

Using a social marketing approach to gain the views of two socially deprived areas to improve the support and quality of information made available to increase breastfeeding initiation and continuation

Breastfeeding has an essential role to play in improving public health and reducing health inequalities. It provides health benefits to both mother and baby. Evidence shows that breastfeeding is lower in disadvantaged groups - younger, less-educated and lower income groups. In 2009/10 CECPCT initiation rate was 64%, compared to 73% in Worcestershire, our comparable ONS PCT. There is a variation between the two maternity units with Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust rate for CECPCT babies at 59%, and East Cheshire Hospital Trust at 70%.

Questionnaires and focus groups were used to find out the views of mothers, fathers, close relatives, health professionals and local businesses on breastfeeding in the Crewe and Winsford areas where the breastfeeding rates are low.

The results showed that younger mothers were less likely to breastfeed, most mothers made their own decision about how to feed their baby and 70% perceived bottle feeding to be the 'normal' way to feed. However there were a number of perceived barriers to breastfeeding, including too much time and effort, concern about involvement of the father, painful and tiring, difficult to return to work and embarrassing in public. Of the 94 businesses contacted only 7 returned questionnaires indicating a lack of support and interest.



Breastfeeding focus group Meeting May 2010

The study resulted in a number of recommendations which should improve the uptake and continuation of breastfeeding – widening and improving public perceptions of breastfeeding; improving the quality information to parents; and improved support for mothers. Two projects now underway are the development of a local website to help provide local information to mothers and a local award scheme for local businesses that provide that little extra for mothers breastfeeding their babies.

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