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Welcome!

Summer is here at last – we hope you're enjoying the sunny days, light evenings, strawberries and cream and looking forward to summer holidays.



In this edition we have an informative and, at times, shocking article written by Susan Last (you may know her better as Lonely Scribe) regarding the advertising of formula to health professionals. We're also featuring two mums' own moving stories of breastfeeding and volunteering. There's a round up of what everyone got up to for Mum's Milk Run this year (many miles were covered!), as well as a lovely article from central team staff member Clare Farquhar, Wendy Jones and NBH, as well as the details you've all been waiting for about this years' BfN Annual Conference and AGM.

Do [let us know](#) what you think about the newsletter – all feedback gratefully received.

The Newsletter Team

My connection with BfN

I am writing this at a time when I feel like an emotional time-bomb just about to explode. My eldest son is about to leave Primary school and move into the big wide world of high school. His birth almost 12 years ago started me on a journey and like a lot of new mums, I didn't have a clue where I was going, or what I was doing. I breastfed my first child for 12 months after a really difficult start and without much support.

By the time I had my second baby almost five years later I was half way through Supporter training. He was born with various minor complications but also a pneumothorax (collapsed lung). This affected his ability to feed effectively and led to him becoming clinically dehydrated. Sitting in SCBU trying to breastfeed a baby who can't even breathe, surrounded by monitors, oxygen tubes and well-meaning staff I learned a lot. I learned that to be a breastfeeding mum you sometimes have to be stubborn and keep trusting your instincts. I learned that advice and opinions can be ok, but the right type of support is invaluable. Someone telling you at 3am "Formula is not poison" when you are desperate to breastfeed is not necessarily very helpful. On the other hand someone reminding you "He is YOUR baby" and "This (breastfeeding) is really important to you" can be just what you need to hear in order to keep going. Fortunately I am stubborn, we kept trying and eventually went home over a week later relying on expressing with a back-up of formula in the cupboard "just in case". My baby latched on for the first time that night.

We went on to feed until just before his 4th birthday and we never needed that box of formula.

He is now a big 7 year old and doesn't remember a thing, but I remember it all and sometimes it still upsets me thinking about how hard it was and how much I had to fight and struggle to get what I instinctively knew was the right thing.

I started working for the Breastfeeding Network in 2010. I came from a mixed background of experience including working in the male-dominated IT department of a manufacturing company and as an Infant Feeding Support Worker for the local CHP. The opportunity to work for an organisation that was not about politics or profit but about empowering women to make their own choices about how they feed their babies was too good to miss. It took me a few attempts as I applied for various roles but eventually my stubbornness paid off again and I came to work as part of the central staff team using my skills and experience to support the administrative tasks that go on behind the scenes.

I have seen a lot of changes during my time, largely as a result of changes in our environment. Funding cuts, more pressure from Commissioners, technological developments as well as a desire to keep improving have led us to continually look at new ways of working. There is more focus on systems and processes to help streamline our central activities and reduce our costs as much as possible.

Focussing on developing and maintaining our website helps us to ensure that independent, evidence-based information (and sometimes online support via web-chat) is available to mums even when other sources of support are unavailable.

Implementing a system that enables us to share and collaborate on files and documents helps us, as a remote staff team, to work more effectively together.

Encouraging all staff to use their BfN email address helps to improve our communication while also enabling people to maintain a balance between work and family life. Having a small central office helps us to respond more efficiently to enquiries and to manage our central administration more effectively.

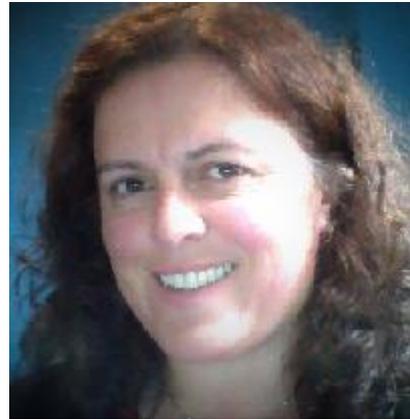
Our Annual Conference and AGM* has continually developed despite financial pressures to enable our volunteers, staff and supporters to come together to learn, catch-up with each other, connect, share and feel motivated by hearing more about what is going on across our organisation.

All of this work has to be supported by up to date policies and procedures that keep us all safe but also by a happy and motivated staff team that help keep the wheels turning.

We do all of this, most of the time quite unnoticed, to enable our peer supporters to keep doing what they do, regardless of the continual change in our environment because what hasn't changed is how that new mum feels, sitting in SCBU at 3am trying to breastfeed a sick baby and wondering how she will tell people what she wants and how important it is for her.

