

SURE START RAVENSDALE

FEEDING SUPPORT GROUP FOCUS GROUP

Tues 23rd November 2003

INTRODUCTION

THE Meet a Mum feeding support group was set up in January 2002 following requests by mothers for a peer support group for breast feeders. It was promoted as a group for all mothers, whether bottle or breast feeding, to provide support on feeding issues. Pregnant women are also invited to attend in order to gain support and information on feeding choices. The Sure Start midwife is available on the premises to welcome group members, facilitate discussion and organise refreshments if necessary and to provide specific advice.

In November 2003 a focus group was held of current group users in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the MAM group in supporting new parents with feeding issues.

Objectives

To find out if the MAM group has

- Increased Mothers confidence in feeding their new baby.
- Provided an opportunity to share common experiences
- Provided peer support for breast feeding mums.
- Provided access to professional advice in an informal setting.

METHODOLOGY

Mums who were currently attending the group were invited to take part in the focus group, which was held at the same time and in the same venue as the weekly MAM group. 10 mothers participated. A large group discussion was held using format attached.

KEY FINDINGS

- 100% of participants were currently or previously breastfeeding. 60% were first time mums. 20% had attended the group antenatally.
- All mums felt more confidence in feeding their baby since attending the group, partly because of the peer support and partly as a natural result of their increasing and ongoing experience of feeding and getting to know their new baby.
- All mums valued the opportunity to share common experiences and the support of other breastfeeding mothers.
- The availability of the midwife was highly valued for advice and for reassurance.

"If it hadn't been for Margaret I would have stopped (breastfeeding)"

All the women felt nervous about attending for the first time and the majority would not have come at all had the midwife not persisted in encouraging them. At every visit and on the phone she promoted the group as a good support mechanism

"Came once was uncomfortable - didn't know anyone. Didn't come again till Margaret told me another woman on my street had just had a baby and could I please bring her."

The most valuable ingredients of the group were seen as

- Social opportunities for the children respite from the children, peer support, advice and tips, extended social networks.
- Of particular note was the acknowledgement that all babies are different and a range of solutions to problems is necessary to find one appropriate to a particular child. This was seen to be the greatest advantage of group support above an individual consultation with Health Visitor or midwife.

"You get 10 different ideas on what to do rather than the Health visitor's one opinion."

100% of participants saw the purpose of the group as being to support breast feeders.

CONCLUSIONS

This group is successfully meeting all 4 objectives for breastfeeding mothers. It is identified by mothers as a breastfeeding support group and does not attract bottle feeders.

The perceived benefits of the MAM group are the same as other support groups run at SS, with the focus on breastfeeding bringing in a specific target group and providing specific advice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the results of this focus group be considered together with the results of the breastfeeding survey in order to inform future services.
- That the perception of this group as breastfeeding specific is acknowledged, and ways of supporting bottle feeders be considered separately.
- That the crucial role of the midwife in recruiting group members and providing informal support is recognised and that this provision continues.
- That the issue of introduction to the SS centre, guided tour, fire procedures, ethos, rules and reg.s is addressed and absorbed into the welcoming process.
- That this report to be discussed for action at the SSR strategy Group.

APPENDIX 1: RESULTS

Participants

10 mums participated, one in a facilitating role, as a trained peer supporter. Babies were aged between 3 and 14 months.

100% of participants were previously or currently breast feeding. 60% were first time mums.

80% of participants lived in the sure Start Ravensdale area.

Participants had been attending the group weekly for between 6 weeks to 12 months. There were no pregnant mums in the group, but 2 had attended antenatally.

1. How did you feel when you first came to the group? What made feel comfortable and able to come again?

I was nervous; Margaret (the midwife) kept encouraging me to come. Is everyone going to be watching me? Am I doing it right? Wouldn't have come if Margaret hadn't kept encouraging me. It would be good to have an appointment when you first come and a time to turn up, so you know where to go. I knew Margaret would be here, that helped.

Came once was uncomfortable - didn't know anyone. Didn't come again till Margaret told me another woman on my street had just had a baby and could I please bring her.

I was wary; I came with my stepdaughter who was pregnant as well. I came back to get the baby involved in something. I was told how good it was and Margaret encouraged me.

You need a reception

I'll go to anything that supports breastfeeding.

You knew she was there.

Margaret just being there is helpful (unanimous).

3. Confidence with breastfeeding.

50% of mums admitted they were worried they would be seen to be 'not doing it right. However as they became established both with the group and with the breastfeeding they felt more confident.

Is everyone going to be watching me? Am I doing it right? Wouldn't have come if Margaret hadn't kept encouraging me

3. What is the purpose of the group? Who can come?

100% participants felt that the group was there to support mums who are breastfeeding. They all referred to it as the breastfeeding group and only 1 person (the peer support worker) had realised it was called the Meet a Mum group.

One mum was unsure whether she was allowed to come once she had stopped breastfeeding although she felt she still needed support with weaning issues.

The group was seen to be -

- trying to encourage mums to breastfeed for longer
- to talk about difficulties with feeding and 'everything,
- And to encourage healthy eating.

What are the most important ingredients of the group?

- Children can mix with others in the crèche and preparation for mum going back to work (i.e. mum and baby get used to being apart
- A break from the babies
- Crèche- time out for the parents. Babies get to see other babies, get used to mum going away, get used to other adults.
- Talking to mums with similar age babies (2)
- Advice
- Regular contact for tips
- 10 different ideas on what to do (with a particular problem) rather than the Health visitor's one opinion.
- It's great; there was nothing when I had my previous babies.
- I would like to be greeted, to know where to go and what to do.

What kind of things have you learned/ discussed?

- Weaning, travelling with a baby, flying, baby walkers, ideas for breastfeeding venues in town.

- Growth charts in the red book are for bottle fed babies. Breast fed babies grow differently- there are red book charts for breast feeders but these are not necessarily available.

What are the benefits to you and your baby of coming to the group?

I've got things to talk about now when I go home.

Weaning and tips.

Extended social networks.

It's a good place to discuss family issues and husbands.

We've passed on info. about Water meadows (children's swimming sessions)

APPENDIX 2 FOCUS GROUP FORMAT

APPENDIX 3 Attendance List. FOR SSR OFFICE USE ONLY

First time mums#

#Vicki Ankrett

#Kelly Buchanan

#Ingrid Carlish

Caroline Howell

#Elizabeth Howes (OOA)

#Rachael Lane (OOA)

#Becky Musson

Mary Rose O'Gorman

Tina Sampson

Kathy Sissons

All above completed breastfeeding questionnaire