Newsletter June 2016


During 2015 /16

The Scottish Government supported a number of stakeholder events around Scotland to engage with the public and our partners on a range of Maternal and Infant Nutrition topics.

We also commissioned an agency to carry out a substantial piece of research which gathered the public and professional insights into resources and messaging around breastfeeding. The findings have been used to develop new resources. During the next year we will continue to focus on quality improvement in all of the areas associated with breastfeeding. The research has already informed the new feedgood.scot website.

Breastfeeding Celebration Scotland: 20th and 21st June 2016

The Scottish Government will be celebrating success and promoting the national breastfeeding helpline and launching the new “feedgood.scot” website this week.

Celebrating Success: UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Accreditation in Scotland

The standards of care expected in Scotland are those within the achievement of UNICEF UK Baby Friendly accreditation. Scotland is now the first UK country to have all of its Maternity Units UNICEF accredited.

Scotland is also leading on community accreditations. Two neonatal units are stage 2 accredited and we can also report good progress amongst Healthcare Education providers. http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/ Many Scottish services will have had reaccreditation visits over the last year and have also been implementing the new UNICEF Standards at the same time. The Scottish Government appreciates the hard work required to implement, maintain and improve standards and applaud your effort – well done!
New Improved Website

By the end of June we will soft launch the new *feedgood.scot* breastfeeding site for expectant/new mothers and health professionals. We have completed most of the basic breastfeeding sections but will add to it over the next year. We are happy to consider your comments. Our users and partners are still being consulted to consider the wider content of the website. This may include staff training sections and wider maternal and infant nutrition topics. Our aim is to work towards it becoming a real “go to” site.

Website Design and Purpose

We have known for some time that our current feedgoodfactor.org was not receiving many visitors from the general public or professionals and the content and design needed updated. The commissioned research also confirmed that more people than ever are accessing websites on their mobile phone or tablet and so our new site has been built with that in mind.

The web site has been designed for mobile users in the first instance – the navigation is easy and well-structured and the ‘swipe’ design means that you can access the information you are looking for with a couple of swipes of your thumb – very handy for mums while their baby is feeding or for busy health professionals in the ward or out on visits.

The other key difference from the existing site and indeed many of the other feeding sites out there is the level of video content with real mums and dads talking about their experiences. The increased video and image content means that the copy can be kept short and simple – again making it easier for busy mums and health professionals.
Resources for Parents and Health Professionals

NHS Boards should have received new materials designed to support the launch of the new site and Breastfeeding Celebration Week:

- For Health Professionals Gestation / age in weeks calculator with weight conversion chart and feeding assessment guide, Baby tummy size key rings and stickers with the website address – please stick these on any material that are given out to mums.
- For expectant mums/new mothers - Fridge magnets with information about storing breast milk and wristbands – very handy to remind mums which breast they have just fed from!

The main purpose of these resources is to signpost parents and professionals to the website.

Support for Dads leaflet

The insight that we carried out indicated that dads would appreciate guidance about how they can support their partners; we are developing a leaflet aimed at dads/partners which gives them tips on how they can help their partner but also how they can bond with their baby. The leaflet includes experiences and testimonials from real dads and contact details for support organisations so that they know who to turn to if their partner is finding breastfeeding challenging.
Maternal and Infant Nutrition Framework Engagement and Progress 2015 /16

Every 3 months the Scottish Government has engaged with the NHS and special Boards Leads to map progress and share experiences. We have shared progress around a variety of topics including: preconception, maternal nutrition, maternal obesity, breastfeeding, weaning and toddler diets, community food initiatives, Healthy Start benefit and Healthy Start vitamin uptake.

Stakeholder Events
During the last 18 months we have also carried out a number of stakeholder events to gather your experiences and views to enable us to understand how we might progress with some of the framework work streams:

Implementing the WHO International Code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes:
Whilst strengthening the current legislation has been widely called for, it’s a complex issue. Similar to the difficulties encountered around trying to implement the minimum unit pricing for alcohol and smoking in public places ban. If Scotland were to legislate above and beyond the EU Formula milk directive, we would be open to considerable legal challenge. We will continue to work with UK agencies to engage with the EU on this issue.

In the meantime, this stakeholder event suggested a number of practical things we could work on. Additionally, NHS teams have been working to implement the UNICEF Baby Friendly standards and have been able to implement the WHO Code as a professional standard and local policy. The stakeholder participants discussed the most appropriate and effective ways of providing professionals with information on formula milks. For more information for Health Professionals on infant formula milks and specialist milks: http://www.firststepsnutrition.org/newpages/Infants/infant_feeding_infant_milks_UK.html
Peer Support across Scotland:
We met with parents, the voluntary breastfeeding organisations, peer supporters and professionals to map the availability of peer support across Scotland and to describe any on-going issues and solutions. A number of actions were identified for us to work on during 2016 and 17.

