FAMILY NURSE PARTNERSHIP

1. Introduction

The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) was launched in Medway by NHS Medway following a successful bid to the Department of Health and the Department of Children Schools and Families in July 2009. The program is being supported by a number of partners including Medway Council and will target the most vulnerable young mothers and families in Medway.

The FNP is a voluntary program which was developed in the US 30 years ago. Its purpose is to offer first time parents a specially trained family nurse who provides one to one intensive support from early pregnancy and throughout the first two years of the child’s life. It has proven outcomes that demonstrate improvement in the mother’s antenatal health, increased involvement from the father and improvements in the child’s readiness for school.

The program has been adopted in England and Wales and along with the positive impacts demonstrated in the US, there is expectation that it will also impact on breastfeeding, sexual health and reduced teenage pregnancies. Broadly speaking, the programme focuses on improved outcomes across three areas:

- improved outcomes in pregnancy and birth
- enhanced child health development
- improved parent’s life course and economic self sufficiency

Other measurable outcomes from US trials have shown consistent short and long term benefits for children and families and include:

- a reduction in smoking in pregnancy
- greater intervals between and fewer subsequent births
- reduction in child abuse and neglect
- better language development in children
- greater involvement of young fathers

Date: December 2009

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Council

Purpose: NHS Medway to update all Members on the progress of the Medway Family Nurse Partnership, following a recommendation by the Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
• fewer accidents
• increase in employment
• increase in the average birth weights of babies
• increase in breast feeding rates

1.1 Who are the Family Nurses

The Family Nurses are specially trained nurses who are recruited from a Health Visiting or Midwifery Background, and who provide regular visits from early pregnancy until the baby reaches two years old. Family Nurses do not replace the Health Visitor or Midwife, but supplement these roles by spending more time with the family and working through their needs and signposting to other relevant services or professionals.

1.2 How is the program being delivered

The program is being delivered by Medway Community Healthcare by a team of four Family Nurses and supervisor who were either Health Visitors or Midwives and have undergone further training to meet the requirements of the Family Nurse Programme. The nurses will be recruiting a cohort of 100 families from wards in Gillingham and Chatham in 2009/10 to generate a caseload of 25 families per family nurse. The FNP is designed to comply with strict guidelines in relation to the number of families enrolled per family nurse to ensure compliance with the licensure and service model. This will ensure the DoH is able to validate the program’s efficacy in a randomised control trial methodology.

Clinical supervision of the FNP team is being provided through one of Medway Council’s Senior Educational Psychologists. This is an unusual and innovative model reflecting the quality and skills of the psychology team.

2. Progress to date

There are currently 31 families from Gillingham and Chatham wards enrolled in the programme with a further 19 families being processed for recruitment.

To meet the model fidelity outlined by the DoH, the nurses must meet FNP Fidelity stretch goals by recruiting 75% of eligible clients who are offered the programme and enrol at least 60% before 16 weeks gestation. It is anticipated that the project will be close to achieving this target of 100 families by 31st March 2010.

The Programme is monitored by the Family Nurse Partnership Board, which meets monthly and is chaired by the PCT’s Director responsible. This is to ensure strict governance processes are in place to ensure the programme is woven into the PCT’s governance processes and across to the Children’s Trust.

Although the programme is at an early stage of delivery, evaluation and monitoring reports demonstrate encouraging signs with involvement of fathers and positive
feedback from those involved in the programme. There is also evidence that the nurses are reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantage young families who will need the support throughout and after their pregnancy to ensure they are not socially excluded.

3. Next steps

NHS Medway will continue to support the FNP to ensure the programme is being delivered to the young families in Medway and the outcomes are being achieved. We will continue to monitor the delivery of the programme through the FNP Board also draw on the information collected from the nurses to ensure parents are signposted to appropriate and timely support where indicated. In 2010, the programme will be subject to a robust evaluation to determine if it has been effective with regards to long term sustainability. We will continue to engage with our partners to elicit their continued support and will ensure young mother and families are involved in the planning of any service development.

Errol Cordle
Assistant Director Integrated Commissioning
NHS Medway
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