

# BfN News

Mums Supporting Mums

## SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

How does it impact breastfeeding?

## CENTRAL EVALUATION

We find out what service users really think of the BfN

## BIG TEA BREAK 2019

Side of relaxation with your tea and cake? Yes please!

OCTOBER 2019  
AUTUMN  
ISSUE 74





# HELLO!

OCTOBER 2019  
AUTUMN  
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## Editor's Note



**Welcome to the Autumn 2019 edition of BfN News.**

On the cover this edition are **Sarah** and three-month-old **Meila** grabbing a quick feed at our recent conference. Sarah has been a BfN volunteer for nearly two years and says how grateful she is to be part of such an incredible and rewarding organisation. It was lovely to have so many babes in arms joining us at the conference! To see more of what we got up to, check out our roundup of photos on page 11, or search **#BfNConf19** online.




The images on this page are from a set of photographs showing breastfeeding around the world. They were taken by photographer **Tina Boyadjieva** for World Breastfeeding Week.

In this edition you'll find a feature on shared parental leave and its impact on breastfeeding (p. 2), some exciting highlights of our annual evaluation (p.8), and information on our new ambassador programme, the #BfNBFFs (p. 6), as well as all of the regular features.

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. Email [alyson.spicer@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:alyson.spicer@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk). We'd love to hear from you.

**Thank you for your ongoing support for the Breastfeeding Network.**



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# SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

## What impact does it have on breastfeeding?

**Dr Ernestine Gheyoh Ndzi, Subject Director for Law  
School of Psychological and Social Sciences, York St John University**

### Introduction

The reduction of maternity leave by way of shared parental leave raises the question of what impact it could have on breastfeeding. The WHO recommends two years breastfeeding with exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of the baby's life. Since the introduction of shared parental leave, the uptake has been low (2%), and the question is whether breastfeeding could be one of the reasons for the low uptake.

I am a mother of two, I breastfed my first daughter for 10 months and stopped because she just wouldn't take it anymore. I felt bad because I wanted to be able to breastfeed for longer. I breastfed my second daughter for 15 months. The bond and the emotional attachment to the baby when breastfeeding could not be the same if I had to bottle feed. Breastfeeding my first daughter was so hard at the beginning because I was very ill after giving birth, but the support my husband gave me helped me to carry on. I recognise the importance of breastfeeding and I recognise the importance of dads being there to support the mother and bond with the baby (which was what happened in my case). I was super excited when shared parental leave was introduced but questioning how it might impact on breastfeeding. I then set how to investigate which I here present the key findings.

The research was conducted through an online survey to investigate the impact of shared parental leave on breastfeeding. The survey was restricted to mothers who were pregnant or had babies after the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 (when shared parental leave started). The survey was designed to collect qualitative data on mother's experience and opinion on shared parental leave and breastfeeding. The survey retained 460 responses with rich qualitative data.



Ernestine Gheyoh Ndzi





### Key findings

- **95%** of the mothers agreed that breastfeeding was the preferred choice for young babies and were aware of the benefits
- **72.7%** breastfed or planned to breastfeed for 49 weeks which is still less than the recommended two years by the WHO.
- **96.1%** of the mothers breastfed their babies on demand in the first 6 months.
- **88.5%** of the mothers knew what shared parental leave was
- **17.2%** had heard of shared parental leave from their employers
- **59.7%** said they had a workplace policy on shared parental leave
- **43.6%** of the mothers felt they would have to stop breastfeeding if they took shared parental leave.
- **24.9%** of the mothers took shared parental leave
- **57.4%** of the mothers were happy to express breastmilk at work
- **42.6%** of the mothers said they were not happy to express
- **34%** of the mothers said they were supported in the workplace to breastfeed
- **48.9%** of the mothers were not provided with any resources at work to encourage breastfeeding.
- **47%** said they were provided with a private room and sockets but no fridge

