

BFN WINTER NEWSLETTER 2015

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Editorial

We wish you a Merry Christmas!

2015 has been yet another busy year for BfN, with thousands of mums and families supported in hospitals, drop in groups and homes across the UK, in addition to thousands of calls answered on National Breastfeeding Helpline, Supporterline & Drugs in Breastmilk. We have also been busy developing new training programmes and updating our existing courses, improving finance and admin procedures, networking and raising awareness.

We continue to review and strengthen governance within the charity and following a year-long review a new sub-Committee of the Board has been established – QUeST which will help improve decision making concerning the quality of our support and training. It will build on and enhance some excellent achievements that have been made already this year for our training including accreditation of Supporter training and the charity being granted direct award status by OCN London which is a hallmark of trust and confidence that the public, funders and trainees can have in the quality of BfN training.

Externally we are building on our reputation and working closely with organisations in Scotland and England including UNICEF, Baby Friendly Initiative, Home-Start UK, First Steps Nutrition and IBFAN. In Scotland we are working with Scottish Government to strengthen the National Breastfeeding Helpline more proactively for Scotland and we remain an active National Partner on the Early Years Collaborative.

We were particularly pleased with our Annual Conference and Community Gathering in London this year which was a booked-out and offered a rich agenda of speakers providing networking and CPD to volunteers, local families and others. We are keen to build on this success for 2016 and are pleased to announce that our next conference will take place in Manchester on Saturday 8th October.

Like other areas of the voluntary sector we have been under a lot of pressure to secure our existing work in challenging funding environment and innovate to ensure the charity can continue to support women and families as the demand for support does not lessen. A dedicated team in BfN work hard in developing income and some of these efforts can be best seen in fundraising campaigns Mums' Milk Run and Tea Break Challenge. Both have been vibrant campaigns and secured interest from high profile individuals including Dame Sarah Storey and Mairi Hedderwick. We were particularly pleased to raise awareness on breastfeeding and maternal mental health during Tea Break Challenge and we hope that our new membership with Maternal Mental Health Alliance will continue to allow us to provide a balanced and evidence-based view on the relationship of breastfeeding and maternal mental health as well as highlight the unique value of BfN's Drugs in Breastmilk. Thank you to all of you who were involved in making these campaigns a success.

We have seen some confusing policy decisions affecting infant feeding recently including cancellation of the Infant Feeding Survey, and BfN is working to raise the profile of the importance of breastfeeding. So we were pleased to work with new MP Alison Thewliss, supporting her with a briefing which provided a punchy and honest account of state of breastfeeding during National Breastfeeding Week in June in House of Commons. We are also exploring opportunities to support existing and potential All Party Parliamentary Groups relevant to infant feeding to help ensure that the voices of women and families are represented to MP's.

One final mention in the list of just some of our BfN highlights includes BfN's recent contribution to UNICEF's BFI Conference in Harrogate just last month. I was delighted to chair the opening session representing BfN and voluntary sector organisations. BfN was also able to showcase two innovations including a web chat service for National Breastfeeding Helpline and What's in Breastmilk demonstration DVD.

The newsletter this time has a guest feature from Mike Brady of the inspirational Baby Milk Action; a message from Ann Kerr, BfN Director; a write up on the recent Unicef Baby Friendly conference; a round of up of all the BfN Big Tea Break action as well as a hello from one of your NBH Link Workers and a mother's story of her visit to a BfN drop-in in Icknield, Hertfordshire. There's also news about a new study BfN are involved in in Fleetwood and you'll find out how we helped out with the BBC soap, Doctors! It's a packed edition.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say a huge THANK YOU to all our BfN volunteers for all the time they've given during 2015 – they make a huge difference to families all over the country. As a recent caller to NBH told us:

"BfN has been amazing. I don't think I would have done it if you guys had not been there. I came up against so much negativity when I talked about breastfeeding both before and after I had the twins, but you were there in the hospital, at the weigh in clinics and visited me too, helping me with P & A and showing me how to tandem feed". She appreciated the support so much and had shared her positive experiences with other mums of twins. Our volunteers make a difference with every mum they talk to – and often that support has more far reaching consequences than we'll ever know.