Supporting all mums in the right way to breastfeed for as long as they choose is

still at the heart of what we do, regardless of all the changes that have taken place along the way and I am proud to play my part in that!



Clare Farquhar

Central Support Manager

BfN Conference & AGM 2016

Saturday 8th October

**Fusiliers Museum,
Bury, Greater
Manchester**

**[Click here](#) for more
information and to
book.**

Advertising of breastmilk substitutes to health professionals - #scientificandfactual

FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST



www.firststepsnutrition.org

Guest article by Susan Last for First Steps Nutrition Trust

*Susan Last is a publisher and freelance editor specialising in birth and breastfeeding. She's a volunteer peer supporter with the NHS in Derbyshire, a director of Baby Milk Action and edited Lonely Scribe's book *Breastfeeding: stories to inspire and inform*. She is a mother of three and blogs here about birth, breastfeeding, books and publishing.*

In the UK infant formula cannot be marketed to the public, or be discounted or promoted in shops.

Manufacturers use follow-on formula to get around the advertising restrictions, but there are still rules that they must follow and they can be reported to the Advertising Standards Agency for breaking them.

When shops discount infant formula, or position it in premium spots, they can be reported to Trading Standards. The system isn't perfect – companies are asked not to repeat ads, or to remove promotions, but there are no fines – but at least there are ways to challenge misleading marketing.

Baby Milk Action, with the help of its members and the public, monitors advertising to parents and publishes its findings, and lobbies for better enforcement of the regulations.

When it comes to advertising aimed at health professionals, however, things are very different.

Breastmilk substitutes can be marketed to healthcare professionals in journals and magazines, on professional websites and at events. Although Department of Health regulations state that this advertising must be 'scientific and factual', there is no monitoring and no mechanism for reporting marketing that breaks the rules.

First Steps Nutrition Trust's recent report 'Scientific and Factual – a review of breastmilk substitute advertising to health professionals', looks closely at the science behind the claims made in advertising in professional journals and magazines.

We (and the companies) know from research that advertising is effective – why else would the companies spend vast sums on advertising space? – and that adverts with simple messages that relate to health workers' own scientific knowledge are very 'believable'.

Few health workers have the time or resources to investigate the references given in tiny print.

Graphs, charts and statistics suggest 'a scientific basis', but can be manipulated to magnify small differences between products.

Advert for: SMA PRO First Infant Milk – long advert (Nestlé)
Advert seen in: *Dietetics Today*, March 2016

BREASTFEEDING IS BEST FOR BABIES FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ONLY

Which First Infant Milk is most in line with expert opinion on growth?

The Department of Health recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life.¹

Protein and the importance of slower growth rates

Because the protein in breast milk is adapted to a baby's needs,² a breastfed baby tends to grow more slowly than a formula fed baby.³ This slower growth rate has shown to have significant long-term health benefits, including a lower risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.⁴

We've responded to expert opinion about proteins in SMA[®] PRO First Infant Milk

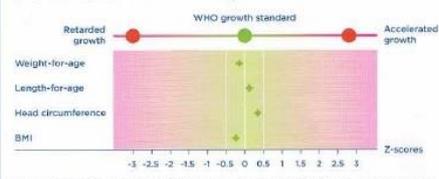
"Protein intakes of infants are generally well above the requirements, so protein content of infant formulae and follow-on formulae could be reduced"⁵
European Food Safety Authority 2014⁵

"The breast milk content of amino acids is the best estimate of infant amino acid requirements"⁶
WHO/FAO/UNICEF 2014⁶

Of the essential amino acids, four have been shown, when supplied in excess, to be associated with increased release of insulin. This may trigger a cascade of reactions in the body which may result in faster growth.⁷
European Childhood Obesity Trial Study Group 2012⁷

SMA PRO First Infant Milk is the only first infant milk clinically proven to achieve a growth rate comparable with a breastfed baby as defined by WHO growth standards¹⁰

SMA PRO First Infant Milk versus WHO growth standard z-scores at 4 months



Visit us: smahcp.co.uk or smahcp.ie



Supporting you to support parents

References: 1. UNICEF. The health benefits of breastfeeding. 2. Lönnerdal B. Am J Clin Nutrition 2003; 77: 1537-43. 3. WHO UK Growth Charts. <http://www.rn.gov.uk/improving-child-health/public-health/uk-who-growth-charts/facts/uk-who-growth-chart-facts>. 4. Singhal A & Lucas A. Lancet 2004; 363: 1642-1645. 5. EFSA. Scientific Opinion on the essential composition of infant and follow-on formulae. EFSA Journal 2014; 12(7): 3760. 6. WHO. PRO First Infant Milk. Databank. 7. Protein and Amino Acid Requirements in Human Nutrition. Report of a Joint WHO/FAO/UNU Expert Conference 2007. 8. Nestlé data on file, 2014. 9. Wechsung FF et al. J Clin Endocrinol Metab 2016; 100(1): 148-58. 10. Grathwohl DJ et al. Abstract at EAAP Congress, 2010.

