'Building a community where people can live their best lives'

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St Chad's Baby Milk Support

Our Family Support team work closely with local families to support them through the challenges they face. Last year our Family Support Workers worked with 1,546 families through 1-1 support, group and advice sessions and providing emergency food and supplies. We noticed that there was a great need for help with access to baby milk, with prices increasing due to the cost-of-living crisis, but alongside this came challenges in storage, safety and providing the appropriate brand of milk for each child.

To overcome this, we developed a partnership with a local independent pharmacy and have designed our own voucher system which is numbered, logged and signed. Family Support Workers issue the family they are working with a milk voucher which they can then redeem at the pharmacy. The vouchers are then returned to us once redeemed, allowing us to reconcile them against the log. This allows the milk to be stored safely at the pharmacy, adhering to guidelines and allows the family to receive the correct milk supporting their dietary requirements. There are no eligibility requirements for the referral other than the family living in our local area. Between January to September 2024, 37 vouchers were given to families. The vouchers are funded through Gateshead Council's Household Support Funding (HSF). We make a bulk purchase of approximately £300 per quarter. We are very grateful to Gateshead Council for their support with this initiative.

"Thank you for helping me, my husband works but I don't. I had to give up my job in early pregnancy as I was really poorly, so I haven't been entitled to maternity pay. I have been so worried about how we would afford everything we needed for the baby, St Chad's has taken that worry away."

"I am an asylum seeker and I am not entitled to healthy start vouchers, so it is a big help to be able to get a milk voucher as baby milk is so expensive for my family"

We are proud to have been able to develop this partnership approach to supporting families in our community.