

June 8th, 2016

## Celebrating breastfeeding benefits

South Tyneside's much-loved Teddy Bears Picnic, arranged annually as part of National Breastfeeding Celebration Week, will take place on Thursday, June 23rd, at All Saints Children's Centre, South Shields, from 10am to noon.

Also during the week, there will be information stands in Alexander's restaurant at South Tyneside District Hospital on Monday, June 20th, and Friday, June 24th, from 1pm to 2pm. Health professionals will be joined by peer counsellors – mothers trained to help other women to breastfeed – who will talk about their experiences and encourage other mums to do the training. The aim of the week is to provide an opportunity for mothers, breastfeeding supporters and health professionals to come together and share what works well to support breastfeeding in local communities in order to create a more breastfeeding-friendly culture and help mothers to continue breastfeeding for longer.

Teddy Bears Picnic organiser Jen Menzies, a health visitor with South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, said: "This event is now in its 12th year and has become really popular. We hope as many breastfeeders past, present and future as possible will come along on June 23rd to celebrate the benefits of breastfeeding and of doing it for longer. The longer you breastfeed, the longer the protection lasts and the greater the benefits. Breast milk is perfectly designed for your baby, protects him or her from infections and diseases and is available whenever your baby needs it. Breastfeeding also provides health benefits for mothers and can help to build a strong emotional bond between you and your baby."

Councillor Joan Atkinson, South Tyneside Council's Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families, said: "The breastfeeding groups at our children's centres are a vital network for breastfeeding mothers. The groups provide advice in several layers, from health visitors to outreach workers and peer support. We recognise the importance of these groups in encouraging women to feed their babies for longer, which provides both mother and baby with protection and benefits."

Councillor Tracey Dixon, the Council's Lead Member for Independence and Wellbeing, added: "By giving your baby breast milk, you are giving him or her the best start in life. This is because breastfed babies have less chance of developing type 2 diabetes, less chance of vomiting and diarrhoea and of suffering from eczema and have fewer chest and ear infections.

"Any amount of breastfeeding has a positive effect, however, the longer you breastfeed the longer the protection lasts and the greater the benefits are to you and your baby. There are many breastfeeding support groups throughout the Borough and to find a local one you can ask your midwife or health visitor or contact your local Children's Centre."

- The Teddy Bears' Picnic will be held in National Breastfeeding Celebration Week on Thursday, June 23rd, 10am-noon, All Saints Children's Centre, Whitehall Street, South Shields
- ends

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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