### Key themes

- Most employers are not supporting breastfeeding mothers at work. Consequently, some mothers stop breastfeeding after returning to work.
- Mothers who are not happy to express breastmilk will not take shared parental leave
- Mothers who are happy to express breastmilk at work would take shared parental leave if the employer is supportive of breastfeeding at work.
- Some mothers thought that shared parental leave and breastfeeding had no impact on each other. However, the thoughts were slightly limited to the first six months because most of the mothers (85.6%) were on maternity leave for at least the first six months and breastfed their babies exclusively in the first six months as recommended by WHO.
- Most of the mothers who took shared parental leave or went back to work after 6 months massively reduced breastfeeding frequency and some stopped breastfeeding altogether.
- Mothers who placed more value on breastfeeding dismissed the idea of shared parental leave entirely especially if they wanted to breastfeed for longer than 48 weeks.
- Some mothers felt they were put under pressure to be to express breastmilk because if shared parental leave.
- Societal pressure and 'unacceptance' of breastfeeding make some mothers not to breastfeed and shared parental leave was viewed as one of such 'unacceptance' of breastfeeding.

### Conclusion

Breastfeeding is a contributory factor to the low uptake of shared parental leave and shared parental leave is also contributing to the low rate of breastfeeding in the UK.

## Making It Work -

BfN's campaign for mums returning to work or study

Women tell us that there is currently inadequate support and protection for women who breastfeed and return to work across all sectors - most recently poor treatment was highlighted in the NHS. Women tell us they often struggle to combine work and breastfeeding and many see returning to work as a reason to stop, when often with good support from their employer and some timely planning this can be avoided.

From November, BfN is running a focused campaign called **Making it Work** which aims to help make more families aware of how it is possible to combine returning to work and continuing breastfeeding, in a variety of careers and workplaces, and when using shared parental leave opportunities.

We also aim to encourage government to ensure breastfeeding is considered and included as their shared parental leave policies and information and we have some new research that we will be revealing as part of this.

We also want to share with employers information to enable them to become breastfeeding friendly workplaces.

We're excited to share more about the campaign as we head into November - details to follow via our social media channels (links are on page 1). Watch this space!

# Big Tea Break 2019

## Time to find a moment of calm...

**BfN's Big Tea Break runs throughout October - there's still time to get involved!**

The theme for 2019 is mindfulness and relaxation. BfN Tutor/Supervisor **Naomi Waters** (who also happens to be a qualified yoga instructor!) has created a fantastic guided relaxation that we've released as a free podcast - search "Breastfeeding Network" on iTunes, Spotify, Soundcloud or TuneIn, or stream from our website (link below). Use the session alone or as part of a group, to take five minutes out of your day and find some peace. Then come gently back to planet Earth with a cup of tea and some cake!

Why not organise a Big Tea Break as part of your next drop-in group or supervision session?



It's all to raise funds for the drugs in breastmilk service. You can donate via text or online at our Just Giving page. Everything you need to organise your session, including a free downloadable fundraising pack, is on the Big Tea Break page, here: [bit.ly/BfNteabreak](http://bit.ly/BfNteabreak)

Let us know what you're up to by using **#BfNteabreak** on social media!



### We caught up with Naomi to ask her about yoga, her work for the BfN, and all things relaxation...

"I began my yoga practice in my teens. As an international competitive swimmer it gave me perfect balance, and it has continued to offer a tool for stress management and relaxation through my academic years. In my twenties I trained in Dru Yoga, where on completing the course I was 6 months pregnant with my second daughter, so I went straight into teaching pregnancy classes. This progressed and developed to completing qualifications in; Baby Yoga, Children's Yoga, and Sivananda Yoga as well as becoming a Yogic Meditation, Positive Thinking and Yoga Nidra instructor. I have now enjoyed 16 years of teaching yoga and enabling mothers, parents, babies, children and adults to access this ancient art which brings a true sense of balance, strength and control, both physically and mentally, in today's challenging world.



Naomi Waters

"My BfN journey started after the birth of my third daughter 10 years ago and I completed Helpers training not long after her 1st birthday. Supporters training followed shortly after, and then I was overjoyed to be offered the role of NHS Breastfeeding Support Worker in our local hospital, where I had been volunteering. Six years later, and a year after completing the BfN tutor/supervisor training, I took the difficult decision to leave the NHS (but not volunteering on the wards!), to focus my time on my BfN role and teaching yoga.

