



Co-design with parents is a core feature of Family Hubs in Calderdale. In Calderdale we have a strong foundation of engaging parents and carers in the shaping of local services, but we know there are more opportunities to involve parents and carers. We know that people want to engage with us in different ways and have different levels of involvement. Which is why we have a range of approaches to connect with parents and carers.


We have diverse communities and work with local partners to connect with seldom heard voices and communities with specific needs. We also connect with local families through our Parent Champions; volunteer parents who reach out to others and feedback themes and issues.


We have used the opportunity presented by the Family Hubs funding to build on our existing approach to engagement with families. A key aim has been to directly involve parents and carers in the development of the strategies that impact upon them and ensure their stories inform our approach.

Our approach combined Community Research and an Appreciative Inquiry methodology.

 Appreciative Inquiry uses strengths, values and dreams to generate imagination and innovation – together with professionals, peer supporters and breastfeeding mums we created a space for people to discuss and co-design questions.

 We worked with Ideas Alliance who trained four local mums as community researchers who could connect with breastfeeding parents and hear their stories, using the co-designed questions.

 Through 69 interviews and 115 responses to an online survey, we gained a wealth of insight into people’s breastfeeding experiences.

 At a sense-making event with over 30 project partners, we explored together how the findings should shape breastfeeding support in Calderdale, and discussed opportunities to develop services in partnership with local people.

Utilising an Appreciative Inquiry approach for our Infant Feeding Strategy



It is often the case insight will be undertaken with a deficit approach, why something didn’t work, which isn’t always conducive to people being forthcoming with their stories. For our recent infant feeding strategy, we chose to look through an appreciative inquiry lens, to find out what had enabled women to breastfeed in areas where breastfeeding is low.

Focusing on an assets-based approach, we found women opened up to us, were proud to share their stories and felt listened to. The key factor was training up four breastfeeding mums to be community researchers, to go into the local community, capturing the stories of their breastfeeding journeys from other mums. From this insight we shared it with Professor Amy Brown a leading academic in maternal and child public health from Swansea university and leading author in the field of infant feeding. Amy combined our insight with the evidence on infant feeding and that has influenced the priority outcomes in our Calderdale Infant Feeding Strategy 2024 – 2029.

Read our strategy here 



“Connecting the data to the stories, gives a fuller picture and this is where the magic happens, what we call the gold dust !”

Deborah Harkins, Director of Public Health

Conclusion

This approach is now being used to develop our peri natal mental health strategy. We are exploring ways to bring a co-designed way of working into future projects. There is an engagement framework already underway and our Council Members have received training in using an appreciative inquiry approach. One the Community Researchers has secured a job with a national breastfeeding charity. **We are being supported on our journey by Ideas Alliance.