

Maternal and infant nutrition framework: supporting a Healthy Start



community
food and health
(scotland)



An event hosted by
Community Food and
Health (Scotland) on
29 May 2014 at the
Albert Halls, Stirling

We are happy to consider requests for other languages or formats. Please contact 0131 314 5300 or email nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net

Published by NHS Health Scotland

1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh EH12 9EB

© NHS Health Scotland 2014

All rights reserved. Material contained in this publication may not be reproduced in whole or part without prior permission of NHS Health Scotland (or other copyright owners). While every effort is made to ensure that the information given here is accurate, no legal responsibility is accepted for any errors, omissions or misleading statements.

NHS Health Scotland is a WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promotion and Public Health Development.

Contents

Background	2
Programme	3
Discussion	4
Looking to the future	6
Networking	8
Feedback	9

Community Food and Health (Scotland) was set up as a result of recommendations in the Scottish Diet Action Plan. Our overall aim is to improve Scotland's food and health by supporting work with and within low-income communities that improves access to, and take-up of, a healthy diet. We are funded by the Scottish Government and are part of NHS Health Scotland, a Special Health Board with a national remit to reduce health inequalities.

Background

Healthy Start is a UK Government programme to improve the health of low-income pregnant women and families. Pregnant women and families with children under four years old qualify for Healthy Start vouchers if the family are receiving benefits and/or tax credits. Vouchers can be swapped for milk, fresh and frozen fruit, vegetables and formula milk. Those accessing the programme also get vitamin coupons with their vouchers, which they can swap for Healthy Start vitamins. Those wishing to access the programme are required to fill out an application form and then gain a signature from their health visitor or midwife before sending their completed application back in a stamped addressed envelope. Women can register from 10 weeks of pregnancy and again once their baby is born. For more information please see www.healthystart.nhs.uk

This report provides an overview of an event called 'Maternal and infant nutrition framework: supporting a Healthy Start'. This event took place in May 2014 and included learning from previous and ongoing work around Healthy Start programmes in the Forth Valley area that were supported by Community Food and Health (Scotland), which is now part of NHS Health Scotland.

Organisers of the event wanted to create an opportunity for people to network and to share information, learning and news around Healthy Start issues. The event had a focus on community activity in relation to Healthy Start and maternal and infant nutrition. Organisers encouraged those who were involved in the delivery of Healthy Start programmes to attend, particularly those in the community setting and those interested in maternal and infant nutrition and/or involved in an early years collaborative. Those working at a national level and at a local level attended the event.



Programme

The programme included national and local perspectives in relation to Healthy Start and the wider maternal and infant nutrition agenda. Morag Mackellar, Allied Health Professional Manager (Children's services) from NHS Forth Valley started the day, welcomed participants and set the scene. Mary Ward, Healthy Start Policy Manager from Scottish Government, gave a national perspective which included background information about the maternal and infant nutrition framework, the aim and vision of the Scottish Government in relation to maternal and infant nutrition and information about Healthy Start.

'Our children should have the best possible start in life and are ready to succeed.'

Mary Ward, Scottish Government

The day gave NHS Forth Valley an opportunity to showcase what had happened in the past, what is currently happening and plans for the future in relation to Healthy Start. Lesley Hetherington and Susan Kennedy, both from NHS Forth Valley, talked about how they support Healthy Start programmes in their area. They also revisited some of their work in relation to **Putting Healthy Start on the Map**, a programme where Healthy Start activities were integrated into communities across Forth Valley. Susan MacKellaig from a local nursery in the Forth Valley area talked to the audience about her work with children and parents. Catherine Johnston from the Scottish Pre-school Play Association concluded the showcase from the Forth Valley area.

'All organisations that have contact with communities are in a good position to communicate and provide information about Healthy Start and maternal and infant nutrition.'

Susan Kennedy, NHS Forth Valley

'Parents were empowered in relation to cooking with their children and trying new foods like fruit. One parent said, "I really enjoyed making this because it is healthy for me and my family".'