ZTC036/12/15

The report looks in detail at recent adverts in the *Journal of Family Health*, the *Journal of Health Visiting*, *Dietetics Today* and *Complete Nutrition*, but the same adverts appear in many other publications aimed at health professionals. When we scrutinised the references, the findings were shocking.

Advert for: SMA PRO First Infant Milk – short advert (Nestlé)
Advert seen in: *Dietetics Today*, March 2016

FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ONLY
BREASTFEEDING IS BEST FOR BABIES

Three good reasons to choose our new SMA[®] PRO First Infant Milk*



Available from January 2016

- Clinically proven¹
- Made with SMA[®] Nutrition's exclusive protein process
- Contains Omega 3 & 6 LCs and GOS/FOS**

Learn more about SMA[®] PRO range at www.smahcp.co.uk or www.smahcp.ie

SMA Careline UK: 0800 0 81 81 80
ROI: 1800 931 832



Supporting you to support parents

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Breast milk is best for babies and breastfeeding should continue for as long as possible. Infant milks should only be used on the advice of a doctor, midwife, health visitor, public health nurse, dietitian or pharmacist, or other professionals responsible for maternal and child care.

*When bottle feeding is complete.
**GOS/FOS is only GOS/FOS in lactose oligosaccharides/Polysaccharides.
Reference: 1. Grathwohl DJ et al. Abstract at EAAP congress, 2010.
*Registered trademark SMA[®] Nutrition UK and Ireland ZTC036/12/15

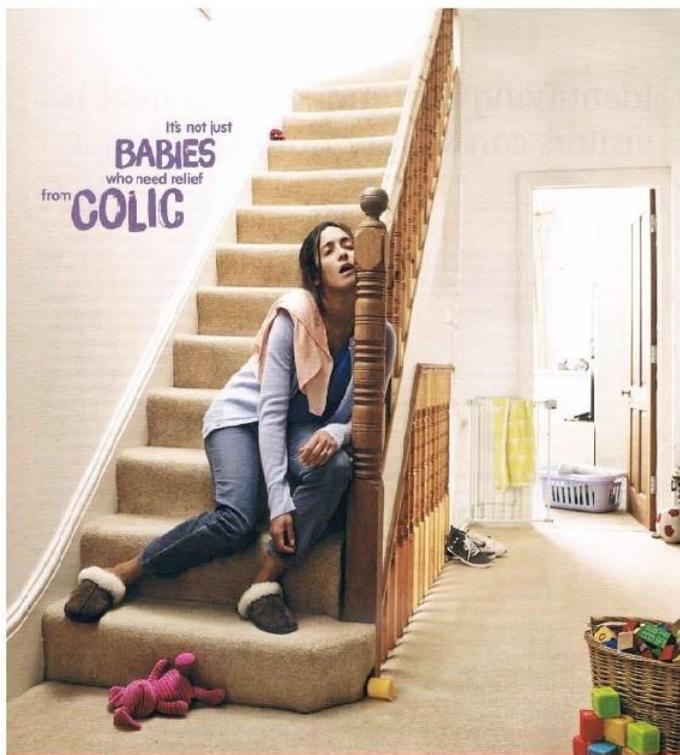
SMA (Nestlé) has been rolling out a new product, SMA PRO. Many shops have illegally cleared stock of the previous formula by marking it down in price, and there has been an extensive advertising campaign to health professionals.

In the report we look at two adverts for SMA PRO that appeared in the same magazine, a shorter one-page ad and a longer, more 'scientific-looking' version.

This reassures readers that the information in the first ad is supported by the 'science' in the second. The main claim in the first advert is that SMA PRO is 'Clinically proven!'

The supporting reference is a poster presentation given by Nestlé employees at a conference – not a peer-reviewed publication as required by Department of Health regulations. The poster reported a meta-analysis of four studies of infants fed Nan milk (another Nestlé product). It is not clear whether Nan is the same as SMA PRO. It is impossible to know how this evidence supports a claim that SMA PRO is clinically proven, or what it is 'clinically proven' to do! That such shaky evidence is used for a headline claim on a new product shows how confident the companies are that they won't be challenged.

