

**DBA DESIGN
EFFECTIVENESS AWARDS
BE A STAR BREASTFEEDING
INITIATION PROGRAMME**

SHE'S NOT
A MODEL.
SHE'S A STAR



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Breastfeeding promotion has a key role to play in tackling a range of health, social, economic and environmental issues.

In addition to improving the health and wellbeing of individual mothers and babies, breastfeeding promotion is being championed as a key strand in government attempts to reduce NHS expenditure and uproot damaging health inequalities.

There is a direct correlation between breastfeeding prevalence and socio-economic status, with babies from disadvantaged backgrounds much less likely to be breastfed. Given that these communities already have a greater instance of other child-related health problems, it is in these groups that the health benefits of breastfeeding would have most impact.

As social marketing specialists, The Hub designed a comprehensive and sustainable behaviour change programme focused on increasing breastfeeding initiation within these groups.

Incorporating service development, co-creation, peer-to-peer mobilisation, stakeholder engagement, group identity formation and a groundbreaking, through-the-line communications campaign, the intervention took a holistic approach based on social marketing principles and established behavioural theory.

12 months after launch, the programme can be shown to have brought significant improvement to our client's business in the following ways:

- 13% increase in breastfeeding initiation over first 6 months against a 2% target
- 9% increase over first 12 months against a 2% target
- National and regional government targets exceeded 4 times over
- Peer support service extended to 27,000 young mothers
- Significant cost savings on service development through the co-creation of peer-driven support provision
- Establishment of a position of authority and a reputation for innovation from which to influence regional and national agendas
- Increased efficiencies and cohesion in delivery of breastfeeding services
- Mobilisation of internal staff through increased morale and aspiration
- Wider acceptance of social marketing approaches due to compelling evidence base

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Outline of project brief

Increase breastfeeding initiation rates amongst 15-25 year old mothers from deprived areas in Central Lancashire.

Description

Whilst the health benefits of breastfeeding for mothers and babies are well known, the economic, social and environmental arguments for breastfeeding are equally compelling:

- A 10% increase in breastfeeding would save the NHS £2.6 million on the cost of treated gastroenteritis alone.
- Given the direct correlation between breastfeeding and socio-economic status, the health benefits of breastfeeding represent powerful weapon in the fight to reduce health inequalities.
- The manufacture, packaging and transportation of powdered formula milk are a drain on natural resources.

Overview of market

Prior to launch, breastfeeding initiation rates for CLPCT stood at 52%, against a national average of 78%.

CLPCT incorporates 4 distinct Local Authorities and is characterised by high levels of deprivation in many of its communities.

Challenges in targeting these groups include:

- Low self-efficacy reinforces a fatalistic attitude towards health.
- A culture of deferred gratification makes it difficult to make long-term health benefits attractive.
- Bottlefeeding is the prevailing socio-cultural norm.

The fact that formula milk companies have an advertising spend 10 times greater than government spend on breastfeeding promotion also represents a key challenge.

Project Launch Date

March 2008

Outline of design solution

The main goals of the programme were as follows:

Develop and communicate a concept that will engage, inspire and motivate a hard-to-reach audience

It was essential that the public awareness element of the programme (a through-the-line communications campaign) resonated with the existing values of our target audience. By leveraging the influence that the cult of celebrity had within this group we effectively repositioned breastfeeding as something that was glamorous, stylish and a declaration of identity.

Co-create a peer-to-peer 'engine' that would drive the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme.

Going far beyond market research and insight, we involved our audience as an integral element in the entire programme. All the 'stars' featured in the campaign are real audience members, recruited from within the areas in which the materials were to be targeted. The word-of-mouth momentum that this created allowed us to establish a new group identity around our redefined concept of breastfeeding and build a vibrant community to drive communications, stakeholder engagement and service design.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Shift social norms

The programme was designed according to a phased approach that would move through awareness raising, engagement and service design, to long-term normalisation of the desired behaviour. Over and above young mothers, specific strategies and materials were designed to target fathers, friends and grandparents—the key influencers whose attitudes define the social norms around breastfeeding.

Design a holistic and sustainable behaviour change programme

Because the new concept we developed for the Be A Star programme has established its own group identity, vocabulary and community, its effectiveness continues independently of any campaign materials. The strategic framework on which this has been built incorporates a long-term phased approach that guarantees the sustainability of the programme over a prolonged period and with minimal commitment of resources from the client.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

An immediate and dramatic increase in breastfeeding initiation rates

Within the first month of the launch of the campaign, breastfeeding initiation rates (BIR) amongst the target audience increased 13.6% from 52% to 65.6%.⁶

By way of illustration of the significance of these results: the Be A Star programme was included as a flagship case study in the recently launched National Social Marketing Centre's Showcase project—an international resource designed to promote best practice within the global social marketing community.

Another breastfeeding initiation campaign rolled out in St Helens was also considered effective enough to be incorporated into this prestigious resource, based on a 3% increase in BFI.

