

Media release

Peer counsellors support breastfeeding mums

Breastfeeding mothers in Wairarapa have a great support network to ensure they and their baby can enjoy healthy breastfeeding, with 26 trained counsellors available for advice.

There are 15 women providing mum-to-mum support, six more that offer group session advice and a further five that offer support through their professional roles.

Having trained counsellors available ensures Wairarapa mothers receive consistent, relevant and correct information to help them maintain their baby's exclusively breastfed feeding programme for longer.

"The peer counsellor training was initially set up by Breastfeeding Wairarapa because statistically we didn't feel we were meeting the needs of the breastfeeding population at the 6 week, 3 month and 6 month target dates," Michelle Thomas, Midwife Educator explains.

"Our mums would start breastfeeding and be really determined to exclusively breastfeed but then, for whatever reason, some mums really start to struggle and would then consider other options of feeding. . Having mum-to-mum counselling and training key community members to be able to help was a natural next step to try and keep our babies breastfed."

Breastfeeding Wairarapa looked back to the basics, and encouraged breastfeeding-friendly cafes and public spaces and breastfeeding in the workplace guidelines in order to try and make it easier for mothers to continue breastfeeding their babies.

"There used to be a lack of support for mothers to breastfeed. There was a lack of one-to-one help. Wairarapa has only one lactation consultant, based at the DHB, but we now have a La Lache League representative locally. The Peer Counsellor programme is a La Lache League initiative worldwide and we are pleased to now have a great, and very active, team here in Wairarapa," says Julia Oldroyd, Peer Counsellor Programme Administrator.

Sarah Taylor-Waitere, a Public Health Advisor for Regional Public Health, says the funding for the peer counselling programme comes under the Wairarapa Community Breastfeeding 3 Year Plan (2016-2019) and aims to improve breastfeeding statistics post six weeks.

"Actions in the plan include the peer counselling programme. We have developed a resource to identify the counsellors by personal photograph and a short biography, which allows mothers to select a peer support that they may feel the most comfortable with."

“We want to make breastfeeding as easy and as supported as we can to ensure Wairarapa mothers have all they need to be able to keep their babies exclusively breastfed for as long as possible. We know it’s best for the baby, and so we need it to be good for the mother too,” said Sarah.

Caption: From left, Rietha De Coning, Lactation Consultant, Julia Oldroyd and Sarah Taylor-Waitere with the breastfriends peer counsellor biography poster that allows breastfeeding mums to select a one-to-one support person.

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For enquiries:

Anna Cardno, Communications Manager

anna.cardno@wairarapa.dhb.org.nz, 027 205 2422