"Currently I deliver local BfN courses and supervision sessions, work with the team of remote supervisors and the team of online tutors/assessors. I teach several yoga classes a week locally and continue to utilise my yoga experience to support parents who are feeling the effects of stress in relation to breastfeeding.

"Whether a new mother is overwhelmed, a volunteer has had a challenging visit or we are experiencing the stressful pressures of life, we can all support our mental wellbeing by learning, sharing and actually using these techniques. There are many names they go by; mindfulness, meditation, guided relaxation, pranayama...but at the end of the day, it is about one human being, being present with another and supporting them to remember how to breathe and access their own ability to find a moment of calm."





# Black Breastfeeding Week

## 26-30 August 2019

Once again we marked **Black Breastfeeding Week in August, with a range of special events and information to raise awareness of the importance of supporting breastfeeding in the black community.**

Here's an excerpt from the guest blog that **Ruth Dennison**, aka [1-2-1 Doula](#) wrote for us:

"In the black community, it is very common for mothers to offer their babies alternatives from early, 2-4 months, if not earlier. The top on the list is introducing water, why? because baby has a bad tummy. Black families have a culture of introducing solid foods from as early as 3- 4 months, why? because their milk is not satisfying baby, because baby is looking at the dinner plate and trying to grab the food off, she is now ready to eat, because granny said baby keeps crying, because your breast milk is not enough, mum needs to rest and let someone else feed baby (this can be done with expressed breast milk and breastfeeding actually makes mothers have to sit their busy bodies down, bond, heal and nurture their babies while they rest), because you never knew what to expect, because no one told you, because you never had any breastfeeding support, because breastfeeding is painful (which it should not be). I would say I have listed a good few things on why many black women don't exclusively breastfeed their babies in the early stages of their babies life and there is so much more to this."



To read more of Ruth's post, head over to our blog: <http://bit.ly/whyBBWblog>

We drew attention to the shocking **disparity of care for black mothers in the UK**, highlighting the almost five-fold higher mortality rate in childbirth compared with white women.

We shared a petition calling on Government to commit to funding better care and safer births for black women:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/259256>

Read more detail on these appalling statistics in CEO **Shereen's** blog post on the MBRRACE report, "Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care": <http://bit.ly/MBRRACEblog>



We also highlighted one of the amazing women of colour who volunteer for us - **Robyn**, who volunteers on the helpline and is part of the Lambeth BfN project. Here's what **Fliss**, NBH manager, had to say:

"Robyn has been a volunteer on the National Breastfeeding Helpline since 2016. Like all our amazing helpline volunteers, she offers non judgmental, evidence based, friendly support to all callers, and she often logs on to take calls late in the evening or at times when other volunteers find it more difficult to do so.



"She is also a super helpful member of our volunteers group, offering suggestions and support to other volunteers when needed. And she went the extra mile earlier this year, volunteering to help promote the helpline with a stand at a midwifery festival.

"As well as being there for callers on the helpline, Robyn also does a fab job as a Supporter in the Lambeth Breastfeeding Network. Thanks for all you do Robyn!"



We shared a particularly interesting study by the University of Georgia, which discovered that **social media**

**support groups can be of particular benefit to African American women:**

*"The mothers said they liked Facebook because it was there 24 hours a day, and there was always someone there who had experienced whatever barriers you were experiencing to help you."*

You can read more details of the study here:

<http://bit.ly/UGAfacebookBF>



# We're looking for BFFs!



**Alyson Spicer**  
Social Media  
Officer

What sort of person comes to mind when you think of breastfeeding? An earth-mother with her baby in a wrap, living exclusively on organic quinoa and wandering barefoot through a meadow?

Of course not. As breastfeeding supporters, we see every day the huge diversity that exists among breastfeeding families. We are hoping to use our social media presence to demonstrate this fact to a wider audience - with the aim of reaching groups who otherwise wouldn't have known about or used our services, and demonstrating that many breastfeeding stereotypes are myths. We're here for everyone.

