

BfN News

Mums Supporting Mums



ONE MUM'S STORY

A young mum shares her breastfeeding journey

BREASTFEEDING LOOKS LIKE...

The BfN social media campaign that took off

FEEL THE FEAR

An honest account of being a Supporter



HELLO!

DECEMBER 2018
WINTER
ISSUE 71

Editor's Note

Welcome to the Winter 2018 edition of BfN News.

Autumn is always a very busy time for us at BfN - it seems to be conference season - kicking off with our own conference in early October, (read our write up of it on page 11), followed by lots of others including Unicef BFI, First Steps Nutrition and the Scottish Maternity & Midwifery festival. Now suddenly Christmas is upon us and all the chaos and joy that comes with it!

Our cover stars this time are Philippa and baby Gabrielle. Philippa shared this beautiful photo with via Instagram earlier this year as part of our 'what breastfeeding looks like' campaign - more details about this on page 8.

Please do let us know what you think of this edition of BfN News and get in touch if you have suggestions for articles for future newsletters. We'd love to hear from you.

Wishing you a peaceful and happy festive season, however you're celebrating, and all best wishes for 2019.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the Breastfeeding Network.



PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE



Shereen Fisher, BfN's CEO, responds to Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock's vision for prevention released on 5th November (<http://bit.ly/MattHBlog>), and how it relates to investment in breastfeeding support.

"The future of health in the UK is dependent on us all getting really serious about prevention[1]. Currently the NHS spends £1 in every £5 on health problems that are a direct result of our lifestyle such as obesity and poor diet [2]. We are told that not only will prevention help reduce the strain on the NHS but it will also improve all our health. Getting serious about prevention must include getting serious about community level investment to enable all mothers who choose to breastfeed to do so, given the substantial evidence that links breastfeeding with improved health.

The Lancet [3] series on breastfeeding offers the most comprehensive review of all the evidence on breastfeeding to date and highlights breastfeeding's role in the UK prevention agenda. The authors state:

"...how important breastfeeding is for all women and children, irrespective of where they live... Appropriate breastfeeding practices prevent child morbidity due to diarrhoea, respiratory infections, and otitis media [ear infections]. Where infectious diseases are common causes of death, breastfeeding provides major protection, but even in high-income populations it lowers mortality from causes such as necrotising enterocolitis and SIDS. It also helps nursing women by preventing breast cancer. Additionally, our review suggests likely effects on overweight and diabetes in breastfed children, and on ovarian cancers and diabetes [Type 2] in mothers."

Importantly UK women and babies offer policy and health leaders an attractive opportunity. While breastfeeding rates in the UK are the lowest in the world the rates of initiation – women starting to breastfeed – have been increasing for the last 20 years (81%)[4]. Scotland's infant feeding statistics[5] (November 2018) show signs of positive change – no happy accident but consequence of national leadership, strategic planning, partnership and sustained investment.

Women's intention to breastfeed offers an important opportunity for health and wellbeing both for babies (next generation) and women themselves. However, individual will has to be met with support that effectively improves a mother's breastfeeding experience and helps sustain her choice to breastfeed. Peer support can make a big difference here especially as over time it offers the chance for areas to recreate a culture where breastfeeding is familiar. We also know that choice isn't made in a vacuum but is heavily influenced by family members, hospital care, health care professional advice and societal views. Patient empowerment is an important theme in the vision of healthcare for the future yet women feel constantly disempowered in their efforts to breastfeed through the lack of support available to them.

With the NHS celebrating a landmark anniversary alongside £20 billion a year in extra cash now announced [6] NHS leaders will be putting forward a 10-year plan that will make crucial decisions about how the service will spend the money. In the planning no doubt demands will be high, as cancer survival rates, mental health support, health inequalities and an aging population all vie for consideration, how should we use the government's cash boost to tackle the priorities that matter most to us?

In the debate let's remember the substantial benefits to health in breastfeeding for mother and baby as well as the sheer economic and environmental sense that breastfeeding makes. In 2012 UNICEF UK [7] reported that just a moderate increase in breastfeeding rates could save the NHS millions. In 2016 the Lancet [8] series calculated that the overall savings would actually be in the order of billions, not millions, of pounds. Moreover, the measures required to support breastfeeding are relatively inexpensive and soon pay for themselves. As Keith Hansen of the World Bank said:

"In sheer, raw bottom-line economic terms, breastfeeding may be the single best investment a country can make. [9]"

The potential savings into the billions are important here because we all know that the cash boost being offered by government to the NHS and social care isn't going to be enough. While the additional £20 billion a year (in five years) has already been welcomed, the Kings Fund has pointed out, that this does not come close to the amount required to improve services after years of underfunding [10].

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...

Prevention is better than cure (continued...)

On social care, the budget announcements will not be able to undo the cuts in services and underfunding of local government that has already occurred. These cuts that have caused losses to breastfeeding support services, many of which are located in areas of low breastfeeding rates and run by volunteers and supported by charities [11].

