

2011

Breastfeeding Continuation Incentive Schemes:

Experiences from the North West



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Overview

Infant Mortality rates are still a concern in a number of areas in the North West and breastfeeding can make a significant impact on this (4 percentage points of the 10% gap in infant mortality rates), if rates were to improve to as good as the least deprived. All North West PCTs submitted recovery plans in 2010 to get back on trajectory for 2% yr on yr increase in breastfeeding initiation rates. However continuation rates remain a concern and need improvement if health benefits to infants and mothers are to be maximised.

Trafford is a less deprived area and was used as a local benchmark continuation rate for 'least deprived'; the Trafford breastfeeding continuation rate was 53% in Q1 2010-2011¹. Appendix 1 shows NW PCTs breastfeeding continuation rates compared to Trafford in Q1 2010-2011. There were five PCTs with a gap of 30 or more percentage points from Trafford breastfeeding continuation rates. All had already received additional DH monies between 2008-2010 to move towards Baby Friendly Status and increased breastfeeding and initiation rates. Due to the numbers of A&E admissions for asthma in four of these, and for diabetes in four of these, improving breastfeeding continuation rates could also reduce future health care spend in these areas.

The participating Primary Care Trusts

All five PCTs identified as above were offered around £15,000 to introduce a breastfeeding continuation incentive scheme; four expressed an interest in taking part. The fifth PCT was to launch a breastfeeding peer support scheme and was concerned about the potential for 'mixed messages' and did not take part.

The participating PCTs were asked to use the monies to develop a local breastfeeding continuation incentive scheme targeted to areas where there was a particularly low breastfeeding continuation rate. The aim of additional funding was to secure an improvement in breastfeeding continuation rates so the following outputs and outcomes would be expected:

- (1) An improvement in the numbers of women breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks so that the PCT has a continuation rate of *"at least current rate (Q1 2010-2011) plus 5%"* by end Q4 2010-2011. (This will mean that only Halton & St Helen's and Tameside & Glossop will remain more than 30% gap from Trafford by end of financial year, both potentially with a 32% gap, down from a 37% gap).
- (2) A targeted approach to offer a reward scheme in the locality areas with highest drop-off rates – this might be through the development of a scheme to award a breastfeeding certificate or to reward with a fruit and vegetable box with access to cooking skills support through local children's centres. The numbers of families eligible would be low, but longer breastfeeding/breastfeeding at all could give significant family health gains.
- (3) It was expected that schemes would include a number of social value outcomes which would be agreed locally. Schemes that simply provided shopping vouchers would not be agreed.

PCTs were also expected to meet the coverage criteria of the breastfeeding continuation indicator (Vital Sign B11) in both Q2 and Q3 2010-2011 if not already achieving this.

¹ All percentages are drawn from Vital Signs Monitoring Returns after DH validation.

The breastfeeding continuation incentive schemes

The schemes were briefly as follows;

Blackpool – offer of a gift each week for 8 weeks, tied to face-to-face contact with peer breastfeeding supporter. The gifts were selected to allow timely discussion of issues that might help continuation of breastfeeding.

Ashton, Leigh and Wigan – aligned to breastfeeding peer support in three areas targeted according to being a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA – a measure of deprivation for a small geographical area) and within the top 20% worst performing areas for breastfeeding drop-off rates. Incentive monies used to fund thank you vouchers (beauty and leisure) to families who wished to complete an evaluation form after receiving support from the '*mymummydoes*' peer support programme. 50 vouchers were available so that the effect of offering an incentive to half of the eligible population could be explored.

Halton & St Helen's – staged vouchers in the first postnatal weeks at key points known to have substantial likelihood of breastfeeding discontinuation; vouchers are collected from the breastfeeding peer support group. (Due to a new IT system being implemented, this PCT chose to delay the continuation incentive scheme and it will report December 2011).

Tameside & Glossop – the provision of fruit and vegetable shopping vouchers to families where the baby continued to be breastfed, up to the time of the 6-8 infant wellbeing check. (This scheme will complete September 2011).

Details of the two completed schemes are given in Appendix 2

Findings from completed schemes

The Views of Families

Overall, women were very positive about the gift/reward scheme. Whilst the gifts were not identified to alter or influence their decision to breastfeeding *per se*, the ongoing receipt of 'quality' gifts was identified as a motivating factor for women's continuation. Positive feedback was obtained in relation to the variation of the gifts, their appropriateness, the discussions they stimulated, and the thought and care that had gone into their selection.

