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POLLOK BREASTFEEDING PROJECT
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES	1
B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	3
C. METHOD AND SAMPLE	4
D. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	6
E. RESEARCH FINDINGS	9
F. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	41

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7	A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES
3	B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
4	C. METHOD AND SAMPLE
6	D. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS
8	E. RESEARCH FINDINGS
41	F. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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.

The desired outcome was to produce a model of good practice at Pollok which could be adopted by other primary care teams. A successful bid for funding from the Primary Care Development Fund in April 1995 enabled Pollok Primary Care Team to further the aims and objectives of the Pollok Breastfeeding Group. This research is designed evaluate the project to date.

The second objective was to provide a model of good practice in FDI which could be adopted by other countries. A number of factors led to the success of the FDI Development Fund in April 1997 enabled FDI to become a key issue to further the aims and objectives of the FDI Development Fund. The results of the fund are set out in the report to date.

B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted in the scheme. The following more specific objectives required to be addressed:

- to determine the approach perceived to be most useful by the primary care team
- to assess the perceived effectiveness of the training workshops by the different participants
- to gauge the perceived impact of the training on attitudes, skills, knowledge and confidence of the Primary Care Team
- to gauge the role played by the group in supporting breastfeeding over 6 weeks and up to 4 months
- to examine perceptions of the provision of information designed to develop knowledge and skills
- to explore the attitudes of GP's to this type of co-ordinated approach to breastfeeding within primary care, and their reasons for not attending workshops
- to review the monitoring procedure and its effectiveness
- to provide recommendations for any improvements which might be contemplated if this scheme was to be adopted in other areas.

B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted in the scheme. The following more specific objectives were to be achieved:

- to determine the approach perceived to be most useful by the primary care team
- to assess the perceived effectiveness of the training workshops by the different participants
- to gauge the perceived impact of the training on attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and confidence of the primary care team
- to gauge the role played by the group in supporting breastfeeding work in weeks and up to 4 months
- to examine perceptions of the provision of information designed to develop knowledge and skills
- to explore the attitudes of GPs to this type of co-ordinated approach to breastfeeding within primary care and their reasons for not attending workshops
- to review the monitoring procedure and its effectiveness
- to provide recommendations for any improvements which might be contemplated if this scheme was to be adopted in other areas.

C. METHOD AND SAMPLE

The main aim of this study is to understand how effective the approach is perceived to be by those involved. The population for this research consists of less than 50 women in the Pollok area, and the primary care team at Pollok. The nature of the objectives and the small size of the total population suggested that a qualitative approach is adopted.

Monitoring Feeding Practice

There was a small amount of analysis to be conducted of the monitoring data which has been collected concerning the women. The analysis included such factors as the intention to breastfeed and attend the support group, and the ensuing experiences and duration of breastfeeding.

As stated in the proposal, we would be reluctant to draw firm conclusions from such a small number, preferring to analyse numbers for each of the key variables within the report as a form of background to the research.

Interviewing Health Professionals

A combination of one focus group with the primary care team, and 2 depth interviews with GP's, were attempted. Recruitment was to be conducted by the client. In the event attempts by the researcher and the client failed to recruit two GP's and we were only able to interview one.

Interviewing Breastfeeding Women

The brief suggested that one focus group be conducted with breastfeeding mothers who had participated in the group. To establish if there are any ways in which the current method could be improved, it was decided that the research should include a second group with mothers who chose not to go to the group. Mothers were recruited by the client for these two groups.

Research was conducted by Lyn McGregor between Friday 13 September and Tuesday 1 October 1996.

Interviewing Elizabeth Winters

The first segment of the film group is centered with Elizabeth Winters who had participated in the group. To establish if there were any other women who had participated in the group, it was decided that the research should include a second group with women who claim not to be in the group. Mothers were recruited by the film in these two groups.

Research was completed by Lynn Minkgen between Friday 13 September and Tuesday 1 October 1988.

D. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The monitoring data reveals that 7 of the 40 women who were breastfeeding in Pollok during the 4 month period under evaluation had attended the support group. Of these 7, all breastfed until the 6 week stage, and 6 continued to do so. These mothers did not choose to supplement with formula during the initial 6 week period.

The picture which emerges for the majority of women who did not attend the support group is more varied, but it would be dangerous to conclude that this was as a result of not attending the group as many other factors such as strength of commitment may have influenced success and attendance at the group.

Health Visitors welcomed the training provided and feel more motivated to encourage and support breastfeeding as a result of this training. Self confidence has been enhanced by increased knowledge and skill development.