Knowing how the money works to support breastfeeding is essential and it is currently hard to know this in England. What we do know is that funding for community-led breastfeeding peer support has been cut because it sits within a shrinking public health budget devolved to local authorities. Despite excellent evidence-based commissioning guidance on infant feeding for local authorities [12] breastfeeding support services in communities is entirely optional.

This has led to mothers who choose to breastfeed being unable to access local services and leaves them failed and let down. This is just too precarious a situation for a public health priority as important as breastfeeding that if better funded and supported could serve us well in the prevention of infant mortality, obesity, type 2 diabetes, ovarian and breast cancer.

If we are going to get serious about prevention in health then there needs to be a clear strategy and leadership for breastfeeding. Government's role is key here in taking responsibility for building an environment that promotes, protects and supports breastfeeding [13], not just for the next year but for the next 20 years.

This should include at a minimum the following very important steps many of which are recommended by National Institute for Clinical Excellence:

- Appoint a national multidisciplinary infant feeding board or committee with strong leadership to ensure evidence on infant feeding is understood and enshrined in policy
- Ensure that Baby Friendly accreditation becomes a minimum requirement for all maternity settings (achieved in Scotland and Northern Ireland) (NICE recommended)
- Ensure that all mothers regardless of where they live, receive skilled evidence-based breastfeeding support, making this provision a mandatory responsibility by protecting the public health budget that protects health visiting and breastfeeding peer support workers (NICE recommended)
- Protect all families from aggressive marketing of formula companies by enacting into UK law the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant resolutions (NICE recommended).
- Require employers to provide breaks to breastfeeding mothers to allow them to breastfeed or express milk at work.

With careful, long term thinking and action the prevention agenda offers great focus to help us plan the health and wellbeing of the UK for the future. The health of women and babies will be stronger still for joined-up planning and provision of quality breastfeeding support. Let us not forget all our responsibilities in supporting breastfeeding and ensuring that its role in the prevention agenda is fully acknowledged.

References:

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- [2] Anita Charlesworth, Chief Economist, The Health Foundation interviewed for Healthy Visions BBC Podcast / <https://www.health.org.uk/Running-to-stand-still-why-20-5bn-is-a-lot-but-not-enough>
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- [9] The Power of Nutrition and the Power of Breastfeeding (2015), Keith Hansen, Breastfeeding Medicine, Volume 10, Number 8
- [10] The Kings Fund, NHS Funding: What we know, what we don't know and what comes next <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2018/06/nhs-funding-what-we-know>
- [11] Open Letter on the crisis in UK breastfeeding <https://ukbreastfeeding.org/open-letter/>
- [12] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infant-feeding-commissioning-services>
- [13] <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/about/call-to-action/>

Shereen has written a number of other blogs recently, including one responding to an article published in the Guardian in October suggesting that women are not heeding breastfeeding 'advice' and another commenting on the recent MBRRACE-UK report 'Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care'.

To read these and all our blogs, visit www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/blog

National Breastfeeding Awareness Week in Gosport & Havant

By Ginny Dupont

The volunteers in Gosport and Havant love to run events for our local community. During National Breastfeeding Awareness Week we decided to cover all bases and held one indoors and a picnic outdoors.

On the Thursday we were at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum and an enjoyable time was had by all in their fabulous play area (including a round of 'pin the baby on the boob!'). There was a great turnout with 42 people in total including mums, their children and local health care professionals.

On the Friday the sun shone but we were lovely and shady under our purple tent at Portchester Castle. Fourteen mums came to see us and enjoyed cake, fruit, bubbles and conversation.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped to organise and support the events including Michelle, Lailani, Zoe, Kelly, Sally, Crystal, Lucy, Eleanor and Lia.



Have you seen Tigers?



Tigers is an outstanding film from Danis Tanovic based on the true story of former Nestle Pakistan salesman taking on the baby milk industry with the help of IBFAN. It's definitely worth a watch if you haven't seen it already.

It is available to watch on Indian streaming service ZEE5 and there have been various showings throughout December. More are planned for the new year, including one on **16 January 2019, 19:30 at the Vue Cinema, Portsmouth.**

To find out more, or to see how you could arrange a screening local to you, visit:
www.babymilkaction.org/tigers

Supporting women with disabilities

Do you have any examples of supporting pregnant or breastfeeding women who also have long term health conditions or a disability with issues around work or returning to work? Or are you a mum with a disability or affected by a long term health condition and might be willing to share your experiences?

Our friends at Maternity Action (www.maternityaction.org.uk) are working on a project focusing on this issue at the moment. They have approached BfN to see if we have any examples we could share at an upcoming focus group around the types of issues this group of women might face.

Contact:
sarah.edwards@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk if you are able to contribute some examples for this. We will share their project findings and work in a future newsletter.

Who says young mums can't breastfeed?

BfN recently attended an event in Edinburgh run by Family Nurse Partnership, an organisation that provides dedicated support for young mums. At this event, BfN Supporter Melanie Woodward met a young mum called Susan. Melanie was so inspired by Susan that she asked her to share her story, which she has done so willingly for us here:



"I fell pregnant with my daughter at the age of 19 and gave birth at 20. I have always felt very maternal and knew that my one real dream in life was to become a mother. Sadly I lost my mum 4 months before I fell pregnant, this is a pain that never fades. However my little girl has brought so much joy back in to my life and I really believe she was sent to me by my mum. I said from the very start that I was going to try and breastfeed as I wanted to do what was best for my baby. I told my midwife I was not going to put pressure on myself or my newborn and if it was too stressful or we had problems then I would change to bottle feeding.