- The gifts encouraged women to
 - take 'time out' for themselves
 - to breastfeed outside the home environment
 - use opportunities to spend time with members of their personal networks.
- Peer supporters also fed back mothers views

"Most mothers said it was really nice to receive a treat and a lovely surprise"

Mothers were thrilled but seemed more thrilled with the beauty voucher rather than the exercise voucher!

One scheme used the incentive as a gift to encourage completion of an evaluation form about the peer support that they had received; half of all women completing a form said the inclusion of a gift encouraged them to complete the evaluation, half said they would have completed the evaluation form anyway.

The Views of Health Professionals

In both the areas that have completed their local schemes, the avenue for delivering the incentive to women was through local peer breastfeeding support services.

Uneasiness at the beginning of the schemes was common and expressed as being largely around the possible interpretation as 'paying' or 'bribing' mothers to breastfeed. Blackpool peer supporters did feel it was legitimate to recognise and reward breastfeeding and enthusiasm increased once discussions commenced about choosing gifts that would enable meaningful discussions around breastfeeding to take place. Once the schemes commenced and women reported favourably about the scheme and the quality of the gifts, unease dissipated. The giving of certificates for the number of days /weeks breastfeeding took place was acceptable to peer supporters and well received by mothers.

In Ashton, Leigh and Wigan, there was a greater feeling of 'legitimacy' where vouchers were used to encourage return of peer support service evaluation forms, rather than to 'reward' for continued breastfeeding

Outcomes

Each scheme decided upon the relevant Social Values for its local context

Blackpool

A key benefit of the scheme is that it enabled regular contact between the peer supporters and women. The quality of this relationship appeared significant for a number of reasons;

- a) mothers were more likely to trust the support provided, encouraging ongoing access;
- b) women more likely to disclose wider socio-emotional issues and barriers that may impact upon breastfeeding (e.g. mental health concerns and problematic familial relationships),
- c) it provided opportunities for peer supporters to appreciate the experiences and values of the mother, which in turn enabled tailored support to be provided, and
- d) it enhanced emotional wellbeing through women feeling 'cared for'.

Engaging with a range of partners enabled good value to be obtained when purchasing the gifts, whilst ensuring that no sponsorship was taken from companies that are manufacturers or distributors of breast milk substitutes under the terms of the WHO Code. The schemes also helped raise the profile of breastfeeding locally, and supported the existing work with businesses that is being undertaken to welcome breastfeeding in public areas.

In addition, improvements in data quality were achieved as a direct result of the incentive scheme. The Star Buddy peer supporters carefully tracked feeding status from first contact within 48 hours of discharge from hospital through to 8 weeks, often with several contacts each week and with at least one face to face contact each week. The feeding status at 8 weeks recorded by the Star Buddy peer supporters in Q4 was compared with the feeding status recorded at the babies 6-8 week check. Several discrepancies were noted, all in favour of bottle-feeding. One concerned a mother who had expressed her breast milk and fed it by bottle since birth to beyond 8 weeks, but whose baby was recorded as bottle-fed at the baby check. Others may have been associated with data that was missing from the baby check and was collected retrospectively at the end of the quarter. A new system has now been implemented across Blackpool where Star Buddy peer supporters who are in face to face contact with mothers then complete the feeding assessment sheet.

The Star Buddy peer support programme, including the incentive scheme, has been evaluated by University of Central Lancashire and a paper is currently under preparation detailing the findings.