“You inspired me to breastfeed and I love it :->
I have lost my weight and feel great thanks to you and your campaign.”
—*blog comments*

A sustainable increase in breastfeeding initiation rates

6 months into the campaign, BIRs amongst the target audience were still being maintained at a 12% increase over baseline figures. A full 12 months following launch, an increase of 9% was still being maintained.⁶

“A totally inspirational campaign.”
—*blog comment*

Significant over-achievement against national targets

Through the Public PSA Targets, the government (in 2007) set targets to increase breastfeeding initiation rates by 2% each year, with a particular focus on women from disadvantaged groups such as our audience. The Be A Star programme allowed our client to exceed these targets 4 times over.

“What an inspiration—wonderful.”
—*blog comment*

Huge cost savings with regard to key services

Research undertaken for this project clearly showed that peer support is a highly effective method of encouraging our audience to breastfeed. However, in-person peer support services are expensive to establish and labour-intensive to manage. As such, whilst an in-person peer-support service was included as an element in this intervention, its effectiveness was defined by finite resources and accessibility barriers.

In developing the online community at the heart of this programme, we not only created a forum in which a group identity could form around the new concept of breastfeeding, but also developed a platform for a virtual peer support service that significantly extended the reach and accessibility of the in-person provision.

In-person peer support services cost our client around £100,000 per year, based on 5-6000 new births each year. Measured in terms of absolute unique visitors, the online peer support community is now 27682 strong, based on a one-off cost of £1175 plus nominal ongoing charges for administration and moderation. The Hub is currently delivering a training programme to enable internal client staff to manage this resource independently, reducing costs and increasing sustainability.

“This is fantastic.”
—*blog comment*

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Increased service accessibility

Reflecting the vibrant nature of the community and our own SEO efforts, the beastar.org.uk blog has a first page, first place ranking on all major search engines for the terms “breastfeeding blog”; a first page, 4th place ranking for “breastfeeding support” and first page rankings for “breastfeeding advice” and “breastfeeding advice for dads”.⁷

In addition to making the blog highly accessible as a peer support service, this level of search engine optimisation also makes it possible to raise awareness (and therefore accessibility) of other services related to breastfeeding, pregnancy and early years issues.

“Wow! All I have to say is wow!”
—*blog comment*

Cost savings through scalability

As the entire Be A Star programme was designed to be both sustainable and scalable from the outset, the NHS (our ultimate client on this project) has benefited from significant economies of scale.

For example, Central Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, East Lancashire and Bolton PCTs commissioned the programme simultaneously as a consortium, although individual campaigns were developed specifically for each area. If these PCTs were to commission the programme separately, each would have incurred a cost of £39,702 to achieve the same reach and penetration, resulting in a total cost to the NHS of £158,808.

Benefiting from economies of scale associated with printed material, media spend, studio hire etc, the combined commission incurred a cost of £53,394, resulting in an NHS cost saving of £105,414.

“Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant!”
—*blog comment*

Improved strategy cohesion across the entire PCT

Following widespread recognition of its effectiveness, the theories, concepts and tactics that defined the Be A Star programme (as a social marketing intervention) have been used to inform development of CLPCT’s entire breastfeeding strategy. A more cohesive approach and coordination of objectives, messages and approaches across the disparate delivery partners has led to increased efficiency and more fluid partnership working.

Furthermore, the increased awareness of the role that breastfeeding plays in a wide range of health issues has resulted in breastfeeding being written into a wider range of health strategies within the PCT, including Health Schools and obesity.

“This campaign is wonderful and incredibly necessary.”
—*blog comment*

Greater organisational influence

In terms of both our project lead within the context of CLPCT and the client in the context of the wider NHS, the demonstrable effectiveness of the Be A Star programme has led to greater acceptance of social marketing as a method for affecting social change.

“A totally inspirational campaign.”
—*blog comment*

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Raised aspirations and higher expectations across the NHS

Low breastfeeding initiation amongst disadvantaged groups has been an intransigent issue for many years, leading to a fatalistic culture amongst those officials charged with addressing it.

At a recent conference, Ruth Hussey, Regional Director of Public Health for NHS North West, declared that “this programme [Be A Star] has shattered the mythology that low breastfeeding initiation is something we can’t change.” Her comments reflect the raised expectations that public health professionals have regarding breastfeeding promotion in the wake of the success of the Be A Star programme.

In this way, Be A Star is being championed as both a symbol of what it is possible to achieve in this area and as a practical example of how to affect it.

“You are what the world needs. Keep up the good work.”
—*blog comment*

Increased morale and buy-in amongst healthcare professionals

“The effect this campaign has had amongst staff should not be underestimated. We finally have a positive, authentic and cohesive message with which to engage our young mums. In the same way that Be A Star is motivating mums to breastfeed, it is re-invigorating the healthcare professionals who work to encourage and support them. It’s a breath of fresh air.”

—*Glenis Tansey, Central Lancashire PCT.*

