

ShowCase

Breastfeeding learning demonstration site

Topic: Breastfeeding

Organisation: Brighton and Hove City Teaching PCT; Brighton and Hove Children and Young People's Trust

Location: Brighton (South East England)

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Overview

This project aimed to increase exclusive breastfeeding at six to eight weeks among women who initiate breastfeeding, and to increase the length of time that mothers breastfeed (exclusively and partially) to six months and beyond.

Service improvements, particularly around antenatal preparation and postnatal support, were identified as key areas to focus on. Using findings from scoping research, Brighton and Hove Primary Care Trust created its first long-term strategy for breastfeeding, which focuses on creating a better support service for new mothers around breastfeeding.

One of the recommendations in the strategy that was piloted during the timescale of this project was a fathers' pack, which acknowledged the role and influence of fathers in supporting breastfeeding.

Results of fathers' pack pilot

- The resource was welcomed by participants and all thought it was very worthwhile to have information specifically for men
- The pack was seen to be most useful for first time fathers and if provided early in pregnancy
- The most notable gains for men were ideas on how they could support and provide practical help to their breastfeeding partners

1. BEHAVIOUR

- To increase the number of women who are exclusively breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks among those who initially breastfed
- To increase the length of time that mothers breastfeed (exclusively and partially) to six months and beyond

2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- One-to-one interviews with mothers
- Focus groups and interviews with a wide range of health professionals
- One-to-one interviews and focus groups with fathers
- Pre-testing of fathers' pack

3. THEORY

Secondary research drew attention to the fact that breastfeeding is not solely behaviour; it is governed by both biology and culture.

Five phases of breastfeeding were proposed;

1. Intention to breastfeed
2. Initiation of breastfeeding
3. Establishment – breastfeeding to six weeks
4. Maintenance – Breastfeeding to six months during the milk only period
5. Continuation – Breastfeeding beyond six months, alongside feeding solids

4. INSIGHT

- Mothers felt unprepared for the realities of breastfeeding, suggesting a lack of effective antenatal preparation
- Mothers were saddened they gave bottles and wanted support to continue exclusive breastfeeding
- Support (including domestic chores and emotional) from partners, family and friends helped mothers to breastfeed
- Services were fragmented and there was lack of communication between health professionals
- Mothers often got mixed messages from different service providers
- Cross-professional training was needed to minimise conflicting advice.

5. EXCHANGE

Barriers

- Breastfeeding is time-consuming and allows less time with other children
- Breastfeeding is not the social norm – Some women feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about breastfeeding in public and there are few facilities
- Cost of breast pads, nursing bras, nipple cream

Benefits

- Health benefits to baby and mother
- Fulfilment of obligation to be a good mother
- Facilitates bonding with baby
- Less expensive than formula

6. COMPETITION

- Formula feeding is the norm in the UK and is often perceived as being equivalent to breastfeeding
- Formula manufacturers have extensive marketing, advertising and distribution budgets, giving formula a high profile and making it readily accessible
- Third-party pressure (such as from partners) on mothers to switch to formula feeding

7. SEGMENTATION

- Segmentation focused on mothers who want to breastfeed and support them in continuing to do so during the maintenance and continuation phases.

8. METHODS MIX

- Breastfeeding helpline
- Father's pack