

Agenda Item	26.
Report No	ECAS 72/15

Breastfeeding in Highland

Report by Director of Public Health, NHS Highland

Summary

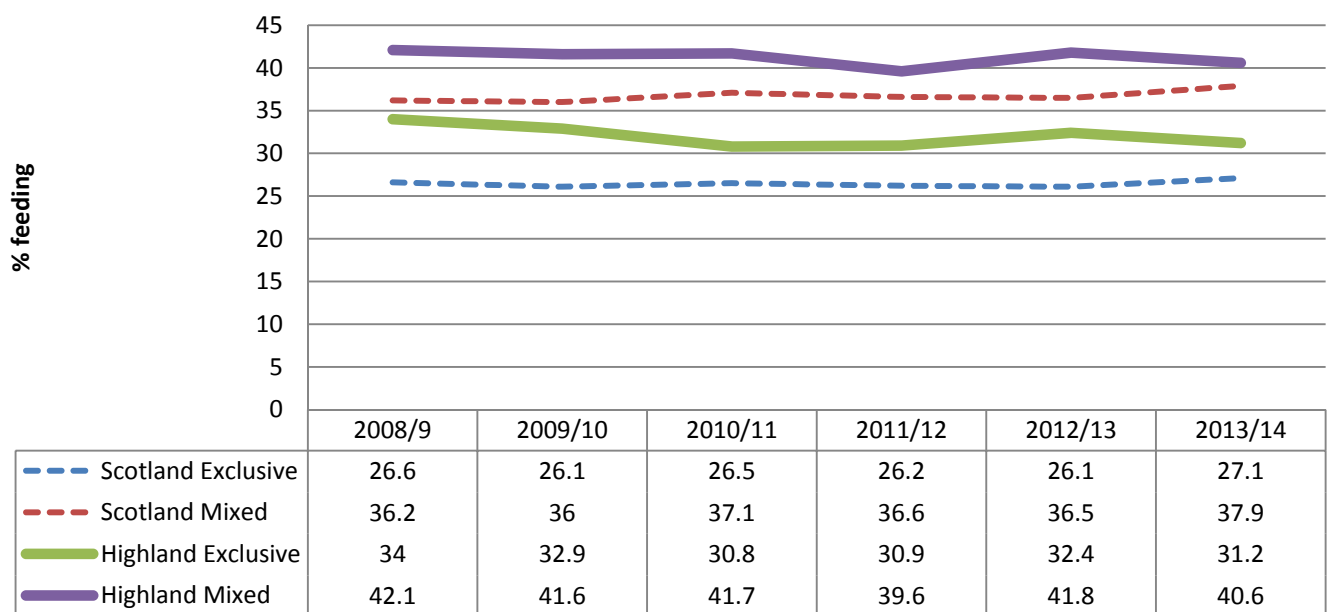
The purpose of this report is to

- (i) update members on current breast feeding rates in Highland,
- (ii) summarise actions being taken to increase the rate,
- (iii) present the options for investment that would increase the probability of meeting the current target by 2022 and help more mums breastfeed.

1. Background

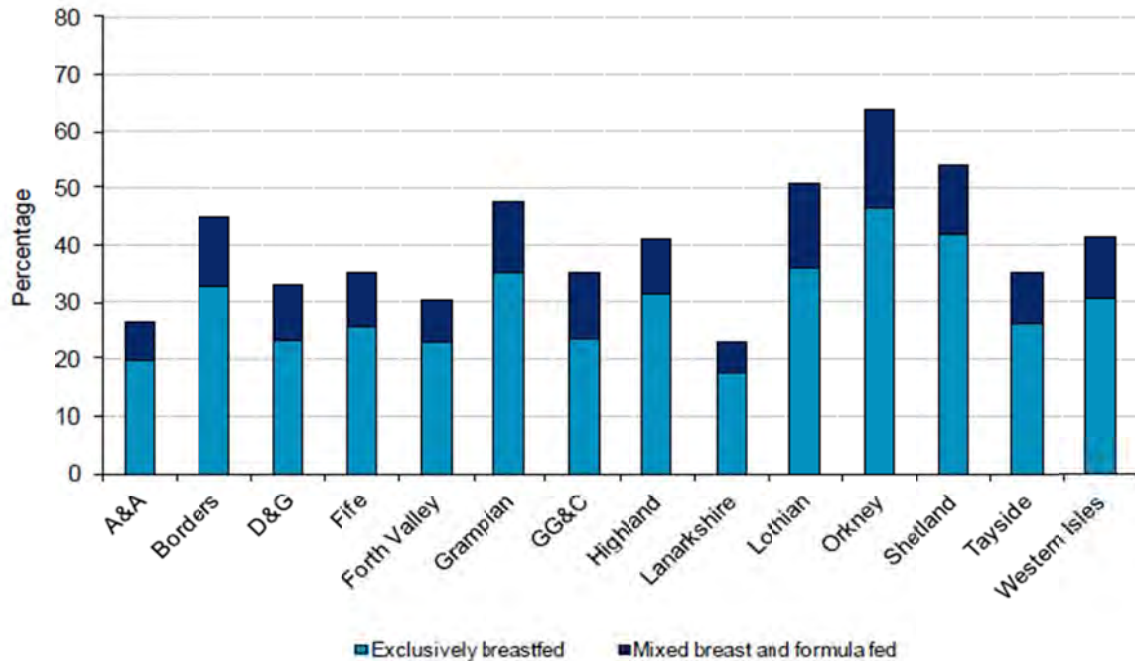
Like the rest of Scotland, breastfeeding rates within Highland have remained static over the past 6 years - see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Breastfeeding rates in Highland and Scotland at 6 - 8 weeks