On 4th November 2017, I gave birth to the most precious gift I've ever received. My daughter Maisie. I had a horrendous pregnancy and suffered with hyperemesis gravidarum and was in and out of hospital constantly. After a traumatic birth, I was very weak and was kept in the labour suite longer to be monitored. During this time I had Maisie laid on my chest, skin to skin. The best feeling in the world. Within a few hours of her birth she became hungry and knew exactly what she wanted and how to do it. I was in total awe of this magical feeling and bond I was sharing with my baby and I knew in that moment that I wanted to give this 'breastfeeding journey' a real go.

For the first few weeks it was quite a blur and some days were tough as she cluster fed. I worried that she was hungry and wasn't getting enough, but with the support of my health visitor and support groups I soon realised this was all normal behaviour. I planned to breastfeed until 6 weeks. By 6 weeks we were doing so well, I wasn't willing to give up. Maisie was very unsettled and colicky and so people would come out with retorts such as "it's 'cause your breastfeeding" or "she'll sleep better on formula". I tried not to take any of these comments to heart but in the end I was exhausted and I decided what harm would it cause if she just took 1 formula bottle a night from daddy so I could rest? Well if only I had known! She broke out in a horrible rash and I freaked. We rushed her straight to the hospital who ran tests and then came back to us with "it's just baby acne". So off we went home, I felt awful for over reacting and wasting hospital time.

However over the next few weeks this rash persisted and she became so unsettled and I knew something wasn't right. It took a lot of trips to the hospital and GP to get an answer. When she started to have blood in her nappies I was adamant that there was something wrong so pushed for a diagnosis. This is when we finally discovered she had CMPA. This is an allergy to the protein in cows milk. We cut out the added formula top ups straight away. I felt so ashamed and upset that I had been feeding my daughter something that was causing her so much pain.

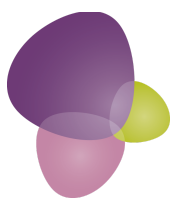
At this point, I had two choices. Stop breastfeeding and feed special prescription formula, or change my diet to exclude cows milk and continue our breastfeeding journey. I wasn't ready to stop and wanted to give my daughter the best again after what she had gone through. So that's what I done. It was very hard and on some occasions I was so ready to give up but watching her feed and seeing the comfort and love she got from it I powered on through. We did trial some special formula to which she couldn't tolerate either so it became clear that breastfeeding was our only option. None of my friends really understood. I often got comments like "just put her on the formula it will be easier for everyone" or "well you can't breastfeed her forever can you!?" These comments really got to me, and I tried my hardest not to let them eat away at me. I was part of online support groups and these really helped me through the darkest of days. Watching my daughter grow and learn boosted me though and helped me to keep going with our breastfeeding journey.

I returned to study when Maisie was 9 months old. I was worried how I was going to manage to feed her and keep my supply up. Thankfully my college have been so supportive and have gave me my own private room with fridge to express in. Everything went smoother than expected with this transition. My daughter has just turned 1 year old and I always thought I would definitely want to stop by this stage but, after everything that we have both went through to get to where we are, I'm now in no hurry to stop. I will continue to feed my daughter for as long as I see fit and as long as she wants to, I have learned to ignore the negative comments and focus on how far we have come.

Never let anyone tell you that you can't, and if they do use it to fuel your fire to keep going. Mothers have hidden strength inside and you will find it. So when any of you new mummies are having a bad day please remember you are not alone and that it does get better. The good days will always outshine the bad ones."

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

- Wendy's fact sheet on Cows Milk Protein Allergy: <http://bit.ly/BFNCMPA>
- Family Nurse Partnership: <https://fnp.nhs.uk>



BfN Inclusion & Diversity group update

The Inclusion and Diversity short life working group have had their first conference call meeting earlier this month.

A big thank you to those members that have offered to be part of the group and who volunteer their time to it. They will be looking to review BfN's approach to equality, diversity and inclusivity for both the families we support and for our membership.

They will produce recommendations that will go to the Board in Spring /Summer 2019. We will update with developments as they happen.

If you're interested in being part of this group, or finding out more, contact: anthea.tennant-eyles@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

SAVE THE DATE

We're delighted to be able to announce that the BfN AGM & Conference 2019 will be held on 12th October in Central London.

Details of speakers and how to book will be announced shortly but please get the date in your diary now!



What BfN means to me...

By Caroline Brough,
Volunteer Supporter



"To me, BfN is inclusive, non-judgemental, evidence-based information and support, accessible through trained volunteers at groups, phonelines, web chats and social media. It has taught me the importance of listening and unconditional acceptance.