Whatever you're up to over the next couple of weeks – celebrating, spending time with family and friends, eating, drinking or volunteering – have a great time and try and take a break if you can! We're looking forward to 2016 being an even bigger and better year for BfN and hope you'll continue your journey with us next year.

Festive Wishes

Shereen Fisher, Chief Executive Officer, Breastfeeding Network

My journey with BfN

"I started off with the great advantage of having been a breastfed baby, and just taking it for granted that that was what you did. I don't suppose I thought much about it until I was studying basic midwifery in the 1970s, and had a good grounding in the physiology and practicalities of infant feeding. What I observed however was that there were many women who wished for a natural birth and hoped to breastfeed, who attended classes and thought themselves well prepared, but for whom the reality of a difficult labour and the common challenges of breastfeeding were deeply distressing, and for some almost catastrophic. It put me off classes and gave me a determination to be realistic if and when, my turn came.

In contrast to today's guidance about exclusive breastfeeding for six months and for a full year or two, we were taught that breastfeeding for three months gave the baby your immunity. This seemed something reasonable to try for and when my first child was born I set off with the intention to try and breastfeed for the 3 months, but not to get hung up on success. Now of course I know that that intention was probably enough to get me through the early weeks to establish supply and demand and my first baby fed for 18 months. The support in hospital hadn't been great - we were expected to feed behind curtains, and challenged if we were seen as feeding too often, but unlike so many, I had full support from my family. Back home I was lucky that there was no conflicting advice - for the simple reason that rural Scotland back then was served by triple duty nurses (covering midwifery, health visiting and district nursing) and one-matter-of-fact nurse and a sympathetic GP saw me through the initial ups and downs of engorgement and cracked nipples.

I loved the closeness, enjoyed the changing interaction with each child, and the amazing fact of a growing baby healthy and strong on mother's milk. Yes, it's a natural process, but that doesn't stop it feeling like a huge achievement, only surpassed by the great pleasure of seeing my elder daughter successfully breastfeed her first baby. Rates of breastfeeding in Scotland were very low in those days, and despite spending about 5 years of my life suckling my four children, I never had a friend feeding at the same time and realise that I was lucky in the support I did have. I returned to work in adult education with pre nursing, social care and nursery nurse students, where I found myself teaching infant feeding and after a couple of years moved into what was then called health education. My boss allowed me a little time to support local breastfeeding work, although it wasn't included in national policy at the time. So I found myself working along with Mary Broadfoot in the Paisley Joint Breast Feeding Initiative, in a culture where a GP took down posters of real women breastfeeding and initiation rates were below 30%. The local maternity hospital gained the BF award, not the first in Scotland, but an early award in a deprived area. I became health promotion representative on the Scottish National Breastfeeding Group which led to all the Scottish maternity hospitals being supported to take forward BFI. Along with a Paisley midwife I was sent to assess UK wide training on breastfeeding that was being developed. The two of us felt something more basic was needed in Scotland and we worked alongside Jenny Warren (the then National Coordinator) to develop joint training for midwives and health visitors,

which we rolled out across our own health board area.

After several years I moved to what was then HEBS (Health Education Board for Scotland) which later became part of Health Scotland. At different times my work there included early years - I hope BfN members and volunteers in Scotland are familiar with *Ready Steady Baby*, *Off To A Good Start* and the Scottish Antenatal Parent Education Package amongst other things, work being continued by my old colleagues. In 2013 a restructuring led to my early years work passing to a colleague. Coming up to retirement I looked at the bookmarked BfN website for training and found a call for Board members and to my surprise my application was taken up. I have found myself working with fellow Board members, the central staff and many volunteers, all very dedicated to BfN. The Board is working hard to address the challenges BfN faces as

it has grown and copes with a tough economic climate.

