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Why breastfeeding research is important

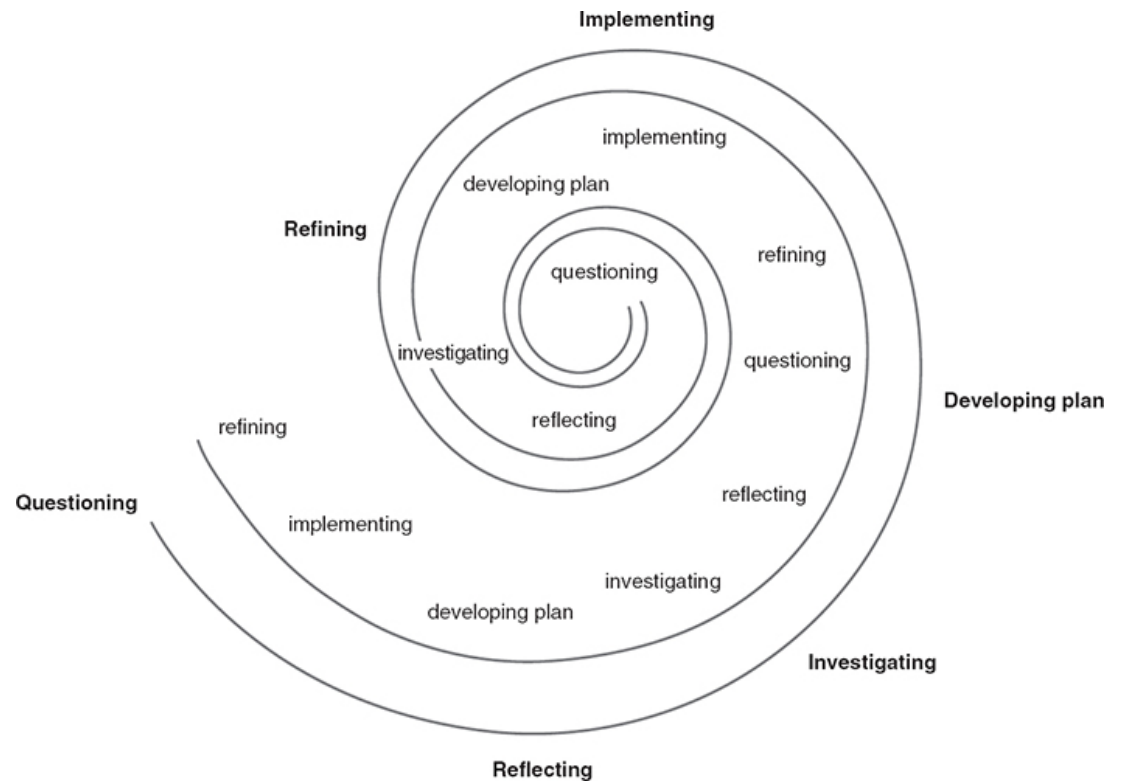
- The [World Health Organization](#) and [UK Policy](#) recommend breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of life, followed by breastfeeding alongside complementary foods for up to two years and beyond
- However, levels of exclusive breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks are only around 32% in [England](#) and [Scotland](#)
- Breastfeeding initiation in [Stoke on Trent](#) falls below the national average
- Children experiencing longer breastfeeding duration have reduced numbers of infections and dental malocclusions, higher intelligence, and potential protection against overweight and diabetes in later-life ([Victora et al., 2016](#))
- Breastfeeding protects the parent against various cancers, diabetes and potentially obesity ([Victora et al., 2016](#))



What is participatory action research (PAR)?

"An approach characterized by the **active participation** of researchers and participants in the **co-construction of knowledge**; the promotion of self- and critical awareness that leads to **individual, collective, and/or social change**; and an emphasis on a **co-learning process** where researchers and participants plan, implement, and establish a process for disseminating information gathered in the research project."