So we're looking for ten families that BfN have supported, who have had an interesting or unusual breastfeeding journey, to become our inaugural **#BfNBFFs** (best friends forever...!). We'd like to share their stories and photos online as part of the campaign, and ask them to become our advocates in whatever ways they can - be they big or small, online or in real life. Examples might be someone who:

- ...we've given drugs in breastmilk advice to.
- ...has returned to work while breastfeeding.
- ...is breastfeeding multiples.
- ...is a non-birth mother who we've supported to induce lactation.
- ...never planned to/expected to breastfeed - perhaps a young mum?
- ...has a baby never expected to breastfeed effectively - e.g. premature baby, or baby with Down's syndrome - who we have supported to breastfeed.

There's more information on the application form at the link below - for now, please don't share this on public groups, but rather pass it on to individual mums who you think might be most appropriate. If you're now a helper or supporter who was previously supported by BfN, you can apply too! Check it out here:

<http://bit.ly/BFFapplication>

We can't wait to hear your stories. For more info, email [social@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:social@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk)

*Psssst...we're also looking for relevant **celebrities or influencers** who might like to get involved, so if you have any potential contacts who we might be able to speak to, please do let us know ASAP!  
Email [social@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:social@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk)*

# What BfN means to me...

**Lindsay Cook**  
BfN Supporter, North Herts & Stevenage

Just over 10 years ago, I became a mum to a lovely baby girl. I always knew I would breastfeed, I was breastfed and I remember my Mum breastfeeding my sister. I didn't really know much about breastfeeding apart from what I had learned in my antenatal class and I thought everything was going well until day 5, when she lost lots of weight and the midwife who weighed her had me feeding and expressing every 2 hours. I felt awful, tired, confused and worried. I went to a local drop in and got even more confused and then 2 days later I was visited by a different midwife who was able to spend an hour and half with us. The time she spent with us that day saved our breastfeeding journey and, entirely thanks to her support, I was able to feed her until she was around 1.

A couple of years later I heard our local children's centre was running a BfN breastfeeding helper course and I decided to go along to be able to learn the skills to be able give the support I received to other mums.

I am now a BfN supporter and volunteer regularly in a drop-in in Letchworth, I helped set up a café drop-in in Hitchin and I (occasionally!) take calls on the NBH. I feel I have developed a lot as a person thanks to my BfN training and, although there is always something new to learn and reflect on, it has affected how I deal with my friends, family and children when they need to talk. Moreover, there is nothing better than bumping into a mum who you met at a drop-in who recognises you and updates you on how things have gone since. It is even better when mums come back with baby siblings because they valued the support they got with their elder children.

Above, all, being part of BfN is amazing. I value being part of an organisation where everyone is working towards the same objectives with a strong vision and where I feel that I can make a difference, surrounded by likeminded women who listen and don't judge. My supervisor, **Jane Neesam**, and my local North Herts and Stevenage BfN team are brilliant and I am proud to be part such a committed team.

**If you'd like to write about what BfN means to you for future editions, we'd love to hear from you! Please email [alyson.spicer@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:alyson.spicer@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk)**





# New Forth Valley Project Launched with Scottish PfG Funding

**Kirstin Worsley**  
Scottish PfG Project Manager

With the new Scottish Programme for Government (PfG) funding, we are working with NHS Forth Valley to train helpers who will go into the postnatal, neonatal and transitional wards to offer additional breastfeeding support to all new mums and their families.

In April, we started training our first 12 helpers in Falkirk. They are all local mums who are really keen to help mums with breastfeeding in the early days and were very excited to be the first cohort to train.

Training ended at the summer holidays and, after a well deserved break, they are now starting to go into the ward, shadowing their new coordinator, **Gemma Hamilton**, and then starting to offer 1:1 support. The project aims to see 4 cohorts of trainees becoming helpers on the ward, with around 40 active helpers on the wards by the end of 2020.

Support will be offered morning, noon and night, seven days a week (eventually). Our main aim is to support women so that they feel more informed when they go home with their new babies and so increase the rates of feeding as the babies grow.