It has been a privilege to lead the TSTG group to explore our training, tutoring and supervision and learn about the widespread recognition of the importance of peer support. The group's recommendations are steadily being taken forward and I hope they will start to bear fruit for BfN.

I haven't had the time to undertake the training that I looked for in the first place but maybe next year!



Ann Kerr

Information on the Code of Conduct

Some important developments are in Central Line (the BfN internal newsletter) - if you are a BfN Tutor, Supervisor, Supporter or a Helper please look out for your copy which should have been emailed to you recently.

The current Code of Conduct is being reviewed and the Board would like to ask all members for their thoughts.

We are considering some important changes and will work hard to listen to everyone's thoughts so we make the best decisions for BfN staff, volunteers and the families we support.

There are also two short-life working groups being developed - one to develop antenatal sessions and the other to develop a neonatal peer support course - if you're interested apply via Central Line.

If you haven't received it check your spam filter and then ask your supervisor to forward it onto you.

Conflicts of Interest - who calls the tune?

Who pays the piper calls the tune. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.

We instinctively know what a conflict of interest is, but dealing with them in the area of infant and young child feeding is sometimes complex.

One definition used is (Thompson, 2005/IOM 2009):

"A conflict of interest is a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgement or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest."

People protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding as a primary interest may have secondary interests from sources of funding, investments, other work, etc. Conflicts of Interest (Col) need to be identified, assessed and eliminated, or at least reduced. While a Col may be obvious when looking at others, people tend to have a blind spot when thinking about themselves.

We might think that if we are aware of a Col we will not be influenced. Companies know otherwise. For example, Nestlé is currently targeting health workers with offers of sponsorship and study days through a network of Clinical Representatives: their job description gives their primary responsibility as achieving "brand endorsement" for SMA formula from health workers.



Baby Milk Action argues that baby milk companies should stop employing these marketing staff and calls on health workers and peer supporters to keep their distance and maintain their independence. Remember, company representatives have no right to enter health facilities, children's centres, nurseries and though it may seem rude, should be challenged for targeting them.

BfN was originally created by peer supporters who wanted to avoid conflicts of interest and sets a great example.

To help explain, see our webpage on conflicts of interest by clicking [here](#)

And the paper

Richter, J. (2005). Conflicts of interest and policy implementation: reflections from the fields of health and infant feeding. Geneva, IBFAN-GIFA.

[Click here](#) to view the paper

Mike Brady, Campaigns Coordinator- Baby Milk Action

Anxiety and Breastfeeding

Below is a glimpse of our latest factsheet written by Wendy with input from Sally Hogg (Vice Chair-Maternal Mental Health Alliance), and personal experience from mums.

There are many reasons that we become anxious at one point or another in our lives. Anxiety is a normal and healthy emotion which helps to tell us that something in our environment may be threatening, either physically or emotionally to either ourselves or the people we care about. Feeling anxious about these situations encourages us to act to make ourselves safe. Without it we would not be able to recognise danger or keep ourselves safe. It is only necessary to seek help if you find your feelings spiralling out of control. Tell your loved ones how you feel, a hug and an opportunity to express your frustration and worries may be all that you need.

Sometimes though we misinterpret situations and start to believe that they are threatening when they are not. This can be affected by:

- The information we are given by others,
- How confident we feel about coping with a situation,
- Our experiences from the past.
- If we have been told that something will be difficult or upsetting, or have experienced struggling in a situation in the past we are more likely to be anxious about that situation again now.

You can download a copy of the entire factsheet [here](#).

Unicef Baby Friendly Conference 2015

Harrogate was the host town for this year's Baby Friendly conference. The venue for the conference itself was the beautiful Royal Hall.



Pictured is our BfN stall at the conference with Kate M, Shereen, Fliss, and Sarah (L-R), and Kate B talking to a delegate.

The conference had a focus on attachment this year, with a great line up of speakers including [Robin Grille](#), Australian psychotherapist and author. He talked about the importance of creating a peaceful, gentle childhood, and showed evidence that children who grow up feeling secure and attached are more likely to become peaceful adults – which felt even more important given that this conference followed a weekend of terror and bloodshed in Paris and across the Middle East (and beyond).

