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Cabinet Member, Adult Social Care and Public Health
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To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee

Date: 22nd April 2014

Subject: Tendering for Kent Community Infant Feeding Service

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

Public Health is seeking to establish a new countywide Community Infant Feeding Service that will provide support for mothers and improve the relatively low rates of breastfeeding across Kent. The service will operate within Children's Centres and provide specialist staff and peer supporters to help mothers and other family members. The service has been designed following extensive consultation and market engagement and is expected to start operating from 1st October 2014, following a competitive procurement process.

Recommendations:

Members of the Committee are asked to:-

- a) endorse the proposed new service model and commissioning arrangements for infant feeding services in Kent
- b) note the proposal to bring an exempt report on the tender evaluation to Cabinet Committee on 9th July.

2. Introduction

2.1. The purpose of this paper is to outline the Public Health proposals for a new Community Infant Feeding Service to improve prevalence of breastfeeding across Kent.

3. Background

3.1. Kent County Council became responsible for commissioning infant feeding services (services which support and promote breastfeeding) as part of the transfer of responsibilities for Public Health from April 2013.

3.2. A range of evidence and national priorities have highlighted the importance of breast feeding in improving long term health outcomes for women and babies. This is an area in which Kent has performed very poorly in recent years, compared to the national rates and other similar areas.

3.3. Several Kent strategy documents (Every Day Matters, Mind the Gap and Kent Health and Wellbeing Strategy) highlight KCC's commitment to giving every child the best

start in life and investing in preventative services that help reduce the longer term burden of costs for specialist services.

4. Service Review and Consultation

4.1. Public Health completed a review of the current infant feeding services and found the following:

- a) poor commissioning arrangements and inconsistent provision of services
- b) a fragmented network of multiple providers with differing monitoring and reporting arrangements
- c) lack of a clear clinical lead, giving rise to increased unnecessary risks
- d) lack of business continuity and service resilience in some areas
- e) poor level of strategic oversight and co-ordination of the services

4.2. Public Health completed a consultation to find out what mothers value most about infant feeding services and what they would want a new service to provide. Respondents indicated that they valued having a local specialist service to support breastfeeding in the early days and weeks after they have given birth. They also valued the support and advice from peer supporters who were approachable and available at community venues such as Children's Centres.

4.3. A market engagement exercise, conducted alongside the consultation, highlighted a good level of interest for a countywide service to support infant feeding. Providers supported the proposal for a countywide community infant feeding service which would have responsibility for improving breastfeeding rates across the county by providing a consistent level of support for new mothers, including lactation specialists and peer supporters. Providers who participated in the market engagement process also welcomed the expectation of close working and co-location with Children's Centres.

5. Service model

5.1. Public Health has taken on board the feedback from the service user consultation and the market engagement and concluded that a countywide Community Infant Feeding Service will be the most cost-effective model for improving breastfeeding rates across Kent by:

- a) ensuring comprehensive access to infant feeding services via Children Centres throughout Kent and providing a gateway for families to access other services
- b) providing a comprehensive community-based service across the county
- c) establishing a consistent reporting and monitoring system
- d) delivering and facilitating community engagement activity to widen access to the service

- e) linking with the Healthy Start programme to ensure improved take-up among eligible mothers

5.2. To achieve this, the service will:

- a) be part of the pathway for infant feeding which includes maternity services and health visitors
- b) be available across the entire county but will be targeted at the areas of greatest needs and highest levels of health inequalities
- c) provide access to lactation consultants in each District
- d) operate from Children's Centres and accessible community venues
- e) train staff to meet Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) standards and provide project management support for BFI accreditation
- f) train and supervise peer supporters, whether paid staff or volunteers

5.3. A more detailed list of the service requirements is included at Appendix A.

6. Commissioning Approach

- 6.1. Public Health is proposing to begin a competitive procurement shortly to invite tenders for a provision of the Kent Community Infant Feeding Service.
- 6.2. A confidential paper detailing the outcome of the tender evaluation will be presented to Cabinet Committee on 9th July. A key decision will be required later in July to enable the contract to be awarded by 31st July.
- 6.3. The new service is expected to begin operating on 1st October 2014, following a transition and mobilisation phase.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The indicative budget for the Community Infant Feeding Service has been set at £475k per year. This is higher than the previous level of investment through the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), which is estimated at £360k per annum, although, as noted above, a number of areas had little or no service provision.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. Kent performs relatively poorly on rates of breastfeeding, despite clear evidence of the importance of breastfeeding to the future health of the child and the health benefits for the mother. Public Health are increasing the investment in infant feeding services on the expectation of substantial improvement in service performance and outcomes in this area.
- 8.2. The proposed new Kent Community Infant Feeding Service has been designed following extensive consultation and a market engagement exercise and will offer better value for money through improved service coverage and capacity.

8.3. This service represents a significant opportunity to improve Public Health and to help ensure that every child has the best start in life.

9. Recommendations

9.1. Members of the Committee are asked to:-

- a) endorse the proposed new service model and commissioning arrangements for infant feeding services in Kent
- b) note the proposal to bring an exempt report on the tender evaluation to Cabinet Committee on 9th July.

Background documents

Service Objectives – Appendix A

BFI Standards – Appendix B

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Appendix A – Kent Community Infant Feeding Service

List of Service Objectives

- To provide specialist lactation advice and support
- To provide and enhance knowledge on breastfeeding through facilitation, training and supervision of community, primary care and acute professionals, voluntary organisations and lay volunteers
- To provide an integrated and flexible service which promotes continuity of care for women and their babies across Kent
- To provide public education and raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding
- Services will be designed to meet the needs of mothers and their babies
- Information will be made available to a range of professionals, service users and public
- Develop progressive programmes to address the needs of women in the most deprived areas
- Ensure liaison with other bodies to address the requirements of achieving baby friendly initiative accreditation in hospital and community settings in Kent
- Provide appropriate clinic and drop-in facilities and make appropriate onward referrals to meet the needs of mothers and babies
- Provide an integrated service to promote breastfeeding, working with colleagues across Kent
- Contribute to public health assessments and interventions
- To provide an effective value- for- money service
- Cater for the needs of non-breastfeeding mothers in a way that promotes the Marmot objective of achieving a healthier start to life