I breastfed my first child for over a year; I experienced toe-curling-hold-your-breath pain on every feed for 13 weeks and I had the sort of support that made me question if I was good enough to be a mum. I became involved with BfN 8 years ago, after the birth of my third child, when I jumped at the opportunity to train as a helper, to provide the sort of support that I had needed but didn't get. As a qualified research scientist, the BfN's ethos felt right to me and I went on to complete supporter and helpline training.

Like many volunteers, I am always busy juggling the demands of life. I now work as a learning support assistant in a secondary school, am a mum-taxi, as well as undertaking other voluntary roles. It's a constant struggle to find time for the helpline, so answering messages via social works really well for me. I joined the Facebook team during Christmas 2016, answering a few messages sporadically.

Last month, the BfN page received around 100 messages for information and support. Some needed just a short answer; for others, the messages went back and forth for hours, days or even months; for some I needed help from the Drugs in Breastmilk team or admin team; and others I needed to ask the BfN hive for their collective input. I can respond at midnight, I can add links to information or signpost on. I like the flexibility of offering this type of support, even though technology as well as social media settings and algorithms can throw in some challenges.

Additionally, despite living in Essex for 22 years, I was born and brought up in Glasgow, so on messages, I don't need to worry about confusing someone with my strong Scottish accent. Most importantly though, the people who message us are overwhelmingly positive about our response."



Women's March



In July a group of BfN volunteers from the Lambeth project joined tens of thousands of other women from across the country to take part in the Women's March in London.

Proudly carrying this this amazing handmade banner they represented breastfeeding mothers their supporters.

Thank you for taking part and helping ensure our voices were heard!



More recognition for Wendy

In our last newsletter we told you that our very own Wendy Jones had been awarded a Points of Light Award by Prime Minister Theresa May in recognition of her tireless work providing families with evidence based information about drugs and breastfeeding.

As a result of this award, Alison Thewliss MP tabled an 'Early Day Motion' (EDM) in parliament to help draw attention to the importance of the work done by Wendy.

EDMs are used to put on record the views of individual MPs or to draw attention to specific events or campaigns. Topics covered by EDMs vary widely. By attracting the signatures of other MPs, they can be used to demonstrate the level of parliamentary support for a particular cause or point of view.

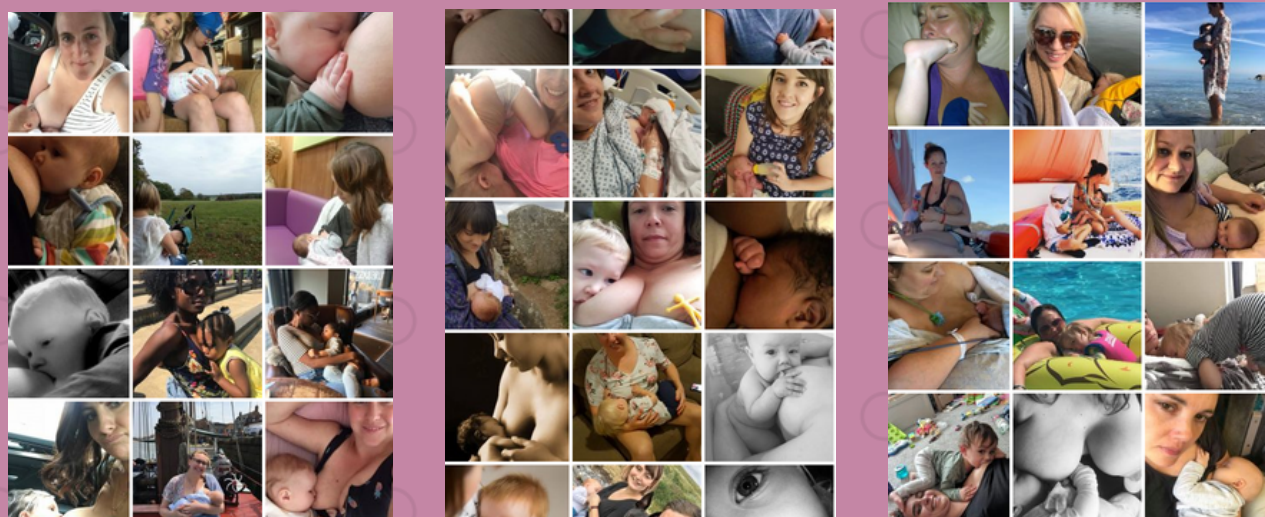
The wording for Wendy's EDM is below.

POINTS OF LIGHT AWARD FOR DRUGS IN
BREASTMILK HELPLINE
EDM #1307
Tabled 23 May 2018

That this House welcomes the announcement that Dr Wendy Jones, founder of the Breastfeeding Network's Drugs in Breastmilk helpline, has received a Points of Light award from the Prime Minister's Office; understands that the Drugs in Breastmilk helpline, which was established by Dr Jones over 20 years ago, helps over 7,000 women a year by providing clear advice on the types of treatment and medication that can be safely taken during breastfeeding; believes that this accolade reflects the outstanding academic contribution that Dr Wendy Jones has made towards advancing our understanding of the impact of different types of drug on breastmilk, as well as reflecting the high quality, personalised support that Dr Jones has provided to thousands of breastfeeding women across the UK; and congratulates Dr Wendy Jones on receiving her Points of Light award and wishes her every success for the future.