"If we are going to have a less violent world, we're going to need to nurture children so that they grow up to be less violent."

The focus on attachment and how what we do to support mums in the early days can have an impact on later life, and on the wider world helped everyone in the audience recognise what they do in terms of supporting mums is really important.

Hollie McNish got a standing ovation with her moving poetry recital, and Dr Mary Renfrew talked about 'shifting the curve' of infant feeding – away from formula feeding being the norm. Dr Matthew Hyde spoke about his role in the film [Microbirth](#) and the implications the information contained in the film has on birth.

There were also talks from [Helen Crawley of First Steps Nutrition](#) and [Chrissy Jo Hendricks, IBCLC](#) on some of the fairly shocking tricks and tactics formula companies use to convince families across the world to purchase their products.

The full timetable can be viewed [here](#). If you're a Twitter user, it's worth searching for #bfconf to get a really good round up of everything that went on. The entire event was filmed, so keep an eye on the [Baby Friendly website](#) to see when the film goes live.

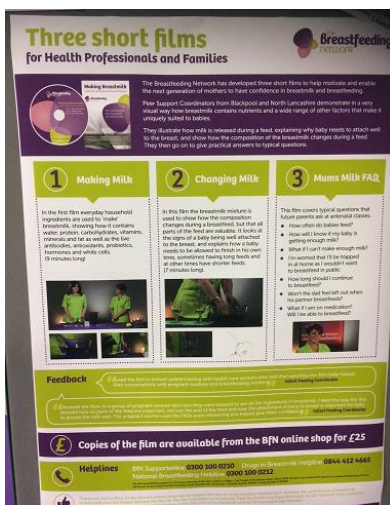
This year BFI introduced a poster presentation showcase as well, and BfN were represented in two of the 20 posters on display – one about our new Making Breastmilk DVD and another covering NBH web chat. The posters looked great and attracted a lot of positive comments. All the poster presentation abstracts can be viewed [here](#).

This year the BFI conference coincided with the Unite CPHVA (Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association) conference and there were several comments voicing concerns and disappointment that the infant feeding sessions at CPHVA were sponsored by formula manufacturers. As a result of this, by day two of the conference a petition was set up to be sent to the CPHVA on this issue.



Most excitingly, our very own CEO Shereen Fisher was invited to open the conference and chair the first half day session. This was a great opportunity for BfN and Shereen did us proud! She represented not only BfN but all the mother supporter organisations. Although this was great, we were slightly disappointed that peer support was not really recognised during the conference this year and will be feeding back to BFI to ensure there are more

opportunities to showcase peer support projects at next year's event.



The Breastfeeding Network stand was looking great and attracted lots of attention as always – this year we were premiering our brand new Making Breastmilk DVD and this generated a lot of interest and sales. We also sold out of NBH Diary covers for the second year in a row, as well as selling dozens of Drug Information packs, leaflets and NBH Age in Weeks Wheels. We also held a very successful raffle, with a star prize of Wendy's Breastfeeding and Medication book. There was lots of interest in our Friends of Drugs in Breastmilk service, and as always lots of praise for all the services BfN offers. It was also great to see lots of familiar BfN faces in the crowds!

Next year the conference will be in Birmingham, and plans are already underway to ensure BfN is well represented again.



#BfNDirectors
#BigTeaBreak

Pictured are Sukie,
Kirsten, Ann, Wendy and
Shereen

The 2nd annual BfN Big Tea Break was a great success with events across the UK. Thank you to everyone who organised events and also to everyone who went along to a Tea Break and ate cake! We are still collecting in the final donations, but so far it looks like we have raised almost £2000 to support our vital drugs in breastmilk information service.

In the photo - Lee-Anne Doyle and Michelle Silver at the Big Tea Break in Portsmouth. We raised £25 for the DiBM on the day along with other text donations that were made during the event.




first milk matters
breastfeeding awareness training

Breastfeeding Awareness Training
First Milk Matters

A short interactive session suitable for:

- Anyone working with children and families or coming into contact with breastfeeding mums
- Pregnant women, families and communities to raise awareness of breastfeeding
- Ideal for developing 'breastfeeding friendly' nurseries and schools.

