



# Working with children and young people to increase awareness and knowledge about breastfeeding and early nutrition



Elizabeth Smith, NHS Ayrshire & Arran

Sarah Edwards and Amy Bryson, The Breastfeeding Network

## Aims

### Children and young people have:

A better understanding of the barriers to breastfeeding and why community support is important.

Increased knowledge and the ability to make healthy and informed choices about feeding babies

\* Normalising breastfeeding can provide future generations with information to support them in making decisions about feeding their own children

\* Breastfeeding rates in North Ayrshire are extremely low (17% breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks compared to the Scottish average of 26.8%)

\* Levels of childhood obesity in North Ayrshire are higher than the Scottish average

\* Babies born in areas of deprivation are least likely to be breastfed which can result in health inequalities



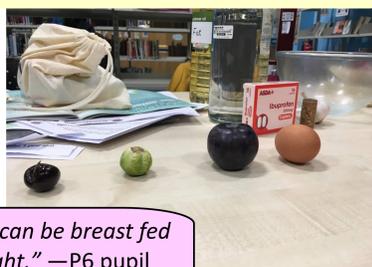
## Methods

Breastfeeding Network Peer Supporters worked with an early years centre, a primary school and a secondary school in North Ayrshire to develop and deliver sessions about infant feeding to 1188 pupils. We collected qualitative and quantitative feedback after each session. The accredited Iowa Infant Feeding Attitude Assessment Scale (IFAAS) [1] was used to measure attitudes of older children towards infant feeding. They completed the survey before and after each session. The IFAAS scores allowed us to assess if young people felt positive towards formula feeding, ambivalent or positive towards breastfeeding and to measure any shift in attitudes by comparing scores before and after the session.



### Topics covered included

- \* Mums and babies – discussions about mammals and how they feed their young
- \* How does breastfeeding work
- \* Attitudes to breastfeeding



"I learned that a lot of stuff was in breastmilk that I didn't know" - P6 pupil

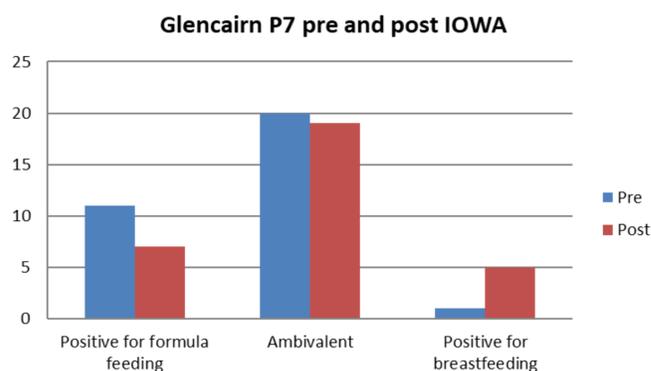
"I learned that babies can be breast fed for longer than I thought." - P6 pupil

## Results

The IFAAS scores for each session showed a general trend for a shift in attitudes from being positive to formula feeding before the session towards being positive to breastfeeding after the session.



We also looked at which specific points on the IFAAS changed the most. We found that the statements 'Breastmilk is the ideal food for babies' and 'Breastfeeding increases the closeness between mum and baby' both showed a large positive change in attitudes during the sessions highlighting an increase in knowledge about these two areas. Some statements didn't show much of a shift in attitudes, for example 'Formula feeding is a better choice if mum plans to return to work' and this might mean we need to change the information in the session regarding this in the future.



IFAAS scores for the Primary 7 age group

"I learned that breastmilk changes all the time." - P6 pupil

"Liked the quiz and pictures game." - P4

## Conclusions

This work showed that a short and relatively low cost intervention can help shift attitudes among young people to become more positive towards breastfeeding. We were also able to increase children and young people's knowledge about infant feeding choices and about the barriers to breastfeeding.

There is some evidence [2] that higher IFAAS scores show that someone is more likely to breast-feed in the future so this work could also impact on how future generations feed their baby.

There were some limitations of using the IFAAS. We used a slightly adapted scale with younger children and with older children we found they sometimes didn't complete the scale at the end of a session meaning we had more before than after scores making any shift in attitudes harder to measure.



References: 1 De La Mora, A., Russell, D. W., Dungy, C. I., Losch, M. and Dusdieker, L. (1999) The Iowa Infant Feeding Attitude Scale: Analysis of reliability and validity. Journal of Applied Social Psychology Vol.29(11), pp.2362-2380.

2 Sittlington, Julie, Barbara Stewart-Knox, and Marion Wright (2007), "Infant-feeding attitudes of expectant mothers in Northern Ireland", Health Education Research, 22, 561-570

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For more information contact Elizabeth Smith [elizabethsmith1@nhs.net](mailto:elizabethsmith1@nhs.net)