This EDM was signed by 18 MPs from a variety of parties including the SNP, Labour, Conservative and DUP. For more details visit:
<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/51778>

What Breastfeeding Looks Like



During October we appealed for photographs showing what breastfeeding looks like in your everyday lives. The response was immense, and the photos are so wonderful and varied, showing breastfeeding anywhere and everywhere...often in some quite comical situations!

Everyone has a small part to play in normalising breastfeeding and removing the stigma that can be attached to something that should be as commonplace as eating a sandwich. This might be by feeding your child in public, or by supporting others who you see feeding, with a kind word or just a smile.

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed photos for this project, it is our hope that they will be shared and seen widely and will also do their bit to help make breastfeeding the norm.

You can see a selection of the photos on this page but to see a full round up of all of them, visit: www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/what-breastfeeding-looks-like/

You can also see more pictures and add your own if you want to in our Facebook album: <http://bit.ly/whatbflookslike>

Alyson Spicer is BfN's newly recruited Social Media Officer. She's a BfN Helper based in Lambeth and if you follow BfN on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, you'll already know she's doing an amazing job of engaging and enthusing our supporters online. And she wants to hear from you!

"We're looking to start including more personal stories on our social channels, as a way of being more engaging and showing the real "human" side of what we do. It would be great if you would be willing to write short posts for us, on the subject of pretty much anything you do for the BfN! Some topic ideas to get you started:

- A day in the life of a BfN supporter/volunteer
- What it's like to attend a drop-in session (this can be either from the point of view of a supporter or helper or a mum, if you'd like to write about your original experiences of attending a group before you joined BfN)
- What it's like to take a call on the helpline
- Why you are involved with the BfN

Or anything else relating to your role at the BfN. It would also be lovely (though by no means a deal breaker) if you'd be happy to include a photo of yourself to go alongside your post.

If you're interested or would like more info, please do drop me a line: alyson.spicer@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

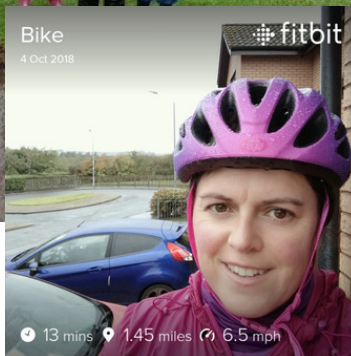


Thank you for taking part in our Big Tea Break!

During October people all over the UK were out and about in all weathers covering kilometres for our Big Tea Break virtual run - we had cyclists, swimmers, runners and toddlers (including these hardcore toddlers in Renfrewshire about to jump in the world's biggest puddle!) taking part this year. An extra big shout out to BfN's Training Development Manager Sarah Edwards who ran every day during October and covered over 100km during the month!

Many others were busy running cake sales, Big Tea Break get togethers and supervision sessions involving lots of tea and cake.

Thank you to everyone who got involved this year - we're already making plans for the 2019 fundraising challenges! Watch this space....



A little late but we also wanted to give a special shout out to Misty Woodhouse who we have recently discovered raised £100 during our Mums' Milk Run in May by running 1km every day of the month. Well done and thank you Misty!



NBH Update

Christmas is a particularly busy time of year for the helpline as many other services close down for the festive period. But we know it's also a busy time for all our volunteers too! So throughout December we have a variety of little treats and incentives on offer to help say thank you to our amazing volunteers for logging on. Talk to your Linkworker to find out more! Over the last few months we have evaluated and increased our remote supervision work, allowing more volunteers to access supervision even if they aren't in a BfN area. We've also recruited a new ABM Helpline Manager, Caroline Bolton and are making plans for the next year, and talking to PHE about continuing funding after July 2019, when our current contract ends. We loved awarding lots of volunteers with their badges at the BfN conference and we should give an extra special mention to Pat Little who is the first BfN volunteer to be awarded a 2000 calls answered badge! Well done Pat! We've continued our series of webinars, most recently with Emma Pickett running a session on oversupply and in the new year we have topics booked including baby led weaning, relactation and lots more. During World Breastfeeding Week in August we were asked to provide quotes for an article on 'what I wish I'd known before I started breastfeeding' - and we were overwhelmed with suggestions from our volunteers. We shared these on our Facebook page throughout the week and thought you might like to see some of them here as well:

"I didn't know that it's okay to ask for help - no question is a stupid one if it helps your breastfeeding go better and there are lots of people out there to help."

"I didn't know that something I had assumed I would just do for my babies would lead me to nearly two decades of wonderful experiences supporting other women to breastfeed for as long as they want and in a way that suited their family situation."

"No one told me it was basically medicine. As well as soothing literally everything when drunk it can be used outside on every little cut, burn, itch. I'm always trying to pin my kids down and slather them in the stuff!"

"I didn't know that breastfeeding was the answer to everything for baby - hungry, thirsty, tired, comfort, whatever - boob was the answer. I used to say 'if in doubt, whip it out!'"