Outcomes:

- An increased understanding of why breastfeeding is important
- Basic knowledge of how breastfeeding works
- An appreciation of the possible barriers to breastfeeding.

Sessions delivered by qualified BfN tutors or ask about train the trainer and licensing opportunities.

For more information have a look on our website
www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
or email
development@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

First Milk Matters Training

Information about our new Breastfeeding Awareness training - First Milk Matters - is now available on our website and the first 'train the trainer' sessions took place in October and November. The training offers a short session to increase awareness about the importance of breastfeeding and the possible barriers for families. It is suitable for anyone working or having contact with families, for example teachers, nursery staff or early years workers and there is also a version that can be used with families and communities.

For more information have a look on the [website page](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk) or email development@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

2015 Annual Conference, Community Gathering and 8th AGM – 7th October at Sadler's Wells, London



BfN members from across the country converged on Sadler's Wells in the historic London district of Islington for this year's AGM, Annual Conference and Community Gathering. The venue proved popular for its refreshments and facilities, the opportunities to meet other mothers and browse the stalls for books and educational materials.

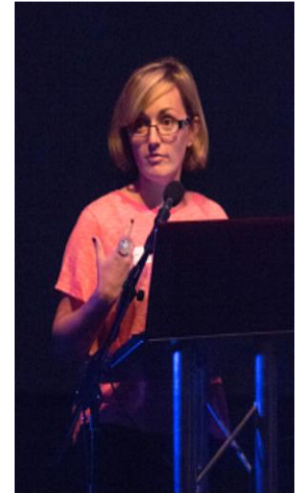
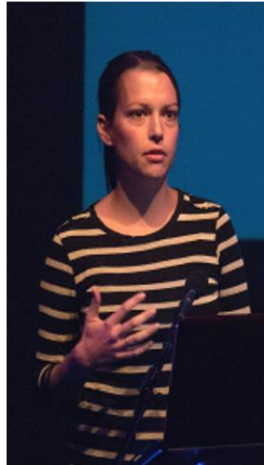


Tickets were sold out by the end of September, and for the first time ever attendance was made possible via video-link with the sessions streamed live on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).

Speakers

The agenda for the conference followed an unofficial theme of mental health and how best to help hard-to-reach mothers. Many members commented on the hard-hitting but inspirational subject matter that was addressed by the speakers, including Sally Hogg, who presented ways in which we can help the 10% or more of mothers who experience perinatal anxiety or depression. Abbi Ayers, who offers support to women who are in prison during the perinatal period, expanded on the need to empower vulnerable women with information and gain their trust.

With 15% of calls to the Drugs in Breastmilk helpline relating to mental health, it was no surprise that Wendy Jones encouraged members to keep talking about maternal mental health and shared ways of supporting mothers requiring medication to continue breastfeeding. The final speaker, Alice Allan, presented a fascinating talk about support for breastfeeding in Ethiopia, where 43% of deaths in children under 5 occur during the first 28 days.



Breakout sessions were led by DASH (Domestic Abuse Stops Here), the Family Nurse Partnership (supporting younger mothers) and Gill Rapley (Baby-led Weaning).



At the AGM, the hot topic was the revision of the BfN Code of Conduct. A new director, Mary Whitmore, was appointed. She will be leading the new 'Quest' subcommittee on Quality, Standards and Training.

A surprise for all who volunteer on the breastfeeding helpline was a series of awards for taking calls – from 50, 100, 250 and even 500 calls. An inspiring way to launch into another great year of supporting mothers, babies and their families!

Caroline Shackleford

So, what's it like being a BfN Linkworker?

Hello there, my name is Kirsty and I am one of the 3 Linkworkers for the BfN, alongside Kristie and Kate. I cover the central part of the country, Kristie expertly cares for our sisters in the North whilst Kate does the same in London and the South East. We are currently advertising for a new Linkworker to nurture our wonderful Scottish volunteer family. Our manager is the fantastic Felicity who is the oracle of all things helpline.

