

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Education and Families Committee

approval noting

Ref GMcL/AMcK

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Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding

From Gerard McLaughlin, Head of Education (North)

Email McLaughlinG@northlan.gov.uk **Telephone** 01236 812269

Executive Summary

Following on from the Report to Policy and Resources on 12th November 2018, this report presents to Elected Members:

- the Council's commitment to protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding across the North Lanarkshire area;
- incorporating breastfeeding awareness into the education curriculum from nursery to secondary; and
- the provision of facilities for employees who wish to continue breastfeeding on their return to work from maternity leave.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education and Families Committee:

- (1) Agree to the exploration of options outlined in paragraph 2.2 with a view to supporting increased levels of breastfeeding in the North Lanarkshire area, the provision of appropriate facilities with education establishments and incorporating breastfeeding awareness into the curriculum.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities

Ambition statement (6) Raise attainment and skills for learning, life, and work to enhance opportunities and choices

1. Background

- 1.1 North Lanarkshire Council recognises the short and long term advantages of breastfeeding for both mother and baby and supports breastfeeding as the optimal infant feeding choice for all parents. However, breastfeeding rates in North Lanarkshire are low compared to national and NHS Lanarkshire are developing enhanced strategies to increase these rates.
- 1.2 Members will recall the previous report 'Breastfeeding Support and Awareness' that went to Policy and Resource Committee on 12th November 2018 setting out the Council's recognition of the advantages of breastfeeding. This report provides information on Education and Families approach to further advance this agenda across all settings in the Directorate.
- 1.3 The Council has agreed that through the partnership between colleagues in Education & Families and NHS Lanarkshire, to seek to encourage and support staff to continue breastfeeding on their return to work from maternity leave to maximise the full benefits (short and long term) of breastfeeding. There is a role for the Council to play in providing breastfeeding friendly facilities where possible in current buildings and to include consideration of these facilities when refurbishing or commissioning new buildings. This report sets out recommendations to enhance support to employees, within an overall context of a series of actions which seeks to change the North Lanarkshire culture from one which is predominantly bottle to breast feeding.
- 1.4 The Council's Diet and Nutrition Policy, which is currently being reviewed, includes a number of commitments to improve health and wellbeing, one of which is the lasting benefits of breastfeeding as a key intervention in improving children's health. As part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme, it is the Council's intention (in partnership between Education & Families and NHS Lanarkshire) to develop breastfeeding awareness lessons for Curriculum for Excellence third and fourth levels. This is to enable a longer term cultural change through education.
- 1.5 Following on from the Lanarkshire Breastfeeding Summit (June 2019) the Council is committed for lessons on infant nutrition to be included as part of the curriculum from nursery to secondary schools.

2. Report

- 2.1 Breastfeeding rates in Scotland are monitored and published annually. A critical indicator is the percentage of babies still being breastfed at 6-8 review by the NHS. The timing of the 6-8 week review is important to consider as there is a known drop-off in breastfeeding rates with time i.e. breastfeeding rates decrease with increasing age of child at the review. Scottish Government statistics show that the Scottish average in 2018/19 was 43.2%, with North Lanarkshire showing the third lowest rate (of all 32 local authority areas) of 26.1%. Taking into account the known challenges around health, deprivation and poverty in areas of North Lanarkshire, the Council (as the largest local employer) has a key role to play in supporting promotion of breastfeeding in the organisation and wider local area.
- 2.2 A multi-strand approach to the promotion of breastfeeding in the organisation and the position of North Lanarkshire as an area of high breastfeeding engagement is recommended. The following actions will be explored with a view to implementation as soon as practicable.

- 2.2.1 The Council will promote breastfeeding facilities to internal and external audiences where those facilities are currently in place. In addition, Corporate Communications will work with colleagues in Education and Families to share promotional messages through the Council's social media channels.
- 2.2.2 Employees returning to work from maternity leave will be encouraged to continue breastfeeding for longer through the provision of appropriate workplace facilities and access to flexible working arrangements in line with the Council's Smarter Working Policy.
- 2.2.3 In recognition of the cultural barriers that can make new mothers reluctant to breastfeed at work, the Council will explore further opportunities to incorporate breastfeeding awareness into the education curriculum from nursery through to secondary school. This is with a view to bringing about change in culture and attitudes to breastfeeding. Schools and establishments will be provided with information on educational frameworks to support the implementation of breastfeeding awareness.
- 2.2.4 The Council's Diet and Nutrition policy is currently under review. The Council will ensure that the promotion of breastfeeding is given appropriate emphasis within that policy.
- 2.2.5 The Council's PSHE curriculum is under review and steps are being taken to ensure that awareness raising of the importance of infant nutrition and of the positive health benefits of breast feeding are structured into the developing curriculum, which is supported by the partnership with NHS Lanarkshire.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

Low levels of breastfeeding are linked to a range of socio-economic factors including areas of deprivation, lack of knowledge and difficulty in continuing to do so while managing a need to return to work. Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding is recognised as an important public health activity. There is good evidence that breastfeeding in infancy has a protective effect against many childhood illnesses. Other probable benefits include improved cognitive and psychological development, and a reduced risk of childhood obesity. There is evidence that women who breastfed have lower risks of breast cancer, Type 2 diabetes, epithelial ovarian cancer and hip fracture later in life. The proposed approach supports the Council's responsibility to reduce socio-economic disadvantage.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment has been completed.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

The law requires that an employer provides an appropriate facility (both rooms and refrigeration equipment) for employees to breastfeed. While it is likely that existing facilities are available in all larger buildings, there are likely to be costs associated with providing such facilities in some Council buildings.

4.2 **HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

The Maternity policy has recently been updated to outline the Council's commitment to mothers who wish to breastfeed/express milk during working hours

4.3 **Environmental Impact**

There is no environmental impact

4.4 **Risk Impact**

The associated risks lie with inaction. North Lanarkshire is currently very low in terms of breastfeeding rates – this continues to reinforce poor health outcomes.

5. **Measures of success**

5.1 Improved breastfeeding levels in North Lanarkshire have the potential to lead to positive health benefits, as outlined above. Support for our employees will continue to reinforce North Lanarkshire Council's role as an exemplar employee.

5.2 Improved educational experiences for young people in relation to PSHE, so as to ensure a more relevant and transformational curriculum.

6. **Supporting documents**

6.1 Healthy Schools Framework:- <https://healthyschools.scot>

6.2 Relationship and Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) - <https://rshp.scot>



Gerard McLaughlin
Head of Education (North)