"I didn't know I could still have a glass of wine while I was breastfeeding!"

"I didn't know how many smiles I would receive from complete strangers when feeding my baby in public."

"I didn't know that breastfeeding was going to be the loveliest, wonderful and most rewarding thing I have ever done!"

Facing the Fear

Kirsty Cummins is one of our National Breastfeeding Helpline Link workers, who has written this very honest piece about her own experience of anxiety and how she is beginning to overcome it in her role as a breastfeeding supporter. You may identify with some of her words.



"Fear. It's a funny thing isn't it. Most of us live in fear of something. Chest squeezing, breath taking fear tucked away inside our breast, kept on a low burn as much as possible it can rear up and get you when you least expect it. Taking the wind out of your sail and putting you firmly in your place.

I have lived in fear nearly all my life. From small person wobbles such as the squirmy, unknown feel of the sea bed under my feet when my Mum forced me to paddle, to the terror I felt when I happened upon "Jaws" being viewed in a neighbour's living room in all its terrifying splendour at the age of 5. (I haven't been able to watch it since.)

As I grew older I developed an anxiety disorder. I didn't know that's what it was. I just thought I was mad and panicked all the time that I couldn't control life. Would someone die if I didn't turn the light on and off a certain number of times, would something terrible happen to a loved one if I didn't wash my hands in a certain way? What I didn't realise at the time was that in trying to control life and death, stuff that I actually couldn't control, I was unable to deal with the things that were my responsibility, such as study and relationships and other such teen angst. I would never socialise and talking on a phone has always been difficult because of the fear of the unknown and the need to keep myself tiny and unnoticed.

I have had treatment. I sought help when I couldn't look after myself any more. And that was and is a long term project but also a wonderful thing. Through years of up and downs, undiagnosed post natal depression and other such low jinx I wished of a way to take control.

This insight into a life of worry and nervousness has made me wonder often about our fears. What fears we have as parents and how our modern life affects those to a lesser or greater degree, with instant access to answers or opinions that we used to have to seek in other ways. The need for us all to go back to trusting our instincts, hidden under a huge pile of 'other'. The voices that live inside us, and the knowledge passed down from Grandmothers and from inside the cells in our bodies, carried through the generations, is still there but no longer encouraged in quite the same way.

Recently I have been pondering the fears we carry as volunteers supporting other parents through times of worry or uncertainty. What makes some people fearless and certain they can make a difference, whilst others hide their knowledge and instincts, terrified they might get it wrong?

My reluctance to be a helpline volunteer has always been based around fear. The fear that I am not good enough to support another person. That if I get it wrong something terrible might happen. In a bid to avoid manic light switching or some such antic aimed at being the high master of control, I avoid. Avoid. Avoid. In talking to people who wish me to support I feel unable to be honest, with them or myself and have always talked vaguely about my true feelings out of embarrassment.

A plethora of excuses may come up that loosely express my fear, but not enough to convey just how terrified I am. Our greatest defence in the fight against fear is, more often than not, knowledge. If we know more we may fear less. When the terrified abseiler is gently guided through moving themselves down the rock face passing the rope through their hands, they are guided by the words of the instructor. That knowledge from another gets them down and the feelings of elation when reaching the bottom make it all worthwhile.

When I look down into the pit of worry and feelings that I am not good enough, I don't believe in my knowledge, or intuition or listening skills. They don't feel good enough to guide me.

Someone very brilliant recently talked to me about voicing those helpline fears out loud. As I said how I felt it made total sense. "It sounds so silly but it isn't silly" I said as I expressed my fear that it felt like a baby's life was in my hands if I took a call. The ugly face of not good enough was there again, taking control and making me feel useless. But actually as I said it I realised that I do have the tools to support and with that added bonus of modern tech allowing us to signpost instantly, we have so much to give. Fear, my old nemesis, can be thwarted if I use my greatest weapon. Honesty. Being truthful to myself about my fears and using the support I know I have available could actually get me past this block.

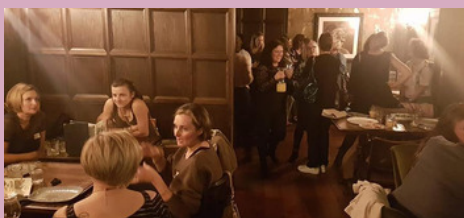
The warm hand of support from a helpline volunteer can and does make all the difference to new families. And that is possible over the phone.

Your love, warmth and ingrained desire to be part of the supportive community – the grandmother full of wisdom just for ten minutes in someone's life – is what you have control of and what changes lives. Yours and theirs."

Conference Season!

BfN AGM & Conference

We were back in Birmingham again this year for our AGM and conference. Well over 120 delegates joined us for the day to hear from speakers including Dr Claire Relton who showed the results from her study on the financial incentivising of breastfeeding; Emma Pickett who spoke about responsive feeding; Mark Williams who shared his experience of postnatal depression as a father; Heather Trickey on the evidence for breastfeeding peer support, and Smita Hanciles who talked about the power of peer support. There were also fantastic interactive sessions run by Sally Etheridge on how stress affects infant feeding and one on mental health from mother and daughter team Wendy Jones and Beth Chapman; plus we celebrated volunteers' achievements on NBH. It was a packed day - you can catch up on what happened by searching for #bfconf18 on Twitter.