As well as the work on the wards, we are planning to work with NHS Forth Valley to establish the Scottish Breastfeeding Friendly Scheme in the area. Inviting businesses and local organisations to support breastfeeding mums in their buildings and encouraging staff to recognise the importance of a mum being allowed to breastfeed. This is a national scheme, as part of the PfG project.

The project is already receiving some fantastic feedback from families - here's one comment sent in by a mum who was supported by the team:

*Thank you: a lady from your network gave me advice on breastfeeding when I was in Forth Valley hospital last week. My baby was in neonatal and we had just progressed on to breastfeeding...up to that point, I was expressing. Your colleague was so helpful and encouraging, giving me advice in handling things like cluster feeding. My baby and I are now home and the feeding is going very well and my baby is putting on weight. Thank you so very much for all the help, positivity and encouragement we got from your organisation.*

*Well done everyone involved, please pass this on to the volunteers!*





# CENTRAL EVALUATION 2019

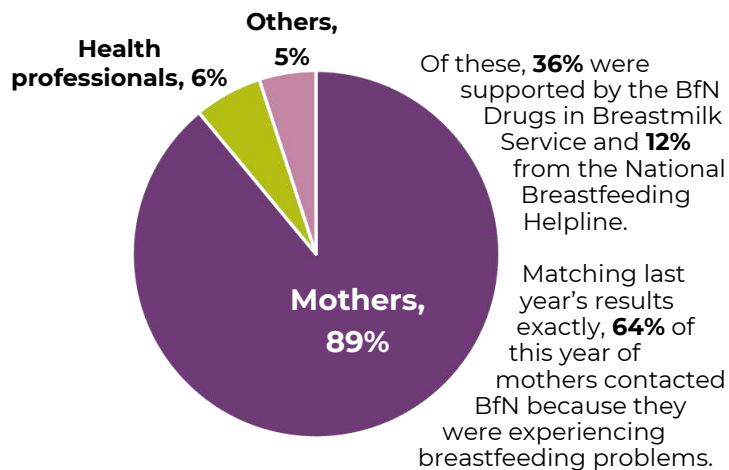
## What do people really think of the BfN?

**Nina White**  
Programme Manager

Every year, BfN release a survey to help us see what we are doing well, where we can improve and also give us the evidence we need to help secure future funding.

This year, the survey was live throughout March 2019 and we received **572 responses**. Thank you to everyone who shared the survey link and encouraged people to complete the survey. We were pleased to be able to send BfN travel mugs to 10 lucky winners from the prize draw.

Responses to the survey came from...



Once again - the most popular topic of discussion with BfN Peer Supporters was positioning and attachment for feeding, with **more than half of mothers struggling with painful breasts and nipples**. The next three common topics were frequency of feeding, baby's weight gain and expressing milk. **Nearly half of mothers asked for information about medication/medical intervention** and impact on breast milk/ breastfeeding. We hope we were able to ensure all these mothers were able to continue feeding their babies if they wished to, since many reported being told to stop breastfeeding unnecessarily.

We asked a variety of 'before/after' questions and were delighted with the answers, which proved the value of peer support:

**61%** agreed they had the information needed to make decisions about feeding their baby before contact with BfN, rising to **95%** after support from BfN.



**45%** of mums could breastfeed without pain before contacting BfN, increasing to **80%** after support from us.



Once again, more than half of the mums questioned (**54%**) claimed **BfN supported them to breastfeed for longer** than they otherwise would have done. Reasons given for this included evidence based information about medication, information about attachment, expressing milk, managing blocked ducts and mastitis, meeting other like-minded mums and knowing what is 'normal' newborn behaviour. There were also lots of comments about general support, building confidence and encouragement.

**90%** of mums said they **felt listened to**, that their choices were respected, they were not pressured to do one particular thing and that the support/information they received was specific to them.



Individual comments/feedback have been shared with the relevant projects for action or thanks to individual volunteers. We hope these results help to demonstrate how important the support you offer to families really is – and how appreciated you are. **Thank you** for all you do to support families!