Susan MacKellaig, Fallin Nursery

After a busy networking lunch, Graham Mackenzie, Consultant in Public Health from NHS Lothian, talked to the audience about the Leith Early Years Collaborative Pioneer Site and what they have learned about Healthy Start. This was followed by Florence Dioka, Development Manager at Central and West Integration Network, who talked about how their maternal and infant nutrition work with black and minority ethnic communities supports a Healthy Start.

'I would like to change the way (Healthy Start) forms are completed as per NHS Lothian presentation.'

Participant

'I found Graham Mackenzie's input extremely useful. I wish this had been done several years ago.'

Participant

Discussion

Throughout the day there was the opportunity for discussion and to speak to other professionals from all over Scotland. In the morning participants discussed their work in relation to supporting a Healthy Start. There were a variety of professionals at the event including midwives, health visitors, community food workers, nursery staff, family support workers and those working in national organisations. People described a wide range of work:

- promotion of the Healthy Start programme
- encouraging healthy eating
- encouraging the use of the voucher scheme
- maternal and infant nutrition strategic work
- work with parents and work in nurseries
- healthy weaning and cooking skills.

‘Thank you – I was very impressed with the range of people and organisations represented at the event.’

Participant

Those who discussed measuring the impact of their work described qualitative methods, such as questionnaires and evidence-gathering at the end of a session/project. Some people discussed the difficulty of showing an impact in a short period of time when the health benefits may show in many years’ time. As discussion continued, the following questions came from some of the groups:

- Should Healthy Start vitamins be non-means tested and readily accessible (in many settings) to everyone?

- Does being able to obtain formula milk with the vouchers reduce the likelihood of the mother breastfeeding?
- Would a forum of good practice with a national steer be beneficial? This may lead to a more consistent message among all the relevant professionals.

The discussion also raised some common issues:

- There are issues with the Healthy Start 0845 phone number in terms of the cost and the customer service that people receive when phoning.
- There can be issues with accessing and understanding the available online information due to lack of internet access.
- Filling out, gaining a signature and printing the online form can be problematic.
- Healthy Start is a UK Government initiative, therefore there are only certain aspects of the programme that can be influenced in Scotland.



There is a national Healthy Start leads network facilitated by Scottish Government.

A large amount of time was spent discussing the free vitamins available as part of the Healthy Start programme. A common opinion was to have free, accessible vitamins for all pregnant women, babies and children in order to reduce stigma and increase uptake. On the other hand, some people spoke about encouraging and enabling people to have a healthy diet rich in fruit and vegetables, therefore the need for vitamin supplements would be lessened. Common problems voiced by participants in relation to vitamins include:

- Ordering restrictions for professionals and queries over shelf life.
- Unclear information about how many vitamins are issued, with no consistency across Scotland.
- Need for increased knowledge in pharmacies. There was an example of pharmacies keeping vitamins under the counter and pharmacists not recognising the voucher scheme for free vitamins, therefore embarrassing parents by refusing them.
- Vitamin D is not being prescribed or encouraged by some GPs. Vitamin D is a health protection issue, especially in Scotland.
- Vitamins are not universal, thereby creating a stigma associated with accessing the programme.

did you know

There is a Scottish Infant Feeding Advisors Network facilitated by NHS Health Scotland. NHS Health Scotland use a virtual learning environment for network members to access and share information and the network meets twice a year.

The Scottish Government is funding a pilot scheme aimed at increasing the availability of Healthy Start vitamins in pharmacies across Scotland. Check the Healthy Start website for registered pharmacies in your area. The pilot scheme is currently being evaluated.

‘Would welcome feedback from all who attended from Scottish Government as to whether they will now consider free vitamins for all!’

Participant

Looking to the future

With discussion came ideas and suggestions about future and continued working. It was evident from the day that good work was being carried out and that this should continue. However, people spoke about the need for a refreshed national steer, a nominated Healthy Start champion and the improvement of local and national sharing of good practice. Strong communication and valuable partnership-working between Healthy Start professionals, Scottish Government and the Department of Health was felt to be needed in terms of reporting and communicating issues and problems. Some people spoke about the need for maternal and infant nutrition work to be a priority in all community planning work.

did you know

There is a Healthy Start named lead in every NHS Board area, as well as infant feeding advisors and a named maternal and infant nutrition lead.

