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POLLOK BREASTFEEDING PROJECT
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

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A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Breast milk has been shown to be nutritious, to protect against infections, reduce allergies, and be protective against gastrointestinal illness. Benefits to mothers are economic, physiological and psychological. In Scotland the rates of breastfeeding are low.

In 1990, half of the mothers breastfed their babies at birth, and only 20% were still doing so four months later. Within Scotland there is great variability, with some areas recording less than 10% for initial breastfeeding rates, and others rising to 60%. A government target for breastfeeding rates in Scotland was outlined in the Scottish Diet report. The aim of this target was to increase the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies for the first six weeks of life from around 30% to more than 50%.

Various initiatives and research studies have resulted from the setting of this target. These initiatives include the piloting of Breastfeeding Groups as an approach which is designed to educate and inform not only breastfeeding mothers, but the professionals who care for these mothers during pregnancy and after the birth. Furthermore, such groups are intended to provide social support as a means of maintaining motivation and morale amongst these young women during a very demanding period of their lives.

The subject of this study, the Pollok Breastfeeding Group, aimed to increase the proportion of women breastfeeding at birth from 16% to 26% over a five year period in the Pollok area.. The Pollok approach involved a training package designed to enhance the skills of professionals involved in Primary Care. It was also planned to encourage mothers to become lay breastfeeding support workers by offering them training once they had been involved with the group themselves.

