

Report to Health Scrutiny Committee Tackling Infant Mortality in Oldham Public Health Annual Report 2022

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr. Barbara Brownridge, Portfolio Lead for Health and Social Care

Officer Contact: Rebecca Fletcher, Interim Director of Public Health

Report Author: Rebecca Fletcher, Interim Director of Public Health

5th December 2023

Purpose of the Report:

For the committee to note the report and recommendations.

1 Background

- 1.1 The annual report of the Director of Public Health is an independent view on matters related to health wellbeing in Oldham and what needs to be done to improve it.
- 1.2 This report is the report of Oldham's previous Director of Public Health Katrina Stephens, and it focuses on Infant Mortality and what can be done to decrease the rates in Oldham. The report covers the period from April 2022 to March 2023.
- 1.3 The report was produced in collaboration with our relevant colleagues and partners, and it shares experiences of our residents. It also details the most up to date data regarding Infant Mortality in Oldham.

2 Infant Mortality in Oldham: Current Position

- 2.1 Infant mortality is an indicator of the overall health of a population. Infant mortality has decreased in England over the past twenty years. Oldham has had a higher rate than other areas for many years. Rates of infant mortality can be seen as a major indicator of a borough's health as a whole.

-
- 2.2 Oldham's infant mortality rate is higher than the Northwest and England rates. Oldham's most recent rate for 2019 - 2021 was 7.2 per 1,000, making it significantly higher than the national figure of 3.9 per 1,000.
- 2.3 Our rates of infant mortality have been higher than the regional and national rates for at least the past 20 years.
- 2.4 Over the last few years, Oldham has not seen a reduction in the infant mortality rate, and, in fact, the rate is increasing.

3 **Oldham Priorities for Reducing Infant Mortality**

- 3.1 Over the past year, we have reviewed the local data, the national evidence base and worked with colleagues across Oldham, including the voice of residents. This has led to the creation of the Oldham Tackling Infant Mortality Group and the agreement of the below priorities:
1. Promoting Smoke-free Pregnancies
 2. Reduce the Number of Sudden and Unexpected Deaths of Infants in Oldham (SUDI)
 3. Improve Breastfeeding Rates
 4. Improve Access to Excellent Maternity Care
 5. Reduce Deaths and Severe Disability Related to Consanguinity/Recessive Autosomal Conditions
 6. Support Women to be a Healthy Weight in Pregnancy
 7. Supporting Young Parents
 8. A Focus on Poverty/Cost of Living The rest of this report will provide detail on each of these priorities and the current work that is happening in Oldham
- 3.2 The Public Health Annual Report has more detail on each of these priorities and showcases the current work that is happening in Oldham to address these priorities. This includes more information about services and case studies of residents experiences of access help and support.

4 **Recommendations**

- 4.1 The report details six recommendations that address Oldham's current situation in relation to Infant Mortality.
- We should continue to take steps to improve the cultural competence of maternity services by ensuring the impact of parents' culture, ethnicity and language is discussed and considered during the antenatal risk assessment process, initial assessment and follow-up.
 - Professionals who work with families and pregnant women including GPs, midwives, maternity support workers, and neonatal staff, should undertake training on consanguinity and genetic conditions, for example the e-learning for health (eLfh) Close Relative Marriage module.

-
- We need to agree and roll out an Oldham approach to delivering personalised safe sleep messages for parents across the borough. This should be led by maternity and health visiting but include wider training for all staff across the wider children's workforce to understand the risks of SUDI.
 - As a borough, we need to commit to mitigating the impacts of poverty on the risks for infant mortality and make this a priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board and the wider Oldham system. This should include considering funding for safe places for babies to sleep and ensuring that housing for families with infants recognises that they need to sleep in a cot.
 - Oldham should become fully accredited by UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative and work towards the Gold award. This will support Oldham to continue to be breastfeeding friendly over the coming years.
 - The aim for Oldham should be for all pregnancies to be smoke-free. The Oldham Tobacco Alliance should work closely with maternity, ROMVP and leaders across the borough to develop approaches to further reduce smoking in pregnancy.
- 4.2 Public Health, with appropriate partners and the Tackling Infant Mortality Group are using these recommendations as a basis for action planning and development of appropriate work to address the priorities and to fulfil the recommendations.