The Early Years Collaborative is a coalition of Community Planning Partners – including social services, health, education, police and third sector professionals – committed to ensuring that every baby, child, mother, father and family in Scotland has access to the best support available. Nutrition is a key cross-cutting theme within the Collaborative's priorities. Are you involved or do you know how to find out more locally?

'I hope the concerns raised by many of the delegates are acted on, as the issues with Healthy Start are the same in every Board. A refreshed national steer would be very welcome.'

Participant

'The "how we did it" aspects were most useful and it would be helpful to do more sharing around "what works".'

Participant

'Sharing good practice is great. More support is needed from Scottish Government in that there was a unanimous appeal for more information on the vitamin issues and also making them available to all.'

Participant

There was a shared opinion about the need to advertise and promote the importance of the Healthy Start programme as much as possible. This included promotion with colleagues and with the public. The use of social media was a much talked about subject in terms of advertising, with mobile apps, Facebook® and text alerts being suggested. It was felt that any advertising and promotion should include information about the vitamins, with all information being consistent and straightforward. It was suggested this could happen not only in the current settings but in other settings – registry offices, libraries and benefit offices were some of the suggestions. It was also suggested that the Healthy Start vitamins could be distributed through nurseries as well as from health visitors and midwives.

‘In an informal way we will check with families about Healthy Start, phoning after birth and also about vitamins.’

Step by Step in Moray

Some participants talked about the need for more training and support for staff to attend training. This would go some way to ensuring that professionals know the same information relevant to the Healthy Start programme, in order for them to be able to give consistent messages to the public. At present there is some confusion about who should sign the Healthy Start form in order to receive the vouchers. There is also some confusion about phoning the freephone number when a baby is born in order for the free vitamins to continue. In the future, participants would like to see all professionals giving the same information to the public and for there to be no barriers in relation to people accessing the programme.

did you know

Ready Steady Baby!, the comprehensive pregnancy and baby resource from NHS Health Scotland, contains information about Healthy Start. There is also a Ready Steady Baby! mobile app. NHS Health Scotland has a wide range of early years resources that professionals and the public can access.

See www.readysteadybaby.org.uk and www.maternal-and-early-years.org.uk for more information.

**The feedgood factor website provides useful information about infant feeding and links to local support:
www.feedgoodfactor.org.uk**

‘Training of early years staff and volunteers is critical. Basic nutrition/cooking training should be embedded into the framework delivery. In addition, training of parents is fundamental. Parents should know how to feed their children a healthy diet, and how to have a healthy pregnancy.’

Participant

Networking

The day placed an emphasis on networking and sharing information with one another. Organisers included everyone's email address on the delegate list to ensure people could contact one another after the event. There was an informal marketplace where people could display material associated with their project, such as resources and promotional material.