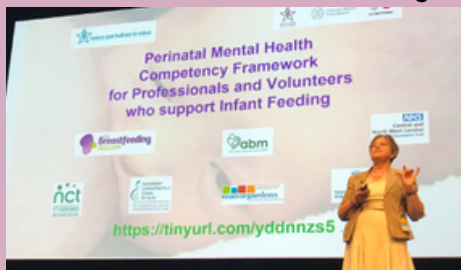


For the first time we also had a pre conference social event the night before - this was also really popular and proved to be a great chance for volunteers and staff from across the country to catch up and chat over a cocktail and a slice of pizza!

We've already set the date for next year's event - 12th October in London! Put it in your diary now!

Unicef Baby Friendly Conference

Liverpool was the home of the Baby Friendly Conference this year and it had its biggest ever attendance - more than 900 people attended across the two days. The BfN stall was as busy as ever with people queuing to stock up on the now famous Christmas boobles as well as finding out more about what we offer. Speakers this year included our very own Wendy Jones talking about perinatal mental health, as well as Janet Calvert from the NI Public Health Agency discussing their campaign #notsorrymums; plus a really interesting talk from Kajsa Brimdyr on skin to skin; and Prof Renée Flacking from Sweden talking about the neonatal environment



and the long-term impact of neonatal care. Her talk can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/BFConf>

BfN were well represented in the poster presentations with one submitted by Anthea Tennant-Ayles on BfN's Theory of Change model and one focusing on NBH. All the posters can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/2QtTmoM>

The 2019 conference will be in Glasgow on 28-29 November.



First Steps Nutrition/Henry Conference

BfN also attended the joint First Steps Nutrition/Henry conference which was held in London in November this year.

There were updates from both Henry and FSN - including details of their findings from their inquiry into the cost of infant formula, and other speakers included Prof Amy Brown talking about feeding in the first year of life and Dr Emma Haycraft on managing fussy eating in children. There was also an interactive activity focused on changing our habits led by Siân Livsey (just try folding your arms the opposite way to how you normally do it and see how you feel - then imagine someone telling you to change something about your lifestyle that you've done forever!)

At the event FSN also launched their newest guides - one on processed dried fruit snacks for children and another on fruit and vegetable based purees in pouches for young children. Delegates at the conference were treated to a taste of some examples of both of these types of products! The reports are worth a read and can be found on their website: www.firststepsnutrition.org



Thank you Rhona

Marion MacDonald asked us to include this shout out for a fabulous Ayrshire BfN volunteer, Rhona Capkiner:

"Rhona's been an amazing help to me at Saltcoats Parent and Baby Café over a long spell during the first half of this year where, where, for the most part, the families would have been stuck with just me otherwise. They've really enjoyed getting to know her (or rather, Rhona getting to know them). Our Parent and Baby Cafés run a bit differently to our traditional breastfeeding Groups, with more older kids running around, more diversity in the families (even just in feeding methods), messy play and crafts, and larger family groups attending as siblings can be more easily accommodated. The kids have loved her being there as much as the parents have and she's been amazing with them all. I know it's getting harder for her to come now between her "day job" and her other very much needed breastfeeding support work and she will be very much missed, so thought this was a good time to let you know. ☺"

Pic showing Rhona doing a great job of keeping the bigger kids smiling so their parents can have a cuppa and a chat in peace. Unfortunately there are no pictures of the wonderful, gentle support she also does so well!



Do you work with an amazing volunteer you think deserves a bit of extra recognition?

Email

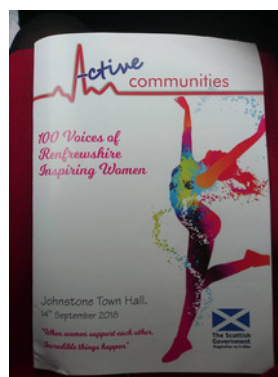
felicity.lambert@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk with details and we'll include them in the next issue of BfN News!

A correction

In our last newsletter we said Ayr United were the first football club in the country to be a breastfeeding friendly club. But we were wrong! Sorry! We were contacted by a former Blackpool Supporter to tell us that actually way back in 2011 Blackpool FC were leading the way with their 'Altogether Now' breastfeeding friendly scheme during matches. Thank you for pointing this out to us, and we hope lots more clubs join in in future!

Congratulations Melanie!

In September, wonderful BfN volunteer Supporter (and Central team staff member!) Melanie Woodward, was recognised as one of Renfrewshire's Inspiring Women at a special red carpet event organised by Active Communities, for her amazing contribution to the Renfrewshire Breast Buddies project over many years.



Katherine Wainwright, who nominated Melanie for the award spoke of Melanie's 'kindness, empowerment and acceptance of women when they are often feeling vulnerable or anxious, and how the Renfrewshire project

drop in groups span areas of socio-economic deprivation and create a mutual support mechanism connecting breastfeeding women from all walks of life".