# Re-Registrations

**Marion McDonald**  
Central Support Administrator

The team at Central Support and the Supervisors have been working really hard to bring the re-registrations process up to date and all active volunteers should now (by 1<sup>st</sup> October) have received their new badge. This will have an expiry date of either 31<sup>st</sup> March (Helpers) or 30<sup>th</sup> June (Supporters) 2020.



If you have NOT yet received yours, please contact Central Support immediately for an update or replacement – expired badges can't be used, but we can help! Email [centralsupport@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:centralsupport@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk)

## Support via Social Media



**Caroline Brough,**  
BfN & NBH  
Volunteer

Social media is a rapidly expanding area for breastfeeding support. A team of BfN volunteers now provide support through Facebook

and Instagram for the Breastfeeding Network page and additionally in conjunction with colleagues from ABM answer messages on the National Breastfeeding Helpline page. There is also the ever popular Drugs in Breastmilk information service page, run by pharmacist **Wendy Jones**.

Since the start of this year, messages to BfN and NBH pages have increased month on month and by July had nearly tripled, to almost 10 new individuals messaging each day. 75% of the total messages are received by the BfN Facebook page, most likely because this page has over 25K followers whereas the NBH page has 6K followers. Instagram only receives a few messages per month.

So, what's good about social media? Most of the volunteers have said that they really like volunteering this way – they have complete flexibility to answer when they are available and don't have to worry that they won't have time to finish, as sometimes happens on the phoneline. Some messages just need a short answer, a link to information or signposting; for others, the messages can go back and forth for hours, days or even months. There is always back up available from the Drugs in Breastmilk team or admin team as well as the collective hive of volunteers. Social media volunteers can respond at midnight if they choose to; I've even responded at a metalcore concert, as well as between pick-ups during mum's taxi runs. Lots of individuals like the service – they can contact us and leave a message when they can't get through on the phonelines and after the phonelines close; those with communication or language issues can get support as can those who just prefer messaging. The people who message us are overwhelmingly positive about our response.

# NBH Update



**Floss Lambert**  
NBH Manager

We are busier than ever on the helpline. July 2019 saw our highest number of calls in a single month EVER! We received over 1000 more calls during July than we had in June. And August wasn't far behind. We are also dealing with scores of web chats each month and hundreds of social media messages. Demand for breastfeeding support seems to be at an all time high – is this because there's less face to face support available in many areas now, or is it that more mums are breastfeeding? Let's hope it's the latter.

Over the summer we've been out and about with NBH stands or presentations at a midwifery conference in Salford, BreastFest in Milton Keynes, CountryFile Live at Castle Howard and in Scotland **Cara Jamieson** has been very busy meeting with the V&A, talking to student midwives at their conference in Dundee and activities to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week in Perth and Kinross.

Coming up over the next month or so we have study days planned in Bristol, Norwich, Slough and it was fantastic to present lots of volunteers with certificates and badges at the BfN annual conference. In January next year we have a big study day planned for Sandwell, and look out for an event taking place in Manchester too.

Our series of webinars continues to be very popular and we are busy booking in speakers and topics for the end of 2019 and into 2020. Our remote supervision project is also proving to be very popular and we are trialling extending this to include Helpers until the end of the year.

We're also in the midst of collating feedback from helpline volunteers on their experiences, as part of our annual volunteer survey. We aim to use their thoughts, suggestions and ideas to develop new initiatives and improve the experience we offer for both volunteers and callers.

As always I want to say a massive **thank you** to every single one of our helpline volunteers – every call makes a real difference to another family and is so appreciated.

The downsides are sometimes feeling like you are always on call as messenger pings at you with another worried parent needing support, although this happens much less now that there is a capable team of social media volunteers. It can feel overwhelming when you open the inbox to answer a query and several other new messages arrive before you've finished answering the first one. The social media platforms sometime throw up some technical challenges and we have had the very occasional crank person spamming a message.

We have a closed Facebook group dedicated to the social media team, that we use for team support and bonding as well as creating best practice for answering messages, discussing specific issues and all things related to breastfeeding support through social media. If you are struggling to find the time to volunteer on the helplines, volunteering through social media might be the answer you are looking for.