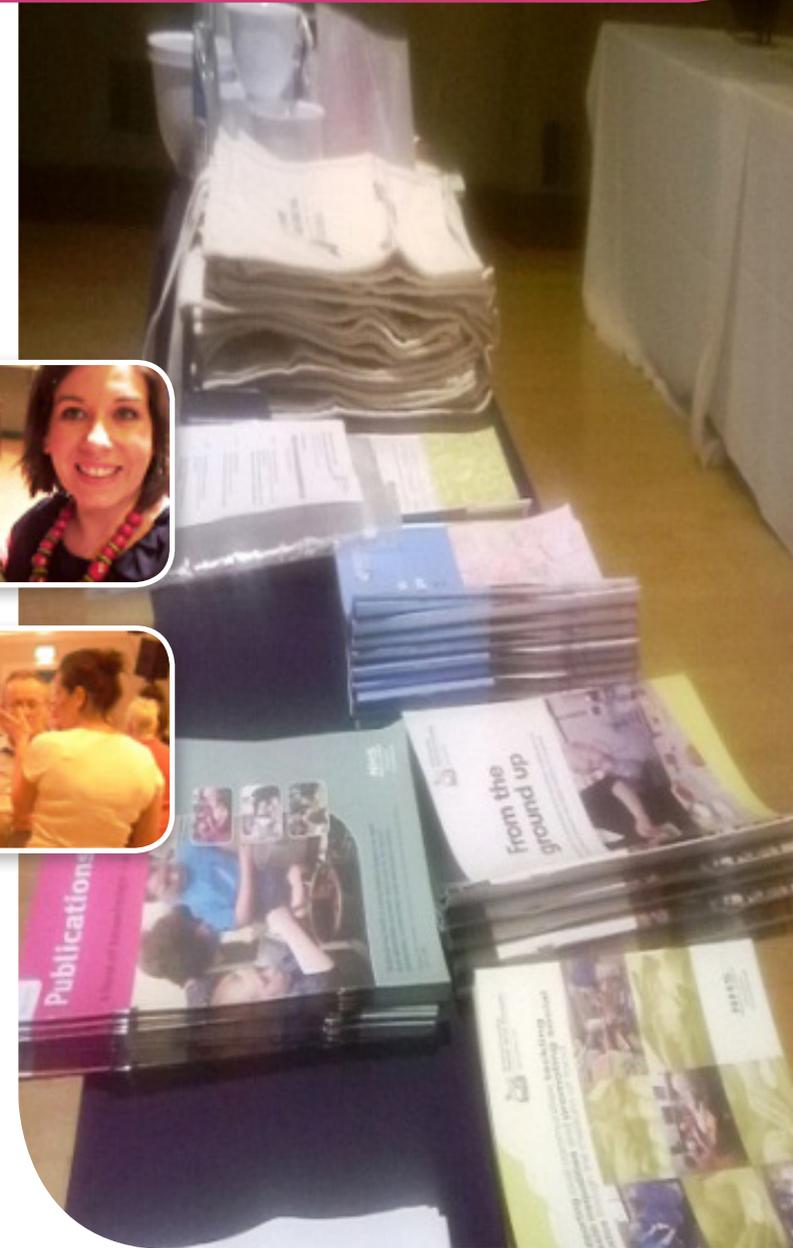
There was also a networking wall on display throughout the day. Organisers asked people to put a post-it note on the wall if they would like to visit another project or organisation, host a visit or do both. The purpose of an in-depth visit would be to learn more about another project or organisation in order to inform future and ongoing work. Three delegates expressed interest in an in-depth visit and two organisations offered to host. Organisers will facilitate a learning exchange, working with the organisations and delegates who showed interest on the day. Other organisations expressed interest in networking with people on the day through discussion and in the networking lunch break.

'We are looking for connections to develop peer support for mothers and improve the social support and awareness of breastfeeding.'

The Breast Feeding Network

'I'd like to visit other Boards and to have a forum to share ideas/good practice/what to do.'

Participant



Feedback

The organisers received valuable feedback on the day and afterwards via an online evaluation. People valued the day, particularly the time dedicated to table discussions. Some feedback is shown below and throughout the report.

'I made some really good connections, and feel the issues affecting Healthy Start are the same across Scotland.'

Participant

'I have made new contacts in different areas in Scotland who I will keep in touch with.'

Participant

'Excellent opportunity to network with other health professionals and to find out what is going on in other areas regarding early years work.'

Participant

'There was a lot of discussion around the Healthy Start vitamins and less around practical examples of infant nutrition (i.e. cooking, training, community engagement) which would have been more benefit for me.'

Participant

'It's been a great opportunity to hear what others do, sharing all of our problems and hearing other people's solutions.'

Participant

'I plan to review healthy eating within my establishment and encourage parents to be more involved.'

Participant

Community Food and Health (Scotland) would like to thank Susan Kennedy and Lesley Hetherington, both from NHS Forth Valley, for their support in the planning and delivery of the 'Maternal and infant nutrition framework: supporting a Healthy Start' event.