

An assets-based intervention before and after birth to improve breastfeeding initiation and continuation: the ABA feasibility RCT

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Plain English summary

The ABA feasibility RCT

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Plain English summary

Breastfeeding is good for the health of babies and mothers. There are low levels of breastfeeding in the UK, with the lowest rates among poorer women. Almost one in five women starting to breastfeed stop within 2 weeks.

We developed an approach that we hoped would support new mothers feeding their babies. Women were given a trained 'infant-feeding helper' who met with women antenatally to discuss feeding their baby and supported them after birth. The support was 'woman centred', including breastfeeding and formula feeding, working with a woman towards her own feeding goals.

The study aimed to discover if it was feasible to test the intervention in the future in a larger study.

We recruited women from two sites in England who were pregnant with their first child. Half of the women were allocated to the intervention group and half were allocated to the usual care group. We sent each mother a text message when her baby was 3 days old and a questionnaire when her baby was 8 weeks old and 6 months old to ask how she was feeding her baby. We interviewed women, infant-feeding helpers and midwives to capture their thoughts.

We were successful in recruiting women to the study. Of 135 women approached, 103 agreed to take part, including women living in disadvantaged areas and teenagers. We received responses from 68%, 85% and 81% of participants at 3 days, 8 weeks and 6 months, respectively. Information collected in interviews showed that the intervention was acceptable.

Delays in finding out when women had given birth led to delays in offering support to some women in the crucial early days and in providing support to some women who gave birth prematurely.

In summary, it was feasible to deliver and test the intervention in a controlled study. To find out if it has any effect on breastfeeding rates, a large-scale trial is needed.

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