

Breastfeeding rates in Cheshire West and Chester are significantly worse than the England average and have been falling. During 2013/14 the proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding at birth was 65.3% compared to the England rate of 73.9%.

We don't have a complete picture at the locality or children's centre level, but information from 2011/12 suggests that breastfeeding rates are lower in Vale Royal CCG compared to West Cheshire CCG. Within West Cheshire CCG, Ellesmere Port and Neston has the lowest breastfeeding rates.

At six to eight weeks the proportion of babies being breastfed fell to 35.1%, also significantly lower than the national average of 45.9%.

Breastfeeding benefits both mother and child. Breast fed babies have less risk of; developing chest and ear infections, diarrhoea and vomiting, eczema; becoming obese, and developing diabetes later in life. For mothers breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

In very crude proportions this means that around a third of mothers do not initiate breastfeeding at all, a third will give up by six to eight weeks and around one third of babies are still being breastfed at six to eight weeks.

Evidence of what works

NICE guidance Maternal and Child Nutrition recommends a multifaceted approach to:

- Raise awareness of, and how to overcome the barriers to breastfeeding.
- Provide high quality and sufficiently skilled breastfeeding peer support programmes.
- Joint working between health professionals and peer supporters.
- Provide education and information for pregnant women.

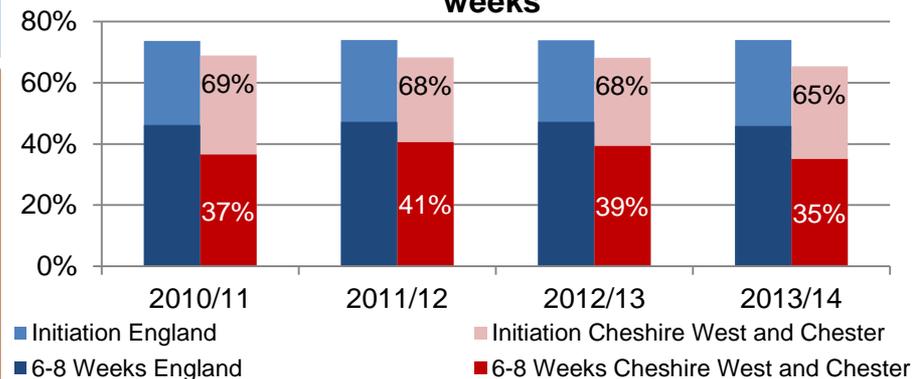
This is underpinned by the support for the adoption and implementation of UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) as the best evidence base to raise breastfeeding prevalence.

Recommended actions

Work towards increasing breastfeeding rates through actions outlined in the Infant Feeding Strategy:

- Carry out targeted work in areas of low breastfeeding initiation and continuation.
- Work towards achieving community and hospital full BFI status.
- Provide breastfeeding peer support in hospital and community settings.
- Continue to ensure the equitable provision of breastfeeding support groups across Cheshire West and Chester.

Breastfeeding initiation and at six to eight weeks



Rationale: Increases in breastfeeding are expected to reduce illness in young children, have health benefits for the infant and the mother and result in cost savings to the NHS through reduced hospital admission for the treatment of infection in infants. Current national and international guidance recommends exclusive breastfeeding for newborns and for the first six months of infancy. (Public Health England)