These professionals view the support group as an excellent initiative and endeavour to encourage women to attend. They are of the opinion that the combination of training for professionals and provision of a support group have gone a long way towards meeting the needs of breastfeeding women. Some perceive a need for one professional to be appointed not only to spearhead activities but to provide a more flexible response to needs.

D. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The monitoring data reveals that 7 of the 40 women who were participating in the program during the 4 month period under evaluation had needed the support group. Of these 7, all benefited until the 6 week stage, and 6 continued to do so. These women did not discuss or experiment with formulae during the initial 6 week period.

The picture which emerges for the majority of women who did not attend the support group is more varied, but it would be dangerous to conclude that this was so as a result of not attending the group as many other factors such as strength of commitment may have influenced success and attendance at the group.

Health Visitors welcomed the training provided and feel more motivated to encourage and support breastfeeding as a result of the training. Self confidence has been enhanced by increased knowledge and skill development.

These professionals view the support group as an excellent initiative and endeavour to encourage women to attend. They are of the opinion that the combination of training for professionals and provision of a support group have gone a long way towards meeting the needs of breastfeeding women. Some perceive a need for one professional to be appointed not only to specialist activities but to provide a more flexible response to needs.

The training workshops were perceived to be interesting and involving. The Health Visitors who attended appreciated the refresher on theory and would have accepted more in this area. The inclusion of the exploration of prevailing cultural attitudes increased the empathy towards women trying to breastfeed in Pollok. Some of the methods employed in the workshops were less popular than others. Greater use of video materials were recommended for future training provision.

Women who attended the support group identified several advantages including the opportunity to gain advice from others with similar experience, and the availability of social contact and emotional support. For women who did not have a role model or source of advice at home the ability to meet others who are breastfeeding is vital. Such contact helps to validate their own behaviour. However, some find the idea of joining a group to be an emotional hurdle to be overcome and it may be wise to emphasise the drop-in relaxed nature of the group in future communications to allay such fears.

Women who breastfeed would welcome greater provision of information about positioning, expressing, going back to work, coping with negative comments, and other common 'problems' or experiences. This information would increase self confidence. The current information which is provided is welcomed by those who receive it, but this provision could be improved.

The report is limited in its assessment of GP attitudes due to the reluctance of GPs to participate in the study. Only one GP was willing to assist at the time of the study and none attended the workshops although invited. This appears to reflect the perceived role and level of involvement in provision of advice to breastfeeding women. The women themselves have generally had little reason to consult their GP, but when they do this experience disappoints due to the perceived lack of knowledge and understanding encountered.

In conclusion, this initiative has proved to be very effective in supporting breastfeeding in Pollok. Those women who have attended the group benefited from the experience, and the professionals who attended the workshop are now more knowledgeable and motivated by their own admission. The report identifies the need for flexible provision of one-to-one support to meet urgent needs as they arise, and the greater provision of information to facilitate self-help.

In addition, the committee was asked to be very clear in recommending the inclusion of a 75-hour course which would be required for graduation from the program, and the program was also asked to include the workshop and any other activities and materials that would be required for admission. The report also included the need for further provision of one-to-one support to meet special needs in this area, and the greater provision of information to facilitate self-

help.

E. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this project are presented under the following sections:

- The Monitoring Data
- The Primary Team's View of the Approach
- Perceived Effectiveness of the Training Workshops
- Perceived Impact of Training
- The Role of the Group in Supporting Breastfeeding
- The Provision of Information
- GP Attitudes and Involvement
- Conclusions and Recommendations

E. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this project are presented under the following sections:

- The Learning Curve
- The Primary Team's View of the Approach
- Perceived Effectiveness of the Training Workshops
- Perceived Impact of Training
- The Role of the Group in Supporting Breakthrough
- The Position of Information
- OP Attitudes and Involvement
- Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The Monitoring Data

Audit of Feeding Practice data was collected by Health Visitors when the child reached 4 months of age. System Three were asked to analyse the data of the 40 mothers who had intended to breastfeed at the ante-natal stage, or had subsequently decided to try breastfeeding.

Sample size

Total number of questionnaires returned = 40. As a result of the small numbers we would caution the reader to treat the findings as indicative of this group of mothers only and not to generalise the findings to other mothers. Comparisons between those who attended the group, and those who did not, are quite dangerous based upon such a small universe. We have avoided the use of percentages in most cases due to the very small numbers. In those instances where they are used it is to try and provide some sense of proportion.

