

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Community</b>		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> October 2023</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Town Hall</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>Jackie MacArthur, Deputy Chief Officer and Emma Evans, Cherubs</b>		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>Item 7 - Supporting Cherubs to make Congleton a Breastfeeding-Welcome Town</b>		
<b>Background</b>	<p>The benefits of breastfeeding babies is well-researched and documented, to the extent that the World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months. The benefits of breastfeeding include:</p> <p><b>For the baby:</b> reduces the risk of gastroenteritis, respiratory infections, allergies, obesity, diabetes and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.</p> <p><b>For the mother:</b> reduces the risk of breast or ovarian cancer, heart disease and osteoporotic bone fractures in later life, as well as mental health benefits.</p> <p>In addition, breastfeeding is cheap, convenient and good for the environment, with no waste, no need for sterilisation and no use of plastics.</p> <p>In the UK we have some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world, with eight out of ten women stopping breastfeeding before they want to, only 1% of babies still fully breast-fed at 6 months, and only a third of babies getting any breast-milk at this age (compared to &gt;70% for Norway, for example).</p> <p>This has been recognised by the NHS as a <b>public health issue</b> which is not only the responsibility of individual parents.</p> <p>To increase breastfeeding levels requires two things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Individual support for mothers</b> to help them get established and continue feeding.</li> <li>• <b>Public support for breastfeeding</b> in general. The goal is to ‘normalise’ breastfeeding anywhere that babies and mothers are welcome.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cherubs (CHEshire Really Useful Breastfeeding Support)</b> is a service that provides both of these. It offers education and runs support groups for mothers who are learning to breastfeed. In addition, Cherubs can designate a venue or business to be ‘Breastfeeding Welcome’ based on how it treats mums with babies who may be employed there or who may visit as part of an event.</p>		

	<p>Cherubs has helped to increase breastfeeding rates at 6 weeks from 38% to 55% in the last five years in Cheshire East, but there is much more still to be done.</p> <p>As a town with a large number of young families, there is an opportunity for Congleton to increase the likelihood they will come into our town centre venues and spend time there if they know that they can feed their baby comfortably. Further normalisation of breastfeeding should help to improve rates further and benefit the long-term health of our community.</p> <p>Congleton Town Hall has just been awarded 'Breastfeeding Welcome' status by Cherubs, working with Mark Worthington and team, and we will display the certificate and a window sticker, so that people know when they are in the Town Hall as part of a meeting, event or function, they are welcome to feed their babies as usual.</p> <p>Cherubs would like to extend this to other venues and businesses in Congleton, and is asking for the help of the Town Council.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Town Council support Cherubs' work in making Congleton a Breastfeeding Welcome Town.
<b>Financial Implications</b>	None, except a small amount of Officer time to include in promotional activities. Cherubs is already NHS-funded and can provide the questionnaires, certificates, stickers and expertise required to make venues Breastfeeding Welcome.
<b>Environmental Implications</b>	Increased breastfeeding will reduce plastic and energy use by Congleton families, as bottles will not need to be washed and sterilised, and formula milk in disposable plastic containers will not be bought.
<b>Equality and Diversity Impact</b>	Breastfeeding rates are higher amongst high-income families than low-income families, which leads to more health inequalities in later life. More support in our town will lead to increased uptake of breastfeeding to give more babies in Congleton the healthiest possible start in life. In addition, feeding mothers are often excluded from, or made to feel unwelcome in, some venues, which is unacceptable when everyone should have an equal right to participate in our town.
<b>PROPOSALS</b>	<p>Promote the Cherubs 'Breastfeeding Welcome Award' through CTC channels such as Bear Necessities, the press, the website and our social media.</p> <p>Encourage other public buildings like the library, leisure centre, schools, and Connected Community Centres to become Breastfeeding Welcome venues.</p> <p>Inform businesses like cafés, pubs, nurseries, soft play centres, as well as employers, of the opportunity to become Breastfeeding Welcome to increase their customer numbers and support their employees.</p>