The role of the Infant Feeding Advisor, staff training and policies and guidelines:
Members of the Scottish Infant Feeding Advisors Network (SIFAN) had input into 3 workshops and agreed several actions that are designed to develop collaborative working on these topics. Over the next 18 months SIFAN will engage with other partners to establish an additional short life working group to progress on the stakeholder event recommendations and the wider breastfeeding agenda for Scotland.

Health Start Benefit and Healthy Start Vitamins:
The Scottish Government met quarterly with Healthy Start Leads from Boards and held 2 events with stakeholders to discuss the future of Healthy Start in Scotland. We are in discussion around how best to meet the needs of the Scottish population. As a start to this reform, the Scottish Government announced that all pregnant women will receive free vitamins from spring 2017.

The Scottish Government Maternal and Infant Nutrition Work plan 2016/17
In addition to the breastfeeding social marking work we will also continue to:

- Review the progress of the Framework implementation and the impact on the health of the population.
- Work on the recommendations and actions from the stakeholder events.
- Deliver the Maternal and Infant Nutrition Survey (to replace the UK Infant Feeding Survey).
- Gather review level information on interventions to support the Framework’s implementation.
- Communicate and work in partnership with a variety of teams to improve the delivery of the Framework objectives.
- Assist organisations to evaluate progress and to prioritise areas of the Framework that are likely to have most impact.
Beyond Breastfeeding Celebration Week

Linda Wolfson, Scottish Government
Maternal and Infant Nutrition Coordinator

Breastfeeding Rates
In 2015 63% of mothers initiated breastfeeding in Scotland and around 42% are still breastfeeding at 6 weeks (but only 36% exclusively). The early decrease happens mainly in the first 2 weeks and there has been little change in the rates over the decade. A range of practical and socio-demographic factors were associated with this.

Outlining our Issues
Most Scottish mothers know that breastfeeding is the best option and many have tried and been disappointed. The input into supporting breastfeeding and the effort that the NHS Boards and Voluntary sector has invested in supporting mothers has been substantial. The flip side of this is that the negative impact on the likelihood of successful breastfeeding has increased. Mothers and infants are more medically complex. Interventions in the antenatal, delivery and postnatal period have increased and hospital stays become shorter. The situation has become so difficult that the support and the people who provide it are being labelled as “too much pressure to breastfeed”.

The rates have been low for so long that many families have never experienced or even seen breastfeeding. It is now a common belief that formula milk does no harm and breastfeeding is an unnecessary “luxury option”. Sadly, many families are no longer prepared to cope with the “inconvenience” and “commitment” required to breastfeed and so there is no place for it in their way of life. This does not mean that there is no hope that rates will rise but it will require creative thinking and additional interventions.

Maintaining the Scottish Government’s Commitment to Breastfeeding
The recent Lancet series has highlighted the practical, emotional and cultural barriers that still stand in the way of women breastfeeding. It underlines the importance of breastfeeding in improving health, saving
lives and reducing costs in every country in the world, rich or poor. This is the most extensive piece of research into the impact of breastfeeding on the health in both the developing and developed world.

No family should have to feel guilty about not breastfeeding successfully, for not choosing to or face any implication that they have not done the best for their child. The Scottish Government supports the need not to put pressure on women to breastfeed, but to remove the barriers that currently stop women who want to breastfeed from doing so. We support the need to change the conversation around breastfeeding by stopping laying the responsibility for this major public health issue in the laps of individual women, acknowledging the role that politics and society has to play at every level.

The evidence from the Lancet series supports many of the elements we are already working on. Over the next 18 months the Scottish Infant Feeding Advisors Network will engage with other partners to establish additional short life working groups to progress on the stakeholder event recommendations and the wider breastfeeding agenda for Scotland.

Increasing breastfeeding rates is responsive to interventions: delivered in health systems and communities. The largest effects are achieved when interventions are delivered in combination”. These can include additional professional and peer support for mothers and, supportive rather than restrictive policies and sensitive messaging and effective resources for parents and the implementation of the UNICEF best practice standards.

In the meantime, Scotland, will be working on improving women’s experiences of breastfeeding and we will ask some key questions in the Maternal and Infant Nutrition survey to enable us to understand the issues and mothers experiences.

Read the Lancet’s breastfeeding series (2016)