McIntyre, 2008



Two PAR informed approaches

Communities have within them the wisdom and creativity needed to resolve difficult challenges

Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1998)



- Participants engage as co-researchers to collect data
- Participants document issues of importance through photography and summaries. Co-researchers engage in data analysis
- Empowers co-researchers to better understand their unique experiences and develop strategies for change



Community Research

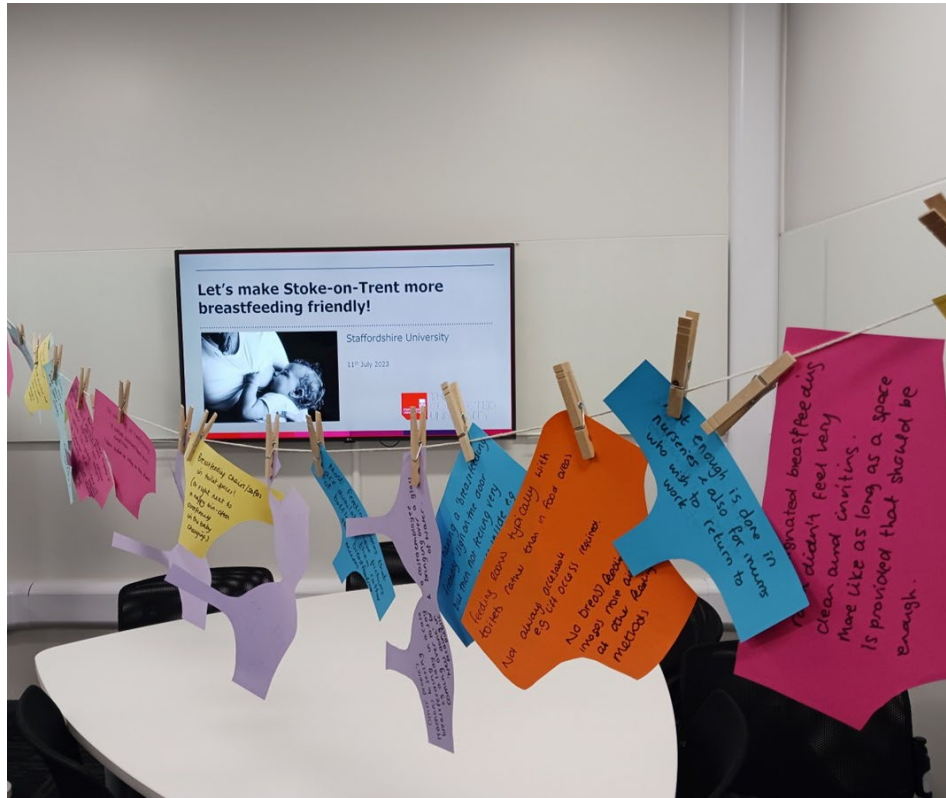
- Members of the community engage as co-researchers.
- Co-researchers help to inform, design, plan and deliver data capture approaches
- Workshops use creative methods to facilitate contribution
- Co-researchers are engaged in analysing the data collected and creating solutions and recommendations based on these findings

What are the barriers and facilitators to breastfeeding in the Pakistani community in Stoke-on-Trent?



Study 1: Breastfeeding Environments: Photovoice

([Burton et al., 2024](#))



- One barrier is fear of breastfeeding in public (Burton et al, 2022; Burton et al, 2023)
- 9 peer supporters were recruited as co-researchers
- Photographs and summaries of breastfeeding environments in and around Stoke-on-Trent
- Analysis workshop
 - Creative activities
 - Discussion exercises
 - Mini exhibition of the data

What makes environments breastfeeding friendly?

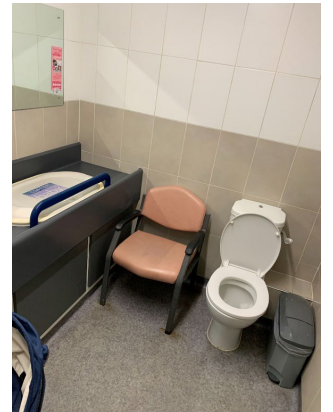
Do

- Welcome breastfeeding of babies and children
- Provide a comfortable seat to breastfeed in
- Display breastfeeding support information



Don't

- Expect parents to breastfeed in a toilet
- Ask anyone to stop breastfeeding or cover up
- Be judgemental if you see someone breastfeeding



Our Impact:



Appetite

Available online 10 May 2024, 107397
In Press, Journal Pre-proof

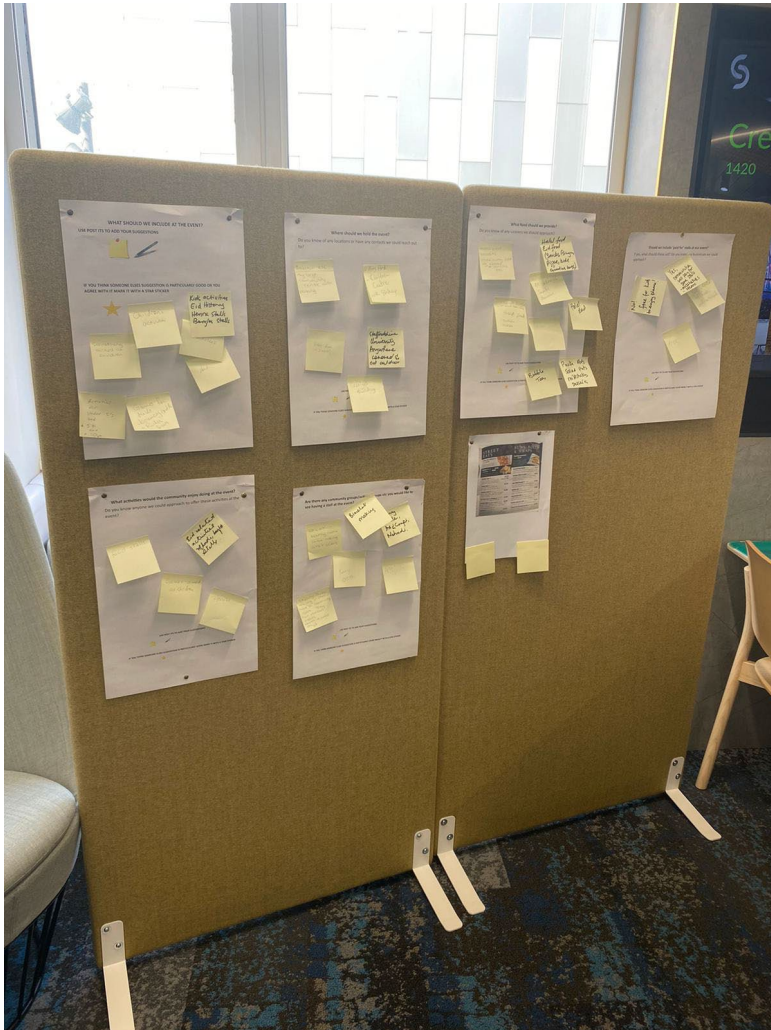


Evaluation of Environmental Features that Support Breastfeeding: A Photovoice Study

Burton A.E.¹, Owen A.¹, Taylor J.¹, Dean S.¹, Cartledge E.², Wright E.², Gallagher N.²



Study 2: Facilitators and barriers to breastfeeding in the Pakistani community



- Commissioned by Stoke-on-Trent City Council to inform the work of Family Hubs
- 14 Pakistani women engaged as co-researchers

Workshop 1:

- Focus group
- Piloting broader data collection strategies
- Planning a community event for further data capture



Community Event



- Food, refreshments, Lego, crafts and colouring, games, henna, local support services.
- Data capture: Sticker boards, draw your breastfeeding experience, and a wishing tree.
- 130 people registered and 127 attended.
- 30 people (50% of the attending adults) contributed to the sticker boards of these 21 identified as Pakistani.

Workshop 2:



- Reflection on the event
- Review quotes from focus group and sort into themes
- Review and discuss event data capture findings
- Identify key issues for action and produce action plan for the council

Ideas proposed to guide the council:

- Address cultural pressures experienced by new mothers through education
- Increase knowledge and awareness within mothers and families
- Improve support offered in a culturally sensitive way

Transforming society: Our impact

- Action plan co-created to inform the development of services run by Stoke-City-Council Family Hubs
- Community event
 - Links made between community leaders and service providers
 - Identification of gaps in knowledge about breastfeeding and family services and ideas developed for widening awareness
 - Joy, happiness, fun, connection
- Novel approach -> sharing of the methodology and approach with the Department for Education with scope to inform future projects.



Department
for Education



Impact on the co-researchers



Breastfeeding environments project

"I am going to think about encouraging pregnant families to Baby Cafe, to help inform them before their baby arrives as early education can help debunk some of those myths [about breastfeeding]"

"[I am going to] incorporate [the research findings] as we plan future volunteer peer support training and groups for families."

"I made connections with the ladies on my table, sharing our jobs and how we could help one another in the future."



"[The difference this project made was] Positive, [it] brought my own sense of being breastfeeding support or facilitator within my own family." (Co-researcher)



"It has made a positive impact as it enables me to contribute to making positive changes to the local communities." (Co-researcher)



"Thank you to everyone involved for a great afternoon. Me and my family will definitely attend other events at the university and within our local community. (Event attendee)"

In short...

- Participatory methods:
 - Benefit individuals and co-researchers
 - Benefit the community
 - Create impact
 - Produce new knowledge to inform future policy and practice
- Is fun!



Acknowledgements

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 - Stoke-on-Trent City Council