and "These groups are my life line, I attend up to 2-3 x a week and have made really good friends". This was a credit to the practitioners supporting families from the Family Hubs and the Growing Healthy



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Northumberland infant feeding team, as the families shared examples of support they received which meant they were able to achieve feeding goals, develop positive relationships with their babies and understand the impact they could have on their babies brain development.

A key part of our offer are the Infant Feeding Support Groups, which have recently been renamed 'Feeding Friends', these sessions are run by our partner organisation Growing Healthy Northumberland and have had 165 people attending in quarter 1 & 2 this year. We are continually promoting this offer and aim to increase attendance at the sessions.

In September 2024 we were able to appoint 3 part time members of staff to run a pilot project, which offers early postnatal support in addition to midwifery support that families receive. The pilot is aimed at reducing inequalities and is targeted in an area of Northumberland that currently has the lowest breastfeeding rates.

The breastfeeding rates have improved slightly; however, we are expecting that to continue to rise. We will be monitoring the rates closely, with a particular focus on our pilot project area.

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1. Logo: Accredited as Baby Friendly by Unicef