Advert for: Cow & Gate Comfort milk (Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition)
Advert seen in: *Journal of Health Visiting*, March 2016



95% of Paediatricians* reported an improvement in common infant feeding problems with a formula like Cow & Gate Comfort¹



Evidence shows these partially-hydrolysed formula milks containing oligosaccharides (GOS/FOS) improve the symptoms of colic in bottle-fed babies.^{1,2} So if a bottle-fed baby's colic is more than mum can manage with practical tips alone, put digestive care first with Cow & Gate Comfort.
Learn more about the evidence-based management of colic at in-practice.co.uk



Comfort for babies, relief for mums

*Out of 96 paediatricians
References: 1. Savino F *et al.* *Acta Paediatr Scand* 2003; 441: 86-90.
2. Savino F *et al.* *Eur J Clin Nutr* 2006; 60: 1304-1310.

An advert for Cow & Gate Comfort milk, marketed as relieving colic, shows an emotive image of an exhausted mother. The main claim is that '95% of paediatricians reported an improvement in common infant feeding problems with a formula like Cow & Gate Comfort¹'

The study cited to support this claim, which was funded by Numico (Danone), did not even use Cow & Gate Comfort milk! The test formula had different energy, protein, carbohydrate and mineral content.

NHS Choices says that there is no evidence for any beneficial treatment for colic. The conclusion that the advert is deliberately misleading is inescapable.

The full report can be [downloaded from the First Steps Nutrition Trust website](#), and there are suggestions about how you can take action to challenge misleading marketing.

Health professionals can complain to journals and professional bodies that carry advertising and allow it at events, and anyone can write to the Department of Health regulators or their MP.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health recently voted to 'decline any commercial transactions or any other kind of funding or support from all companies that market products within the scope of the WHO Code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes' – which shows that professional organisations can be successfully lobbied. Baby Milk Action is urging the UK government to better enforce restrictions on the promotion of formula to parents too; you can donate on their [website](#) to support their work.

More information can be found on the First Steps Nutrition [website](#).

Nurture Project International



You have probably seen shocking scenes from refugee camps in Greece and Turkey on the news over recent months. We have been contacted by Nurture Project International – a non-governmental organisation who are working on the ground in the camps who are in desperate need of trained breastfeeding support volunteers. Here's what they told us:

"Breastfeeding Supporters are desperately needed in Greece, where thousands of refugee mothers and babies are in desperate conditions. In particular, breastfeeding supporters are urgently needed in EKO camp near Idomeni (at the Greece/Macedonia border) as part of the Nurture Project International/Lighthouse Relief partnership team.

There are babies less than a week old, babies diagnosed as failure to thrive, many babies who are ill with diarrhoea and vomiting. The situation is critical and they need help.

Nurture Project International is a Code Compliant and IYCF-E (Infant & Young Child Feeding in Emergencies) guideline following organisation, working in partnership with Lighthouse Relief to provide Mother and Baby tents.

We need your help in the Mother and Baby tents and in setting up outreach work in Idomeni's main camp.

Housing costs are covered and travel costs may be able to be covered if you can go for 2+ weeks. Online training in IYCF-E can be provided to supplement your breastfeeding training."

BfN insurance does not cover you outside of the UK but Nurture Project International will support you and help with questions about insurance. The need is urgent.



For more info [click here](#)

You can also see more images of the mother and baby project on their [Facebook page](#).

Maternal Mental Health

Wendy Jones tells us about her recent involvement in the #maternalMHmatters Twitter hour:

I joined in the #maternalMHmatters on 4th May with some trepidation. I have been on Twitter for quite a while but remain a bit of a newbie in understanding it all. It's all a bit tough at my advanced age!

BfN hosted the session from 7-8pm utilising the expertise of expert tweeters Louise Santhanam ([@GPIFN](#)) and Emma Jane Sasaru ([@ESasaruNHS](#)).

Here's a few tweets from the hour...

**#breastfeeding helped me to bond with my son after #birthtrauma
#maternalMHmatters**

@gp_aulait #maternalMHmatters yes. Careful sensitive and skilled emotional support needed.

@gp_aulait @ESasaruNHS @BfN_UK terrifying consequences with "failed" bf being risk factor depression - whatever failed means for that mum

@ESasaruNHS research shows ↑risk PND if wanting to BF but then unable/stopping sooner than planned - what can be done? #maternalMHmatters

@ESasaruNHS @DrSMcMullen @gp_aulait @BfN_UK Yes 😊 Often mum reaches crisis point & can no longer see wood from trees...→ #maternalMHmatters

Although I was staying with my daughter and looking after my grandson I logged on but became quite terrified by the ping, ping, ping of retweets and replies! However, once the panic eased I was amazed and humbled by the responses and conversation – which included 'fathers need support too', 'GPs need to be more aware of information on drugs and breastfeeding where mums have mental health problems', 'we shouldn't be ashamed to admit to mental health issues', that 'the worst case scenario is a mum who doesn't take her medication in order to breastfeed (but doesn't tell anyone)'. Comments came in from across the world showing eloquently that this is a problem which respects no boundaries. The twitter hour brought together all the voluntary breastfeeding organisations, GPs, PND experts and many more. I finally started to understand the power of Twitter.

