

Launch of service to support Stockton-on-Tees' new parents

A service to help new parents and their babies in the Stockton-on-Tees area is launched today by the charity Family Action. The Stockton-on-Tees Perinatal Support Service, which is being funded by the Department of Health & Social Care's Health & Wellbeing Fund, will support parents who may be struggling with low to medium level mental health issues, helping them during pregnancy and up until their child is two years old.

The service promotes good maternal and paternal mental health by providing emotional support, reducing social isolation, and improving parent/child attachment. It will help parents give their babies the best start in life so they can thrive throughout their childhood and beyond. The Perinatal Support Service offers parents tailored emotional and mental health support, help with parent and child bonding, as well as offering breastfeeding advice. Volunteer befrienders will give emotional and practical advice as well as being a listening ear, and therapeutic play groups will be offered for new parents to meet to help reduce feelings of isolation.

In the light of COVID-19, the service is also offering two digital coaching sessions and ongoing support to help break down barriers to social interaction, build confidence, and signpost parents to resources and support.

Families will also have access to the HENRY programme – whole-family, behaviour-change groups to improve early nutrition, reduce child obesity and promote child development. HENRY is delivered in collaboration with Stockton-on-Tees Council Family Hubs and HDFT's Growing Well, Growing Healthy team.

Emma Crawford Moore, Operations Manager for Family Action's Stockton-on-Tees Services said:

"Family Action has a wealth of knowledge and experience helping new mums and dads across the country. Working with our professional colleagues including Health Visitors, Midwives, Family Hubs, GPs, and Adult and Children's Services, we aim to reach new parents who would benefit, especially those living in areas of high deprivation. The Stockton-on-Tees Perinatal Support Service is here to help parents give their child the best start possible."

Sarah Massiter, Service Lead for the 0-19 service said:

"The Health Visiting team in Stockton-on-Tees are thrilled that Family Action will be able to offer our families this much needed service. It comes after a really difficult year that has meant so much isolation and challenges for new families. It's a really exciting new service that will really benefit the families we work with."

Martin Gray, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Director of Children's Services, added:

"We want our children and young people to get the best possible start in life so we're really pleased that the Perinatal Support Service has been set up to help parents during the early stages of their child's development."

“The service is an invaluable addition to local support services and will provide essential emotional and practical guidance for parents, meaning that families - particularly those families that need the most help - can access specialised support when they need it.”

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Family Action is a national charity committed to building stronger families and brighter lives. Since the charity was founded in 1869, we have continued to help children and families overcome the challenges they face through a wide range of practical, emotional and financial support. We offer free and immediate support to adult family members through our national helpline, FamilyLine and with some 160 community-based services across the UK as well as a range of national programmes, we currently support more than 60,000 families each year.

We help families and individuals to manage their mental health and wellbeing, working with families to reduce the impact of social isolation, poverty, addiction and other significant sources of stress and pressure. We also support families affected by adoption, special guardianship, separation, special educational needs, disability, domestic violence and sexual abuse. In addition, we provide thousands of welfare and educational grants every year to people in financial crisis.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Family Action has adapted its service delivery to ensure we are still very much there for the people who rely on us. While we have continued to work in person with the most vulnerable individuals and families, many of our services are now being delivered virtually. We have expanded our grants services and network of FOOD Clubs during the pandemic to provide the most vulnerable with emergency financial support as well as food and practical resources to help them get through.

For further information, please visit our website at www.family-action.org.uk

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