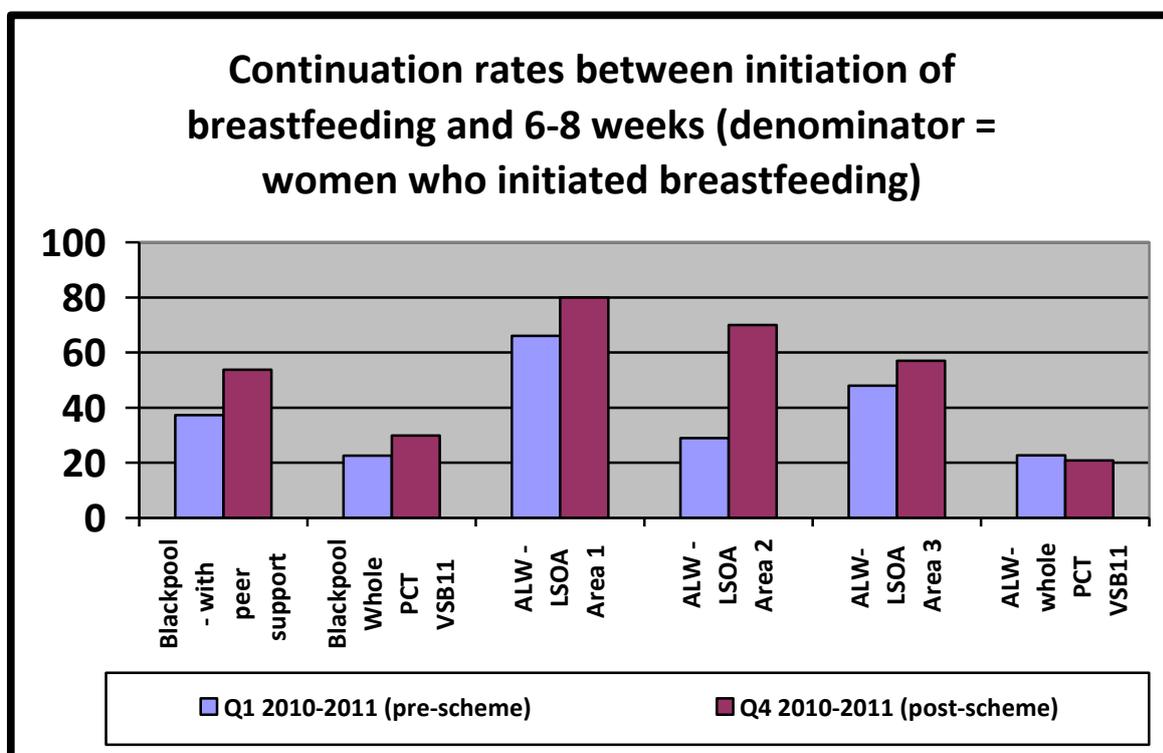
Ashton, Leigh & Wigan

Women using the *mymummydoes* breastfeeding peer support service were more likely to complete an evaluation form about the service if they had received the gift incentive with the form (52%v 29%), helping commissioners understand whether the peer support service meets womens needs. An increased usage of local breastfeeding support groups was also seen. Small numbers participating in the incentive scheme means that the effect of the beauty and exercise vouchers on emotional health and physical wellbeing has not been evaluated. However it is likely that, similar to Blackpool findings, enhanced emotional wellbeing would be reported by women because they feel 'cared for'.

The negotiations with partners to secure provision of the leisure centre and beauty college vouchers also accompanied Breastfeeding Awareness training for staff and students of both organisations to help them understand the importance of breastfeeding and widen the impact of the scheme.

Breastfeeding Continuation rates

Within the populations that the scheme targeted, the improvement of breastfeeding continuation rates at the conclusion of the scheme was expected to be at least 5% (baseline Q1 2010-2011). All areas participating in the continuation incentive scheme achieved the 5% increase in continuation *in the populations that were targeted from initiation of breastfeeding*. The table below shows breastfeeding continuation rates following the continuation incentive scheme. Blackpool data is on a ‘population receiving support’ basis because all women initiating breastfeeding have the option of having peer breastfeeding support. Ashton, Leigh & Wigan were targeting the peer breastfeeding support at three particular populations at LSOA level as part of a pilot scheme. Whole population PCT level Vital Signs Performance for the same period is shown for information.



Note: the VSB11 Breastfeeding at 6-8weeks indicator is given above for information; VSB11 uses a denominator of all infants due a 6-8week check, regardless of if they have ever been breastfed.

Blackpool

Blackpool eligibility criteria for the continuation incentive scheme involved all Blackpool women who initiated breastfeeding whose babies would be 6-8 weeks of age in Q4 2010-2011, and who signed up to community peer support (Star Buddy) whilst on the postnatal ward – this was 141 women. The breastfeeding status at 6-8 weeks for these women was compared to the continuation rates seen by peer supported women from Q1 2010/2011 in order to assess the impact of the incentive scheme. This included breastfeeding mothers who did not engage with the community peer support or the

incentive scheme. Across Blackpool as a whole there was an improvement in breastfeeding continuation of over 16 percentage points. An increase of 10 percentage points could be directly attributed to the gift giving and extra face to face contact mothers had with the Star Buddy peer supporters; over a third of women supported were from the 10% most deprived super-output areas. An increase of a further 6 percentage points resulted from an improvement in data quality as a result of the incentive scheme. In effect giving intensive peer support to 141 women over the 6 month period lead to an increased rate of breastfeeding continuation; this was exhibited as an increase of 7.3% in VSB11 (between Q1 2010/2011 and Q4 2010/2011) performance at the PCT level.