A blog posted by the RCGP can be read [here](#).

My contribution was some new simple fact sheets on **Bipolar, OCD, Feeling depressed and Feeling Anxious** which can be accessed through the special part of our website dedicated to [perinatal mental health](#) as well as on our [usual factsheet page](#).

This is an area we shall continue to build in order to support breastfeeding mothers who may need medication.

Wendy Jones BfN Drugs in Breastmilk Pharmacist

Mums' Milk Run

This year's Mum's Milk Run took place between 7th-21st May and the theme was 'Building a community of support'. There were a variety of events held across the UK and we also had great support for the #MilkRunTeam who between them raised over £1800!

Thank you to everyone who organised and attended events, your support makes a big difference. Our next national fundraising event will be the BfN Big Tea Break in October- look out for more information very soon!



On Saturday 7th May the Islington Breastfeeding Peer supporters and volunteer team held their 2nd annual fundraising event in Chapel Market... and we focused on the passing customers sharing their community stories.

It was a wonderful success, at least in my opinion, and not only did we manage to raise £210, (trebled from last year) in 6 hours. It was a beautiful and glorious sunny day.

The team all came together and we sold cakes (our speciality), ran breastfeeding quizzes and games (guess the marbles and a 100 square). Our very own Heidi scouted around Islington and secured book tokens, free cinema tickets, and an M&S voucher as our prize offerings. The cakes as you can imagine went down a treat with adults and children

alike. Not forgetting our beautifully displayed bra bunting. We also proudly showed off our newly accreditation baby friendly certificate (I stole it from the office - sssssh).

It was the people passing by that made it truly successful day for me! We had mums come by to chat and chairs provided for them to breastfeed. Expectant mums who were really keen about the service that we provide. Elderly ladies who were happy to share and reminisce about their breastfeeding days and plenty of dads to offer their support and part with their cash... They were really positive about the work that we do.

What an amazing way to come together and build community through participation and contribution. We are proud to be the Islington Breastfeeding Team and part of the Breastfeeding Network and we look forward to participating in the Mums Milk Run 2017.....



Here's BfN's Kate Meads at the end of her own personal Mums' Milk Run Challenge – an impressive 15 mile run around her local area. She raised more than £200 - Well done Kate!

A team of North Hertfordshire helpers and supporters held a Family Fun Day fundraising event for the Breastfeeding Network on 2nd May, at Hitchin Youth Trust. The day included a range of activities including crafts, cupcake decorating, water play, seed pot planting, a raffle, and outdoor play including an obstacle course. There were also guest appearances from Peppa Pig and Fireman Sam! Several local businesses generously donated prizes. Partners and family members of BfN volunteers also gave up their time to help in the planning, and on the day itself.

A total of thirty-three families attended, and the total raised on the day was £317! The feedback from the day has been very positive, and we all enjoyed ourselves. We were thrilled with the interest in the event, especially as it was the first time we had run it. We hope to hold the event again next year!"

Mums' Milk Run fun in Renfrewshire with Gemma Scott, Laura Jarvie and Marion McDonald accompanied by their little ones Zach, Arrianna and Ivy



In Eglington we held a sponsored stroll through Eglington Country Park, followed by a 'bring your own picnic'. Little ones with their mums, dads, grans, papas, and any other extended family and friends were invited to join us and help raise some money to help The Breastfeeding Network continue to provide the support that we do. A great time was had by all that joined us, and luckily the weather behaved itself!



Congratulations

Congrats to helper Jennah Holder

Thanks to tutor Helen Palmer

Congrats to helpers Samantha McFadzean, Beth McInalty, Leanne Auld.

Thanks to tutor Karen Patterson

Congrats to helpers Jessica Chiddle, Rheanna Smart, Sophie Harper, Sally Carter, Jenni Moore, Harriet Cutting, Hannah Barnard, Lani Darrington, Louise Archer, Lucy Goodhew, Zoe Slevin, Crystal Golding-Smith, Hayley Osborne and Lauren Neanon

Thanks to tutor Eleanor Johnson

Congrats to helpers Emma Radford, Joanne Jones, Jill Broadhurst, Loreto Rubianes, Nicole Addis, Hayley Appiah and Carly Pointon

Thanks to tutor Linda Bloor

Congrats to helpline supporters Joanne Todd, Nicola Hamilton-Grant, Aurore Arnould, Nancy Carter and Karen Tweedy