An amazing achievement and very well deserved - thank you for all you do Melanie!

More Awards!

While we're on the topic of awards, it seems a good opportunity to mention that yet again BfN volunteers have been nominated for the Mama Awards next year!

The BfN Ayrshire volunteers team have been nominated in the group category and Amy Gibson has been nominated for an individual breastfeeding champion award. Amy is the schools breastfeeding peer supporter in Ayrshire as well as working and volunteering at breastfeeding groups. Congratulations to Amy and the rest of the team! We're keeping our fingers crossed until next May when the winners will be announced!



2019

NOMINEE

Scottish NBH Study Days

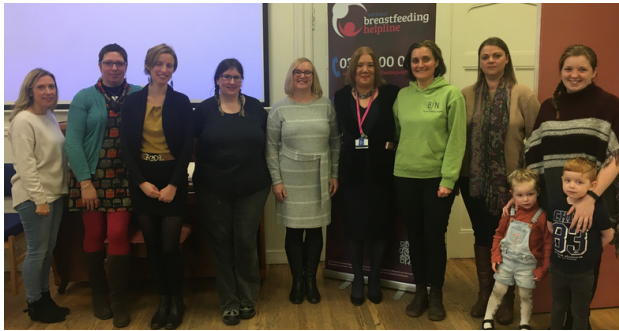
Julie Wiegand writes: "On Saturday 9th June, we had our first NBH study day of the year in Scotland in Wallneuk North church in Paisley.

Eighteen of us made it along to learn about ways we can access ongoing learning, supervision and support when geography and general busy lives get in the way, social media support and what role this could play for NBH in the future as well as a fun and informative visit from Angela McNeil from Heartstart where we learned basic CPR on various age groups, how to use a defibrillator and what to do when somebody is choking. Luckily, the practical choking exercise was done before lunch!"

Pictures show Marion McDonald & Gemma Scott doing choking training (!) and Julie Wiegand presenting Kirstin Worsley her 50 call certificate.



On 24th November, Councillor Jane Strang (Renfrew North and Braehead) visited us at our second Scottish NBH Study Day of 2018. She was keen to speak to our volunteers and local coordinator to find out more about what our volunteers do and how she might be able to support us. She left saying that she was very impressed at the work that we do for local breastfeeding families and plans to write about us in the local newspaper (eyes peeled Renfrewshire volunteers)!



We were very lucky to have Rachel Murray, an ABM Mother Supporter speak with us in the morning. She had prepared a beautiful video for us which we watched before taking part in mini workshops based on her recently published article "The Politics of Breastfeeding: In Whose Interests?" (read here: <http://bit.ly/RachABM>) Rachel's workshops went down a treat and really got us thinking about the barriers we face and how we might overcome them. After lunch, local Health Visitor MarieAnne Smith visited us and spoke very openly and honestly about her own breastfeeding journeys and how that led to her career as a HV, and about just how much of a lifeline the BfN volunteers are to families and health professionals in her local area. The day was rounded off with an interactive display on the WHO Code by Carolanne Lamont and an opportunity to catch up on supervision, and with each other, before the holiday period. Thanks to all who came along!"

Maternity & Midwifery Festival

Melanie and Julie attended the recent Maternity & Midwifery Festival in Edinburgh - helping spread the word about BfN and NBH to current and trainee midwives from across Scotland.



WAM Funding Success!



Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead project held a relaunch event in October to celebrate their successful fundraising - BfN WAM managed to achieve a grant from the Big Lottery Fund which ensured they can continue their hard work with in the area until 2020. They invited mothers and families to join them for the celebration event. With the help of this grant, they were also able to run a new Helper training course.

Volunteers from BfN WAM support over 750 mothers and families a year, at their six weekly drop-in groups in Maidenhead, Datchet, Dedworth and Ascot. BfN WAM also offer home visits, and have recently received training in areas such as gestational diabetes, Smoke Free Life, and DASH.

Congratulations

A massive well done to every Helper, Helpline Supporter and Supporter who has qualified in the last six months.

Sadly we have been unable to include everyone's names this time BUT we will ensure every single person has their name in lights in the next edition of BfN News!

We are really sorry for any disappointment caused - please do look out for your name next time.

Thank you for all your hard work in training, and to all the tutors and supervisors involved in supporting trainees on their BfN journeys.



Another thank you

At the conference three BfN Directors announced they were stepping down from the board:

**Kirsten Burnett
Mary Whitmore
Phyll Buchanan**

All three have been much valued members of the board, providing support, encouragement and direction throughout their time with us. We want to say a huge thank you to all three of them for the countless hours they have given BfN over the years.

One Director's contribution in particular stands out - Phyll. One of the founding members of BfN, Phyll has been tireless in her commitment to developing and strengthening our organisation over the years.



As a mark of our appreciation of her work, Phyll was presented with an engraved quach at the conference this year, and we asked members and friends of BfN to comment on her contribution over the last 20 years. All of these comments were made into a short film which you can watch here: <http://bit.ly/phyllfilm>