Ashton, Leigh and Wigan

Ashton, Leigh and Wigan eligibility criteria for the scheme was based on women choosing to receive breastfeeding peer support from the *mymummydoes* new breastfeeding peer support home visiting programme – this was 111 mothers. The monies to support a continuation incentive scheme were used to pump prime the breastfeeding peer support scheme so that both could be trialled concurrently. All targeted areas in Ashton, Leigh and Wigan showed improvement, of between 9 and 40 percentage points, apparently going against the trend for the PCT level indicator. Whilst it does not appear that there was an effect at PCT VSB11 level, there was a clear effect at the targeted local super output areas level. This is important for the wellbeing of infants and an important public health intervention in wellbeing challenged communities. The effect of the incentive scheme *per se* is difficult to identify, but commissioners believe it has a social value and have decided to continue with the incentive scheme as part of the now commissioned peer breastfeeding support home visiting programme which will be available to every new mother across Ashton, Leigh and Wigan from September 2011.

What did the schemes cost?

Both schemes were dependent upon there being a peer breastfeeding support scheme in the area which was able to make the incentive scheme effective. Ashton, Leigh and Wigan's peer support and incentive scheme cost £15,000 (largely to enable peer support scheme provision), with incentives costing £0 per family taking part as no leisure or beauty vouchers have been redeemed to date! If vouchers were to be redeemed in any significant volume then the costs of the scheme would additionally need to factor in the administrative time to validate the redemptions and to action payment to the leisure and beauty suppliers. Peer supporters reported that the excitement of receiving the voucher encouraged the return of the evaluation form, but families did not appear to go on to actually redeem the voucher

Blackpool had an existing breastfeeding peer support scheme and the additional continuation incentive scheme cost £72.66 per family taking part, with the gifts costing £52.11 and extra wages, travel and associated costs being £20.55 per family.

Key points for using incentive schemes in the future

- Use a continuation incentive scheme in combination with
 - Breastfeeding peer support services because it appears to help peer supporters develop and maintain a relationship of trust and support.
 - Other work you are undertaking to promote understanding of the benefits of breastfeeding and welcoming breastfeeding within businesses in your area.
- Advertise the scheme extensively with health professionals so that unease with 'rewarding' women to breastfeed can be worked through.
- Consider the social values that you might also achieve through using an incentive scheme.
- Be aware that women and peer supporters find carefully chosen gifts a useful discussion prompt to explore feelings and experiences of continuing breastfeeding (see Blackpool scheme). However it may be more financially prudent to only pay for any leisure and beauty activities on the redemption of a time limited voucher rather than buying the vouchers up front.



Need more information?

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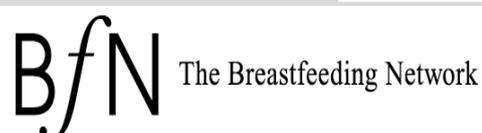
Ashton, Leigh & Wigan – Alison.Healey@alwpct.nhs.uk

PCT	Breastfeeding 6-8 weeks variance from IM Scarf required (suggest Trafford as baseline = 53% Q1 2010-11)	Previously Received DH breastfeeding rate improvement monies? and TREND in continuation rates	(From local NW analysis)	
			A&E contacts for asthma 0-18	A&E contact re Diabetes 0-18
Ashton, Leigh & Wigan	-31	Yes UP	2 nd best quartile in England.	2 nd Worst quartile in England
Blackburn With Darwen	-22	N		
Blackpool	-31	Yes LEVEL	2 nd Worst quartile in England	2 nd Worst quartile in England
Bolton	-22	Y		
Bury	- 16	N		
Central & Eastern Cheshire	- 13	Y		
Central Lancashire	- 21	Y		
Cumbria	- 25	Y		
East Lancashire	- 19	Y		
Halton and St Helens	- 37	Yes LEVEL	Worst quartile England	2 nd Worst quartile in England
Heywood, Middleton & Rochdale	- 22	Y		
Knowsley	- 34	Yes UP	Worst in NW	Worst quartile England
Liverpool	- 28	Y		
Manchester	- 13	Y		
North Lancashire	- 14	Y		
Oldham	- 20	N		
Salford	- 15	Y		
Sefton	- 26	Y		
Stockport	- 8	N		
Tameside and Glossop	- 37 Drop	Yes LEVEL	2 nd Worst quartile in England	Best quartile in England
Trafford	= (used as baseline)	N		
Warrington	- 19	Y		
West Cheshire	- 18	N		
Wirral	- 26	Y		