Thanks to tutors Morag Neil, Sarah Edwards and Phyll Buchanan

Congrats to probationary supporter Charlie Boggis

Thanks to tutor Jacqui Stronach

Congrats to probationary supporters Laura Heap, Sarah Brown and Jane Chance

Thanks to tutor Kate Russon





Congrats to helpers Harriet Maby, Alicja Bunio, Sabrina Hall, Isabelle Anderson, Kate Reid and Caroline Schmitz

Thanks to tutor Joy Jones

Congrats to helpers Ariana Grace Hill, Kathryn Lawrence, Nikita Charalambous, Marina Fung, Kate Harris, Hannah Hanks, Kate Hewitt, Nickie Futter, Emma Hayes and Kirsten Bacon

Thanks to tutor Jane Neesam

Congrats to helpers Zoe Dutton and Cas Serafin

Thanks to tutor Sarah Rob

Congrats to full supporter Laura O'Neil

Thanks to tutor Shruti Arora

Thanks to Sarah Bamford, Sophie Reeve, Lynsey Saxon, Alex Taylor-Ashcroft, Rebecca Blackett, Ruth Bayne, Radmila Faleyeva-Munns, Sarah Lane and Carina Cervera who have spent their valuable time in volunteering for BfN and are currently resigning from their roles



A mother's emotional breastfeeding journey

Finding out I was pregnant for the second time filled me with a wave of anticipation and excitement. This was quickly followed by a deep dread of how I was going to feed my baby... When my first daughter was born I had the attitude, quite naively, that I would breastfeed and it would come naturally, surely?



Fast forward 9 months: I was exclusively expressing following two months of crying every day with a newborn who would feed for ten hours a day, scream constantly from colic and reflux, and feeding so painful I would flinch and cry at each feed which resulted in purple/bruised nipples and vasospasm.

One day I looked at my beautiful daughter and wished she'd stay asleep as I couldn't physically face putting her to my breast.

That was the day, I booked in the doctors, begged for special formula

(dairy made her reflux worse) and transitioned to expressing.

My whole life revolved around feeding.

Expressing wasn't any more comfortable but compared to ten hours of feeding it was the better of two evils. I think it is important to say at this point that expressing was difficult.

Thirty minutes to express, then thirty minutes to feed. I had to time outings to three hours so I could express again. Taking out bottles, a thermos flask, an ice pack and a pump. I couldn't express in public so if I was out for longer I would be confined to toilets and store rooms. For a first time mom already feeling isolated this made it worse.

I'd regularly miss conversations with friends, put off meetings and on many occasions just stayed home to save being so anxious. I expressed so much that I developed sores around my areola where the flanges had rubbed and became obsessed with being able to keep up with how much my daughter would feed.

I decided to meet with a BfN supporter and I walked away from that meeting feeling like I was in control and I could look at things differently. She gave me the freedom to breathe and realize that I had options.

It became very apparent to me that there is very little support for moms who exclusively express in the UK, especially for the practical aspects. I managed to join a group on Facebook of moms who expressed (the majority of them were American) but I met few women from the UK and eventually became an administrator for a UK breastfeeding group. This short version of my story does not scratch the surface of the emotions I went through. Feelings of guilt, anxiety and failure swamped me.

A local breastfeeding group were my lifeline and three very special ladies in particular are my rocks even now. Initially when I started expressing I stopped going. I felt jealous watching moms breastfeed. I ended up on antidepressants and cannot thank my family enough for their support.

My mom and husband have both expressed how utterly soul destroying it was to watch me put myself through what I did. As soon as I found out I was pregnant again, the anxiety started.

I couldn't think of a way that I would be happy when the baby was born... I'd either be in pain or feeding my baby, something I didn't want to. I wasn't sleeping through tying myself up in a huge dialogue of formula, breastfeeding or expressing. My breasts were so painful I couldn't touch them. I had started my antidepressants again.

How could my body fail me in something so natural?

I'd researched milk donors, however, as due to a difficult pregnancy I wasn't emotionally or mentally capable of facing breastfeeding or expressing.

My husband and I bought formula and bottles and prepared for our baby. Our son arrived and I was in euphoria. We had two hours of skin to skin and we then asked for a bottle to feed him. He was rooting and they had forgotten the bottle, so I attempted to latch him. It was painful so I stopped immediately.

I have a picture of that first formula feed and I look so relaxed and happy. My consultant had previously prescribed me a milk suppressant to avoid engorgement and prevent any further pain.

At a week old my son caught his first cold. I had noticed I was still producing droplets of colostrum. I ignored it until at three weeks he seemed to catch another.

