

1st June 2016

New Breastfeeding Support Service for Suffolk

Mums in Suffolk who need support and guidance to help them breastfeed their babies have a new team to turn to with the launch of East Coast Community Healthcare's (ECCH) county-wide Brilliant Breastfeeding Service.

Suffolk County Council has commissioned ECCH to deliver the new support service from 1st June 2016 with the aim of raising the number of mothers who initiate and sustain breastfeeding in the county.

ECCH has provided a breastfeeding support service in Great Yarmouth and Waveney since the social enterprise was launched in 2011. The new service will offer 7 day and 'out of hours' advice and support for breastfeeding families across Suffolk. ECCH's specialist professionals will be assisted by Peer Supporters at a network of free breastfeeding support groups where pregnant women, new mums and their partners can drop in for help and information – and to meet other parents. A range of breastfeeding sessions will also be provided at Children's Centres and other community settings such as libraries.

The team will carry out home visits, where necessary, and will work at Ipswich and West Suffolk Hospitals offering support to new mums on the maternity units seven days a week. A similar service is already offered at the James Paget University Hospitals NHS Trust in Gorleston. The breastfeeding specialists will also work closely with Suffolk Children and Young People Services' health visitors and Family Nurse Partnership team which offers support to teenage mums from the time they discover they are pregnant until their child is two years old.

In addition, ECCH's Brilliant Breastfeeding service has an active social media presence on Twitter and Facebook for mums to share experiences and get advice, and a dedicated phoneline and text service available seven days a week on 01502 719845.

ECCH will be working in partnership with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) to deliver antenatal workshops to help pregnant women understand what to expect through birth and beyond. The NCT will also deliver training courses for ECCH's Breastfeeding Peer Supporters.

ECCH's breastfeeding support team was awarded UNICEF Baby Friendly Stage 3 (full) accreditation in 2014 and was given an award at the House of Lords for innovative services to breastfeeding - proof that they provide world-leading advice and care. They consistently exceed the national average for the number of mothers still breastfeeding their babies at age 6 to 8 weeks in the Waveney area.

ECCH's Director of Children's Services Julia Whiting said: "The services we have run in Great Yarmouth and Waveney have been a great success and we are delighted that Suffolk County Council has recognised that and given us the opportunity to extend it across the whole county. We are very excited to be using our skills to share the benefits of breastfeeding with a wider group of parents and children.

“Our team are all passionate about the benefits of breastfeeding and about helping mums have a positive experience because not all babies find it easy to breastfeed at first. And we aim to offer much more than support in just the early days – through our support groups and workshops we can help mums meet other parents and handle any ongoing concerns throughout the early months and years. Sometimes mums and dads just need to get out of the house and chat to people who understand that being a new parent can be tough.”

Councillor Tony Goldson, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Health said: "Breastfeeding is so important when it comes to giving children the best start in life. That's why I am very pleased that East Coast Community Healthcare will continue to deliver a range of support groups and other services to help pregnant mothers, new mums and their partners to get the advice and information they need."

For more information on the new service please see ECCH's website www.ecch.org.

ENDS

East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH) is a social enterprise which provides NHS community health services across Norfolk and Suffolk.

These services include district nursing, health visiting, community in-patient services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, specialist nursing care, palliative care, a primary care centre, school nursing and health improvement services.

As a social enterprise, ECCH is owned by its staff and uses any surplus money for the benefit of the community in Great Yarmouth and Waveney.

www.ecch.org

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