Description of the Blackpool scheme	Total cost to scheme £72.66 per family, of which the gifts cost £52.11 per family, and extra wages, travel and associated costs were £20.55 per family	Total monetary value per family £71.99.
	Mothers participating in the scheme were offered a gift each week they breastfed, tied into a face-to-face meeting with a Star Buddy peer supporter. The gifts were selected to allow timely discussion of issues that might help continuation of breastfeeding.	
	<u>Week 1</u> : silver photo frame (congratulations and introduction gift).	£5 (<i>cost £4.75 inclusive of postage through bulk buying from John Lewis</i>).
	<u>Week 2</u> : Healthy snacks Graze Box of dried fruits (encouraging mums to remember to eat and to focus on healthy eating whenever possible).	£3.19.
	<u>Week 3</u> : Bath pampering set (encouraging mums to relax and look after themselves, enabling discussion of expressing if required).	£10 (<i>general public offer 3 for price of 2 used, cost £6.67</i>).
	<u>Week 4</u> : Choice of Magazines (encouraging mums to sit down and relax, and to breastfeed whilst reading).	£2.50.
	<u>Week 5</u> : Cafe voucher for use in Debenhams or Children Centres (encouraging mums to breastfeed in public. Debenhams were one of the first cafes in Blackpool to sign up to the 'breastfeeding out and about scheme' that welcomes breastfeeding in Blackpool).	£6 (<i>Debenhams agreed to extend its coffee and cake deal, which had just finished, for the incentive scheme, cost £5</i>).
	<u>Week 6</u> : Swim vouchers (encouraging mothers to use local Council swimming pools, either by themselves or with baby and build regular exercise into their lives).	£10 (<i>Blackpool Council swimming pools provided one free voucher for the incentive scheme for each one purchased, cost £5</i>).
	<u>Week 7</u> : Meal Deal from Marks and Spencer with bath salts sachet (a meal treat for two when life is busy with new baby, and Marks and Spencer enthusiastically supported the 'breastfeeding welcome' scheme in Blackpool).	£5.30 (<i>Marks and Spencer's gave a bath crystals sachet with each meal deal voucher purchased for the incentive scheme, cost £5</i>).
<u>Week 8</u> : Beauty Pampering session from beautician based at Unity College Children Centre (encouraging women to look after themselves, to feel good about themselves, to be proud that they breastfed to 8 weeks, and to encourage them to access the Children Centres).	£30 (<i>Diva Beauty based at a Children Centre supported the incentive scheme by providing £30 of treatments for £20</i>).	



The incentives!



Description of the Ashton, Leigh & Wigan scheme	Total cost to scheme currently zero as no vouchers have been redeemed! Potential cost £10 per family	Total monetary value items per family £15
	<p>Breastfeeding mothers in the targeted areas were referred by Midwifery service and Breastfeeding support workers offered a minimum of 2 face to face contacts with additional home visits, telephone/text support dependent on family needs, under the <i>mymummydoes</i> breastfeeding peer support home visiting programme.</p> <p>Vouchers available to first 50 mothers to complete evaluation of “<i>mymummydoes</i>” support from target areas. “<i>mymummydoes</i>” breastfeeding peer supporters were very excited to present the vouchers but were given clear direction to tell families that the vouchers were a thank you for being part of the programme and that in order to get very valuable feedback for the future of the service we would value the return of the evaluation form.</p> <p>The vouchers were given with the <i>distribution</i> of the evaluation form, not on completion and return of the form. This was because the evaluation forms were anonymous and returned by post. To give the voucher on completion of the form would mean the peer supporter picking up the evaluation form and giving the voucher at that point, hence undermining the anonymity. It was believed that the receipt of the voucher s would encourage return of evaluation form as a matter of good will.</p>	
	<p>Beauty Package at local Beauty College: option of one of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manicure and eyebrow shape 2. Pedicure and eyebrow shape 3. Basic Facial, and nail file and polish 4. Body Massage 	Face value £10.00 but to be recharged to programme at £5.00
	<p>2 vouchers for instructor led exercise classes at Local Leisure centres run by Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust</p> <p>Expiry date of vouchers was June 30th 2011 (12 weeks after last women supported by <i>mymummydoes</i> and received vouchers and evaluation form.</p>	Face value and recharge value £5 (two vouchers at £2.50 each)
 <p>The bottom section of the table contains two logos side-by-side. On the left is the NHS logo with the text 'Ashton, Leigh and Wigan' below it. On the right is the BfN logo with the text 'The Breastfeeding Network' below it.</p>		