At that point it didn't seem right that I was still producing something that would benefit him so I began hand expressing my milk.

At first it was 1ml, then 2ml, then 5ml. I did this for a week. When my baby was five weeks of age, I gave in to curiosity and attempted to latch him on.

He latched and I cried.

Sam Ball

[to be continued in the next newsletter...]

APPG Report

Following February's All Party Parliamentary Group on Infant Feeding and Inequalities meeting where BfN made a presentation on the barriers to breastfeeding, we were delighted to be contacted by Flick Drummond, MP for Portsmouth South, who initially contacted us for more detailed information on our talk, then went on to arrange a visit with the BfN project in Portsmouth.

Read the local press write up about her visit [here](#).

We were really pleased that at least one MP had taken on board what we had to say at the APPG and acted on it.

The third meeting of the APPG took place on 17th May, and this time the presentation came from Baby Milk Action who gave a detailed account of how infant feeding companies aggressively market their products to families. You can view their presentation [here](#).

Unfortunately due to bad timing (it was the day before the Queen's Speech), there were no MPs other than Alison Thewliss present this time, but notes from the meeting will be circulated amongst all members.

The next meeting will be held on the 5th **July** and we would like to encourage all BfN members to write to their MPs and encourage them to go along to the meeting. This would be particularly useful if you are in an area that has been badly affected by funding cuts. Alison made it clear that if MPs get letters from multiple constituents, they are much more likely to make the time to attend,



so please do spread the word and ask colleagues and mums if they would be willing to write to their MPs too.

BfN has drafted a template letter that you can adapt and use to send to your MP. Please do personalise it as much as possible as this really helps.

[Click here](#) for the instructions and template.

You can find your local MP [here](#).

The APPG for Infant Feeding and Inequalities can now be found on Twitter [@APPGIFI](#)

NBH Update

As always I'll start with a huge thank you to every single volunteer who has answered a call on the helpline in the last few months. Every call makes a difference. Demand for support is as high as ever, if not even higher, due to the number of local breastfeeding support projects that are closing because of a lack of funding.

During Volunteers' Week (1-13th June) we launched our #ThanksNBH short video across social media channels. [You can view the video here](#). The 6-13th June also saw our second 'have a go' week, aiming to encourage volunteers back onto the line, which was a success with an increase in the number of calls answered, and some new volunteers logging in for the first time.

We are midway through our third online training scheme for Helpline Supporters and are just about to launch a 'refresher' course for Supporters who may have had a break from the helpline and want to increase their confidence in answering calls. This course will be open to any Supporters, wherever you are in the country. It will be all online and should only take a couple of weeks to complete. If you're interested, contact [Kate Bovill](#) and she'll send you more info about what's involved.

I was recently contacted by the manager of the [Australian Breastfeeding Helpline](#), who have also been trialling a web chat support service. They were particularly keen to talk about how we manage our web chat service, but we also spent a lot of time talking about the similarities between the helplines we offer. They face many of the same challenges as we do, and report many of the same successes too. Just like us, all their calls

are answered by volunteers, however they receive around twice as many calls as we do and their helpline is open 24 hours a day! (Although interestingly they said they usually only get about 2 or 3 calls between midnight and 6am). It was a very useful conversation and we have agreed to keep in touch in future.



Australian Breastfeeding Association

A new Programme Manager (North)

We are very pleased to announce that we have appointed Nina White as Programme Manager (North) following Alicia's departure.

Nina has considerable experience in managing the Sandwell project during financially turbulent times and has demonstrated strong capabilities in managing staff and volunteers in other peer support projects.

We wish Alicia the very best for the future and thank her for all her input to BfN.

My BfN Story

“So, where does my Breastfeeding Network story begin? Well, I put it down to seeing many of my friends starting to have babies around me and breastfeeding was reported as hard, difficult, painful and at times a cause of embarrassment. However, many of these friends attended drop-ins (or Milkspots as they are also known as in some parts of the UK) and received invaluable support, help and robust evidence-based information from the group. These friends ended up having positive breastfeeding experiences.”

So, when I became pregnant, I was in no doubt that I would seek out these support groups should I start to have difficulties, once I had given birth. I was living in North London and so found out about the drop in sessions run by the BfN Islington project and felt reassured that there were so many groups available.

At 33 weeks, (9 June 2014) after a routine antenatal appointment with my community midwife, I was advised to go to my local hospital. I did and was admitted the same evening, (with suspected pre-eclampsia). My daughter, Emily, arrived on 23rd June, 5 weeks early by emergency c-section. She weighed 1.92kg (4lb 4oz).

She spent 18 days in NICU and SCBU. While she was there, I received a lot of specific and excellent breastfeeding advice and support, including guidance regarding expressing even before Emily had been born.