*As our social media support offer is expanding so rapidly, BfN are looking at ways to manage this safely and effectively. We are about to launch a mini online training course for volunteers offering social media support. The course will cover some of the main issues that come up and will ensure all volunteers are offering the same kind of support. We are also considering ways of monitoring numbers of messages and types of support requested. Watch this space for more details!*



# Ride Across Britain - Fundraising for the BfN



**Joy Jones**  
Tutor, Supervisor & Supporter

This September, alongside a total of 888 other riders (including my husband) I took part in Deloitte's annual Ride Across Britain. The ride starts in Land's End, and finishes in John O'Groats, nine days later. I trained, on a static trainer, on my bike and at the gym. I visited my physio to work out what parts of my body were struggling, and to get exercises to fend off disaster.

The ride was difficult from the start – I was anxious about the first few days, which were very hilly indeed. The first day, from Land's End to Okehampton in Devon, was the hilliest of the entire journey – over a quarter of the height of Everest in climbing! I struggled with timings, ate a bit too much at a feed stop, and ended up with a stitch, which was agony, for the last few hours. The second day was marginally better – the Cheddar Gorge was beautiful, and I started to get better at climbing hills, finding a pace that was sustainable, and recognising that going slower was often my best option.

The third day (Bath to Ludlow) was particularly rainy, which suited me – I struggle in the heat. The third day was also much less hilly and actually quite enjoyable. I had moments of thinking, "I would like to get much more fit and do this again". Day four was also relatively easy and quite enjoyable. Day five was brutal – (Haydock to Carlisle) once again. Shap Fell was a very long climb, and we were very tight for time at the end, getting in just ten minutes before the cut off time. Day six was relatively easy, so I completed it, but by that time I had had enough.

Our rides would start between 6 am and 7 am, and end by 7pm. As a slower cyclist, I rarely got in before 6pm. My days would start at 5am at the latest. The logistics of eating, laying out clothing, and cleaning my bike, meant that I struggled to sleep more than three or four hours per night, and after six days of riding, in Edinburgh, I made the decision to stop. I rode 635 miles in 6 days, climbing the height of Everest x 1.2, spending nearly 68 hours on the road, passing through England, Wales and Scotland. I spent the next few days mooching about eastern Scotland, and met my husband off his bus from John O'Groats, in Inverness.

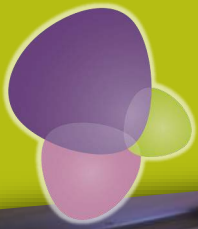
I enjoyed some of the parts of the ride I did – I saw some lovely bits of the UK that I'd never seen before, and I picked up some new skills. I've been a commuting cyclist for decades, but had never got into long distance riding in this way. Since I got back from RAB two weeks ago, I have done a mellow 120km weekend ride for fun.

I am fundraising for the BfN with this ride because I believe in the work that we do – we support families with feeding issues, trying to reduce feeding inequality and increase informed choice. I have been a tutor with the BfN for five years now, and it is a role I greatly enjoy.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/joy-jones4>







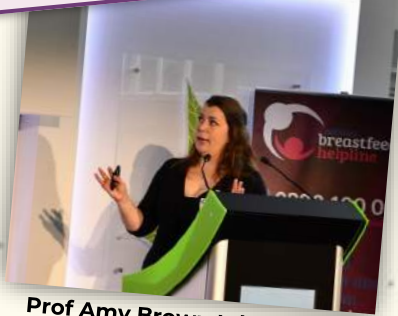
# BfN Conference 2019

## In Pictures

Thank you to all who organised, attended and spoke at this year's conference.  
**Want to see more?**  
Check out **#BfNConf19** online



CEO Shereen Fisher opens the conference



Prof Amy Brown takes to the stage



Dr Natalie Shenker begins her presentation on human milk



Ruth Dennison on supporting black women to breastfeed



Clare and Nina keeping an eye on the schedule



Boob-drawing and guess the weight of the cake on the BfN stall



Lovely t-shirts on @milkandmoonuk's stall



Fliss details NBH's 2019 successes



Closing remarks - see you next year!



