



Feed Your Way Mid-Point Evaluation Summary

March 2024

Background

[Small Steps Big Changes](#) (SSBC) is funded through The National Lottery Community Fund's '[A Better Start' Programme](#), utilising a test and learn approach to improve 0—4-year-olds' outcomes in Nottingham, with a focus on four ethnically diverse wards. Breastfeeding benefits mothers and babies' health^{1,2} but sociodemographic inequalities in breastfeeding are persistent.³ Nottingham has a lower breastfeeding rate at birth than the country as a whole (58.7% versus 67.4%).⁴ High levels of deprivation are seen in SSBC wards, and the percentage of babies breastfed at birth in these wards (38.9% to 51.9%) is lower than the Nottingham average.⁵

Although breastfeeding support offered to the breastfeeding parent is important⁶, many barriers to breastfeeding exist at the societal rather than individual level.^{7,8} To shift societal attitudes towards breastfeeding, breastfeeding must be considered a public health issue.⁹ Public health promotion of breastfeeding may prove more cost-effective than interventions aimed solely at women.¹⁰

In collaboration with a behaviour change agency, SSBC developed and produced [Feed Your Way](#), a breastfeeding public health campaign for Nottingham. The campaign seeks to address not just new and expectant families but community and societal attitudes and support around breastfeeding.

In addition to desktop research, co-production activities informed the campaign design. Activities included continued engagement with a multidisciplinary stakeholder group including parents, Health Visitors, Nutrition Peer Support Workers, Public Health and others, a county-wide social marketing survey (1802 respondents), focus groups and concept testing. The survey's main finding was that risk reduction health messages, which promote breastfeeding to avoid illness in themselves or their child, were perceived as controlling by families. Families' stories highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivation to breastfeed.

Self-determination theory (SDT) provides a framework to promote intrinsic motivation.¹¹ SDT has been used in a wide range of settings, including business and organisations, healthcare, education, physical exercise, and sports.¹² In health settings, its applications have been linked to a host of beneficial health outcomes.¹³ Thus, instead of focusing on risk reduction health messaging, the Feed Your Way campaign emphasises three psychological needs that, according to SDT, facilitate and maintain intrinsic motivation: Autonomy (breastfeeding is a choice), Relatedness (this is a collective issue and support is available), and competence (every attempt is successful).

Launched in October 2022, the campaign presents the real, lived experiences of six Nottinghamshire families. Their stories share a narrative of overcoming breastfeeding challenges, echoing the main findings from the social marketing survey. Diversity was reflected in ethnicity, gender, cross- and same-sex families and stages of parenthood, such as pregnancy and children of different ages. Campaign assets include a website (<https://www.feedyourway.co.uk/>), social media, out-of-home advertising and free-to-download resources for workforce who have a role to play in the promotion of infant feeding.





Aim

The aim was to undertake a formative evaluation of Feed Your Way in order to understand how families and residents have seen, responded to, and interacted with the campaign, how workforce have engaged with the campaign, and how the campaign can be improved.

Methods and procedures

Alongside continued conversations with stakeholders, SSBC set up an evaluation of the Feed Your Way campaign to inform future campaign iterations. The evaluation is underpinned by RE-AIM framework.¹⁴ The evaluation components of Reach, Efficacy, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance are split across two evaluators.

The Feed Your Way behaviour change marketing agency undertakes the mid- and end-point evaluation of Reach and Efficacy, with a focus on local residents. The mid-point evaluation concluded in 2023 and consisted of a survey (374 adults aged 18-65+, 69% female and 31% male) and two focus groups, one focus group with eight women and one with eight men. Through a recruitment agency, residents of Nottingham were recruited as participants to reduce sample bias.

The Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance component of the evaluation are carried out by an SSBC commissioned external evaluator, who focuses on engaging with workforce members who have a part to play in promoting infant feeding.

Results and outcomes

As for Reach, the mid-point evaluation survey found that 26% of survey respondents remembered seeing a breastfeeding campaign in Nottingham and 20–38% of them correctly identified Feed Your Way logo and brand images. Feed Your Way campaign images and assets were recognised by 6–15% of respondents. Survey participants included 19 employers and over half of them had engaged with the campaign in some way. None of the focus group participants were aware of the Feed Your Way campaign.

As for Efficacy, the mid-point evaluation has identified that the campaign is well received, most people respond positively to it. When shown campaign assets, participants found that the campaign is clearly a breastfeeding campaign and described it as 'non-judgmental'. People who had either experienced breastfeeding challenges and had to stop breastfeeding or who had opted to formula feed, did not feel excluded because of the Feed Your Way name. Of the 50 respondents who stopped breastfeeding before they intended, almost half said that they might have continued if they had access to more information about the challenges, which support the choice of narratives of the Feed Your Way campaign. Almost half of them also said more support from healthcare professionals could have enabled them to continue breastfeeding. Diversity in the campaign was appreciated but representation of fathers was suggested as a point for improvement. In the survey people reported positive changes in their attitudes around breastfeeding after seeing the campaign resources. For example, 68% of survey respondents felt more positive about seeing breastfeeding in public.



Conclusion and recommendations

The Reach and Efficacy mid-point evaluation is informing development of the campaign for a second phase, with the end-point evaluation to follow this year. The mid-point evaluation identified that the campaign is well received but needs to increase its reach. Diversity in the campaign has been appreciated but additional case studies may be of benefit. From the evaluation findings and SSBC's continued conversations with stakeholders, suggestions for additional case studies are fathers, a parent under the age of 19 years old, a pregnant person who is expecting her first baby, as well as a case study on an employer's perspective. Increased representation of disability is to be considered in newly developed campaign resources. The campaign will explore creative, cost-effective means of communicating with a larger audience.

The external evaluator's mid-point evaluation around Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance by early summer will provide a workforce perspective on how FYW is influencing feeding discussions and feeding decisions to inform future iterations of the campaign. A culminative evaluation will follow later this year, which will pull together all elements and considers recommendations for onward commissioning.

SSBC's Feed Your Way campaign has set out an innovative vision and strategic ambitions for improving breastfeeding rates in Nottingham. The Feed Your Way campaign has the potential to be an asset to future breastfeeding welcome schemes and trainings around breastfeeding for healthcare professionals who promote infant feeding.



References

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