Besides being a new mother with a baby born early and learning to breastfeed, I was also coping with being an inpatient (due to very high blood pressure induced by pregnancy it turns out, not pre-eclampsia) for a total of 23 days which was very challenging and emotionally hard. Not being able to be with your baby, unlike the other mums



who moved to the postnatal ward with their babies was very hard.

Being on a triage ward throughout the entire stay, combined with a desire to go home with my daughter, was overwhelming.

I was discharged from hospital on 1st July but Emily remained in SCBU until 11th July. Taking her home with Matt, my partner, was the happiest day of our lives!

“This entire experience showed me, first-hand, the necessity of having practical and emotional support in the early part of parenthood relating to all aspects of breastfeeding.”

Once Emily was home, we had issues relating to her not gaining sufficient weight so for a short time my breastmilk was supplemented by a small amount of formula (mixed in). However, I remained confident that this arrangement would be short-term and was determined to carry on breastfeeding....and I was right.

So where does the BfN come into all this? Well, when Emily was 7 weeks old, I emailed the BfN and enquired about peer support training in Islington and was given the relevant contact details but didn't get a chance to email. Then while getting Emily weighed in August 2014, I saw a poster in the GP toilet (!) about Islington peer helper training.

It was an out of date poster, but I saw that the course had run from April 2014 for 12 sessions.

On the off chance, I emailed and asked would another course be running? To cut a long story short, I was successfully accepted on to the peer helper course in November 2014.

The sessions flew by and I loved it. The two tutors teaching were excellent (thank you Heidi and Joy) and I also made some good friends with the other mums on the course.

During this time, Matt and I had found a house to buy in South London. So for the last three sessions, I found myself commuting during Friday morning rush hour to get from South London to North London for a 10am start. I think this may have been Emily's first introduction to the London morning rush hour!

It is now May 2014, Emily is 23 months and I am still breastfeeding. In addition, I am volunteering weekly (and have been for a year) at a Lambeth Children's Centre. It is the highlight of my week. Not just because I meet some amazing

mums but also because of the staff that I have and currently volunteer alongside.

Unlike in Islington, the groups in South London are not led by BfN supporters. Instead the groups are run by midwives or a lactation consultant. It has been an excellent experience volunteering alongside these highly trained staff, (a special mention must go to Julienne whom I have learnt so much from!).

"I have always been made to feel welcome, respected in my voluntary role and Emily enjoys the groups as well, particularly the choice of toys available!"

Since training with the BfN it has opened up other opportunities. Last year, I participated in the BfN Mums' Milk Run where I ran with the Islington project's co-ordinator to all the BfN Islington drop ins and raised money for the BfN. I attended my first BfN Annual General Meeting (AGM) and in the process have gathered quite a collection of knitted and crochet boobs - for training purposes of course, but also they look rather good decorating my fireplace. Certainly a talking point for visitors!

I have been inspired to get involved in other ways. I am an active member on two BfN working groups. One is looking at creating a BfN volunteer handbook, and the other, helping creating a course suitable for peer helpers to support mums who have babies in NICU.

By the time you are all reading this article, I will have completed a few assignments for the Supporter Helpline course. By August 2016, I will be sufficiently trained to answer calls on the National Breastfeeding Helpline.

A lot has changed since Emily arrived. I think parenthood has shown me the importance of keeping an open-mind, following your passions and remembering that volunteering with the BfN (or any organisation) can have a funny way of enriching your life in ways that you could never imagine!"

Erica Harris, BfN Helper (trained in Islington)

Meeting with a local MP in Scotland

Our local MP and MSP came to talk to volunteers at a large local summer event, [Lilias Day](#). They were very keen to know more, and [Tom Arthur MSP](#) spoke in the Scottish Parliament about our volunteering.



Here's what he had to say in Parliament:

"It is important to remember that for too many people, inequality begins in the womb. I am delighted that the Government has taken important steps to address that, with baby boxes and the recent announcement that all pregnant women will receive free vitamins by next spring. That builds on the work already undertaken by the Government to address neonatal inequality, for example by overcoming the barriers to breastfeeding that too many women face.

As with mental health, the work of the third sector in making Scotland healthier in that respect must be acknowledged. Last weekend, at the outstanding Lilias Day event in Kilbarchan, I met Melanie and Hazel from the Breastfeeding Network. The network does outstanding work in communities such as Johnstone, Linwood and Kilbarchan to support mothers to make informed decisions about breastfeeding and to provide access to help when they need it. It is vital that we continue to support organisations such as the Breastfeeding Network to ensure that they continue to play an active role in making our communities healthier."