Highland performs relatively well compared to other NHS Board areas in Scotland but breastfeeding rates are still below levels that we would want to see.

Figure 2 Breastfeeding rates by NHS Board



There is a need to review what level of breastfeeding Highland Council wishes to achieve in the context of local and national priorities and the how this might be achieved.

1.1 Ongoing work to improve breastfeeding rates

There are currently a number of programmes of work underway across the Community Planning Partnership to improve breastfeeding rates. These include:

1. Implementation of the national Maternal and Infant Feeding Framework as the strategic approach to improving breastfeeding rates. This involves working with a wide range of partners to publicise the benefits of breastfeeding and supporting women who chose to breast feed.
2. Working with the small pool of Infant Feeding Support Workers that have been funded by Highland Council and NHS Highland to reach as many mums as possible with support. A first phase evaluation of these posts has been undertaken and indicates that the support provided by these staff is extremely well received by mums.
3. Many girls have made a provisional decision by the age of 14 years as to whether or not they intend to breastfeed. Extensive work is therefore underway in both primary and secondary schools to provide information on the benefits of choosing to breastfeed. This is being done in a way that does not stigmatise those who decide not to breast feed.

4. Gaining and maintaining international awards. Highland can be proud that it was one of the first in Scotland to achieve Breastfeeding Friendly status from an international award system run by The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Extensive work is currently underway to ensure that we continue to keep this prestigious award when we are re-assessed later this year.
5. Work to change the culture around breastfeeding by providing workplaces and public places with guidance and support for breastfeeding including the breastfeeding sticker scheme.
6. Working collaboratively with other professions and community groups including the Family Nurse Partnership initiative and developing peer supporters to promote breastfeeding.

2. Historic Breastfeeding Targets

The Scottish Government breast feeding target for 2006/07 was 25%. Highland successfully reached and surpassed that target. Subsequently a decision was made in Highland to have a stretch aim of increasing breastfeeding rates from 26.6% to 33.3% by 2010/11 and subsequently to 36%. The target for 2010/11 was not met and breastfeeding rates have remained static around 31% since then. In the context of the rest of Scotland, it should be noted that some areas in Scotland have targets for breastfeeding as low as 19%. Highland is significantly above the Scottish average and has made good progress. However, there is more to be done and additional investment is required if rates are to be pushed up further.

3. Infant Feeding Support Workers

Evidence from elsewhere tells us that one of the best ways to improve breastfeeding rates is to provide Infant Feeding Support Workers. At present, there are 4 whole time equivalent Infant Feeding Support Workers within Highland:

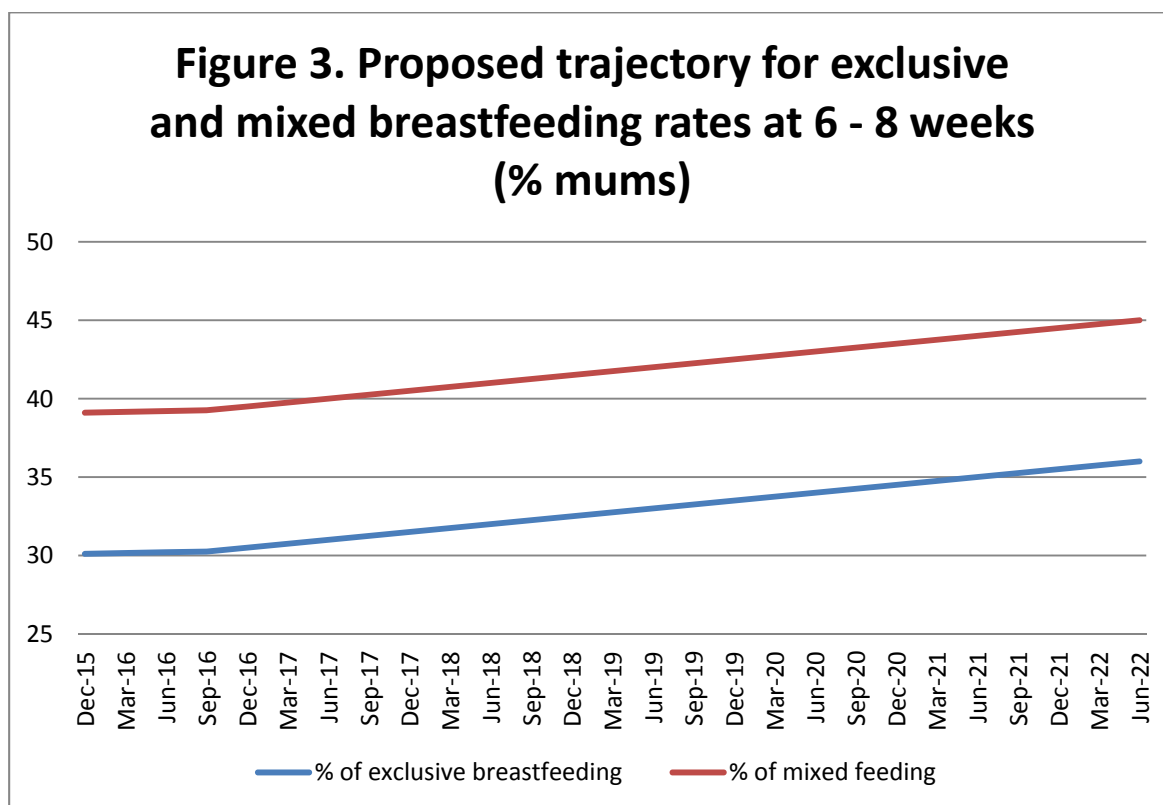
- 1 WTE in Raigmore funded by the Maternal and Infant Nutrition Framework funding
- 3 WTE funded by the Highland Council preventative spend
 - 1 WTE based in Easter Ross
 - 1 WTE based in Inverness
 - 0.5 WTE based in Caithness
 - 0.5 WTE based in Fort William

These posts are being evaluated using Early Years Collaborative methodology and the feedback to date has been very positive. All parents who have had contact with the Infant Feeding Support Workers have returned questionnaires saying the service was helpful to them. However, there are still many mothers who do not currently have adequate access to this service.

4. Future options

It is proposed that the targets for breastfeeding need to be proportional to the level of investment in meeting the targets.

This issue was taken to NHS Highland Improvement Committee in June 2015. The committee were keen to pursue a trajectory to 36% exclusive breastfeeding. With additional investment this could be achieved by 2022 – see Figure 3.



Alternatively, lower targets could be agreed with less investment. Three options are therefore laid out below.

1. **CURRENT INVESTMENT** - Maintain the current level of investment but lower the target for exclusive breast feeding to 33% and mixed breastfeeding to 43%, to be met over the next three years based on retaining the current four Infant Feeding Support Workers.
2. **MODERATE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT** - Agree to increase the current level of investment to areas with low breastfeeding rates to raise the rates as in the table below:

Area	Current rates	Proposed local target for 2022	Additional IFSW advised	Additional cost
Caithness	18%	22%	0.5 WTE	£11,000
Easter Ross	22.4%	27%	1 WTE	£22,000
Inverness West	26.3%	31%	1 WTE	£22,000

It is estimated that the investment would increase rates by around 0.75% per year over three years in these areas. In this case, the target for Highland as a whole would also improve.

3. HIGH LEVEL OF ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT - Agree the proposed trajectory for exclusive and mixed breastfeeding rates shown in Figure 3, supported by investment of £220,000 in Infant Support Workers to ensure that every mother can have support.

Annual delivery rate for Highland Council area	Number of IFSW's required (WTE)	Cost of IFSW's – based on middle band 2
2,200	10	£220,000

It is estimated that this level of investment would increase exclusive breastfeeding rates for Highland to 36% by 2022 and mixed feeding rates to over 50%.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to consider the three options presented above in the light of this and other priorities and provide guidance on the approach that the committee believes should be pursued.

Designation: Public Health Directorate, NHS Highland

Date: 14 August 2015

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Background Papers: