

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Update – Baby Boxes Offer  
**REPORT OF:** Moira Richardson – Advanced Public Health Practitioner

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## Summary

This report provides a summary of progress in delivering the Baby Boxes offer to Gateshead families.

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### 1. Background

The Make a Million or 'MaM' campaign of the Children's Foundation started in June 2022 and aims to provide all first-time parents in North-East England with a Baby Box.

Gateshead was an initial pilot area for this initiative, with 50 boxes available for distribution, focusing on first-time mothers with vulnerabilities identified by NHS maternity colleagues.

### 2. Expansion Phase

Family Hub and Start for Life funding has enabled us to purchase an additional 400 boxes and the North East Combined Authority have recently agreed (September 2024) to fund a further 175 boxes for Gateshead families.

Enrolment typically takes place at 20-28 weeks of pregnancy through a midwife or health visitor, with mothers receiving the box at 32 weeks gestation.

The boxes include essential resources such as a sleep sack, change mat, bath towel, first toothbrush, a blanket, thermometer – among other kit - to get families started with baby care. They also include specific toys, games and books to stimulate development - helping parents to promote the best start in life through a focus on playing, reading, singing and counting; all known to stimulate optimal brain development in children. The aim is also to support positive maternal mental well-being and parent-child bonding during the first 12 months of life.

### 3. Outcomes

To date, Gateshead have issued 260 Baby Boxes and have recently reviewed the eligibility criteria to enable maternity staff and health visitors to exercise their professional judgement on when to issue the box, depending on family circumstances. This might include when a box would benefit families with existing children.

Feedback from practitioners has been very positive on how the boxes provide parents with practical support on facilitating early brain development for their child.

Direct quotations from mothers who have received Baby Boxes include:

- *Really good idea for first-time parents and especially young parents like myself as it has given me more confidence.*
- *Seeing so many different baby activities inside the box gives me joy.*
- *I am very grateful for this gift - it gives me a feeling of inclusion as an immigrant. Thank you very much.*
- *The box helps me kickstart the baby's book, toy and essentials collection.*
- *The baby box is excellent and will help a lot of mums to support the development needs of their babies.*
- *The box was a lot bigger than I thought it was going to be and had a lot of things in that are helping so much.*

#### **4. Recommendations**

The Families OSC is asked to consider the contents of this report and to receive further updates.

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