Intention to breast feed

The vast majority of expectant mothers taking part in the exercise intended, before the birth, to breast feed their babies (85%). Of the remaining 15%, half had intended to use formula and the others were undecided.

Attendance at Support Group

Only 7 of the 40 mothers actually attended the Group, although all were invited. All 7 of these mothers intended to breast feed.

When stopped breast feeding

Overall, a roughly a third of the mothers who intended to breast feed were still doing so at the time of the questionnaire.

Amongst the 7 who attended the group, 6 were still continuing to breastfeed at least at some of the feeds within the 24 hour period, the other mother had not intended to breastfeed for more than the first 6 weeks and duly gave up when the baby was 7 weeks old.

Of the remaining 33 mothers who did not attend the group, 10 continued to breastfeed according to the data collated, whilst the other 23 had abandoned their attempts to breastfeed for a variety of reasons which are analysed below. Of the 33, 16 had stopped breastfeeding their babies when they were between 1-6 weeks old, 1 had stopped at 8 weeks and 6 stopped after 12 or more weeks.

Supplementing with formula

Half of the 6 mothers who had attended the group and were still breastfeeding were supplementing their breastfeeding with formula feeds; 2 of these 3 had returned to employment. None of the mothers who attended the Group supplemented their own milk with formula when their baby was between 1-6 weeks, one had supplemented at 7 weeks and another at 8 weeks, while the other 2 who had begun to supplement did so after 16 weeks.

Of the 33 mothers who did not attend the group, 19 had started to give formula during the first 6 weeks, 1 had done so at 8 weeks, another at 10 weeks, and 3 after 12 weeks or more.

When stopped breast feeding

Overall, a roughly a third of the mothers who started to breast feed were still doing so at the end of the study.

Amongst the 7 who started the group, 6 were still wanting to breastfeed at least at some of the time when the 24 hour period, the other mother had not wanted to breastfeed for more than the first 6 weeks and only gave up when the baby was 7 weeks old.

Of the remaining 22 mothers who did not attend the group, 10 continued to breastfeed according to the data collected, whilst the other 12 had abandoned their attempts to breastfeed for a variety of reasons which are analysed below. Of the 10 who did supply breastmilk their babies were breastfed for 1-6 weeks, 1 for 6-10 weeks, 2 for 11-15 weeks and 5 stopped after 15 or more weeks.

Supplementing with formula

Half of the 6 mothers who had started the group and were still breastfeeding were supplementing their breastfeeding - 10 formula feeds, 2 of these 2 had started to supplement. None of the mothers who attended the Group supplemented their own milk with formula when their baby was between 1-6 weeks, one had supplemented at 7 weeks and another at 8 weeks, while the other 2 who had begun to supplement did so after 10 weeks.

Of the 22 mothers who did not attend the group, 19 had started to give formula during the first 6 weeks, 1 had done so at 8 weeks, another at 10 weeks, and 2 after 15 weeks or more.

Starting solids

Among the 7 who attended the Group, 6 gave their baby solids after the first 12 weeks, and the other mother started her baby on solids at 11 weeks. Among non-attendees at the Group, 9 had begun to give solids before the 12 week stage, 10 had started to give solids after 12 weeks, and no data was given on this for the remaining 14 women in the sample.

Reasons for stopping

The reasons given for stopping breast feeding that were cited by more than one respondent are shown below:

Too demanding/tiring/time consuming	15%
Returning to work (although not necessarily stopping altogether)	10%
Not enough milk/baby not satisfied	10%
Too painful	8%
Problems with siblings	5%

Other reasons each mentioned by one mother only:

- Baby not growing
- Colic
- Mastitis
- Going on holiday
- Not shown how to do it properly in hospital

In Conclusion

The above findings would indicate the following key points:

- the majority of mothers involved in this exercise intended to breastfeed prior to the birth of their baby
- out of the possible small number of 40, a total of 7 (almost 20%) had attended the group
- there is some evidence that attendance at the group enhanced the likelihood of success in breastfeeding to the 6 weeks stage with all 7 reaching this point, and 6 of the 7 continuing to breastfeed at the 4 month stage
- none of the mothers who attended the group supplemented with formula during the first 6 weeks of breastfeeding
- during the same six week period 44% of those who did not attend the group had abandoned breastfeeding, and 56% had supplemented with formula during this time
- only one mother who attended the group gave solids before 12 weeks, and this was at 11 weeks, whereas amongst the 33 women who did not attend the group 9 introduced solids before the 12 week stage