# Breastfeeding as a young mum

**Naomi Forbes**  
BfN Helper, Forth Valley

Breastfeeding is a big part of my everyday life. I currently tandem feed my one year old and my two and a half year old. Tandem feeding can be challenging for many reasons but it's something I wanted to do. When I had my first child at the age of 19 and my second at 20, I noticed a lot of people around me did not expect me to breastfeed. I think there is a stigma around "young" mothers, people assume a lot of things, such as "they won't be breastfeeding", "they'll leave their baby with others all the time", "they'll be lazy" etc. I found this difficult and hurtful at first as I did plan my pregnancy at a young age and even if I hadn't it would not have been anyone else's business.

It can be lonely tandem feeding especially if you don't know many others in the same position as you, and I'm writing this to make people aware that it is perfectly normal. I assumed most people already knew that there's nothing "strange" about it, however I spoke to many people during my pregnancy who had no idea that it was even possible to feed my new baby and continue to feed my older child. It's often hard to do the things you want to do when the people around you are not as supportive as you had hoped they would be, I don't think people mean to be hurtful I think it's often down to a lack of education about the subject.

I feel extremely passionate about empowering women and helping them to achieve their breastfeeding/parenting goals just like I have achieved mine. I have recently started to train to become a breastfeeding helper with the Breastfeeding Network, I often focus on the negative responses I have had and not the positive because I want to help educate more people and it's important to focus on the bad so I know what I have to try and change, but I have had so much support and I feel this is one way of giving something back.

I didn't really give it much thought before I gave birth to my first child, I had a few conversations about it when I was pregnant and a lot of people told me "you might not be able to breastfeed" and "most women can't breastfeed". I just knew I wanted to but I had it in my head that so many women can't breastfeed and I thought there was a high chance that I wouldn't be able to. I just decided I was going to try it and see how it went. I've found out now that only a tiny percentage of mothers truly can't breastfeed and that a lot of people say that rather than just admit that they made the choice not to, and of course that's fine but I don't think they should be trying to put other mothers off by giving false information, especially as first time pregnant women do tend to look up to people who are already mothers as they believe they will know better than them.



Naomi Forbes

# Portsmouth BfN volunteers snag city Education and Mentoring award



Back row, L-R: **Cassie**, BfN Supporter; **Laura**, BfN Helper; **Becky**, BfN Helper; **Eleanor**, Portsmouth Service Co-Ordinator, Tutor & Supervisor; **Claire**, BfN Supporter.  
Front row, L-R: **Sacha**, BfN helper; **Michelle**, BfN Supporter; **Stephen Morgan** MP; **Lia**, BfN Supporter; Portsmouth Lady Mayoress **Leza Tremorin**.

**Sacha Brooks**  
BfN Helper, Portsmouth

Portsmouth Together, the city's coordinator for volunteering, recognised the extraordinary achievements of the city's BfN volunteers at the organisation's 5th annual "Inspiring Portsmouth" awards, held in May.

Celebrating amongst an audience of 200 including a local member of parliament, the city's Lord Mayor, category judges, representatives from the city's business community and voluntary organisations, ecstatic Portsmouth BfN volunteers accepted the 2019 award in the Education and Mentoring category from event sponsor Irwin Mitchell Solicitors.

Impressing the judging panel as a team of committed volunteers adopting roles relating to education or mentoring, **El Johnson** (Service Coordinator, Portsmouth BfN) commented, "Last year Breastfeeding Network volunteers gave over 1000 hours of their time to support Portsmouth families.

"We are both amazed and delighted that the Portsmouth Breastfeeding Network team as a whole has been recognised for all the hours they selflessly volunteer."

Portsmouth Together advertises volunteering opportunities and promotes volunteering activity providing information and support to Portsmouth city residents. Together with its sponsors, the organisation annually presents the "Inspiring Portsmouth" volunteering awards, paying tribute to individuals and groups that make a powerful contribution to the city and its community.





# CONGRATULATIONS TO...



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**A huge thank you to everyone who makes BfN what it is - helpers, supporters, tutors, supervisors, staff members, friends and fundraisers - you all make a difference to families across the UK.**