Our role is to care for all volunteers trained to take calls on the helpline in a technical and practical way. We provide information and guidance from the time you complete module 1 of the Supporter training. At this time we help you to log in with confidence and to understand the system used for taking helpline calls and making records. We can provide information about other issues such as how to listen in to supporters or how to claim childcare costs.

We are your point of contact if you have any technical issues, and we can also help you work out when you would like to volunteer, perhaps even committing to a regular time.

It may seem that a big part of our job is chasing people to get them volunteering on the helpline and this may make us a not so welcome contact for some. We do, however, also spend time congratulating and thanking those who have been logged onto the helpline. I do love being able to say thanks and it is really rewarding to be able to send certificates or badges for number of calls taken. We always listen with empathy to anyone not in a position to take calls and would never force the issue.

I have been working in this role since January 2014 and think it is wonderful to be able to support fellow BfN Supporters.

It is a great feeling to be the first contact a trainee has after completing their first module but is equally rewarding supporting someone onto the helpline after a long time.

It's a great job that we do from home. A few hours each week of keeping connected with the wonderful women who make BfN what it is.

To contact the Linkworker team, email linkworkers@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

Kirsty Cummins

'Breastfeed Happily Here' has a new member



Local mothers and babies met with staff and drivers at Ayr bus station recently to celebrate Stagecoach West Scotland's decision to display 'Breastfeed Happily Here' stickers on 50 local buses as part of NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Breastfeed Happily Here initiative.

Here is the actress Jane McCarry the Fairy godmother at a pantomime in Ayrshire holding one of our local "Breastfeed Happily Here" scheme stickers. She featured in Still Game and was also Granny Murray in the CBeebies series Me too!

The NHS initiative, which is promoted by the Breastfeeding Network, is a way of ensuring that mums feel comfortable to breastfeed when they are out and about in the community. Businesses who sign up for the scheme display their 'Breastfeed Happily Here' sticker to let customers know that they welcome breastfeeding mums. It is a voluntary scheme which does not involve any changes to facilities. All that is needed is a positive attitude towards breastfeeding mums.



Emma McNae, Marketing Manager, Stagecoach West Scotland added: "We are delighted to support the Breastfeed Happily Here initiative which we hope will ensure that breastfeeding mums and the whole family will feel welcome on our bus services."

Julie Peterkin of the Breastfeeding Network added: "We are delighted with the outstanding support we have received from local businesses and organisations in Ayrshire and Arran. We have been overwhelmed with positive messages and stories on social media and in the community."

In another instance, breastfeeding mum in Ayrshire, Fiona McLean had the unique experience of breastfeeding at the Ayr Community Fire Station after her car broke down near the station. The Fire Station had signed up to the 'Breastfeed Happily here' campaign and the firemen welcomed her with a cup of tea and biscuits.



If you own or work for an Ayrshire business that would like to display a 'Breastfeed Happily Here' sticker, or if you would like to find out which venues have signed up, please contact the Breastfeeding Network Facebook page by searching for 'Breastfeed Happily Here Ayrshire' or email julie.peterkin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk. The Facebook page has some wonderful stories and pictures from mums who have had positive experiences around Ayrshire.

[Click here](#) for the list of businesses who have signed up so far.

BBC DOCTORS

Earlier this year BfN was contacted by the team from BBC daytime soap Doctors to give advice regarding a storyline involving character Zara, who was involved in breastfeeding peer support.



They put forward several topics and we were happy to provide suggestions.

One of the storylines we helped with was around introducing peer support groups and training, another World Breastfeeding Week and another about implementing online resources. We also suggested information about the safety of drugs in breastmilk.

They used the information we provided to make sure the storylines were realistic and reflected the types of things that peer support might involve.

If you're interested in finding out more about what BfN advised, let us know.

The episodes were broadcast in October this year – we recorded the shows - let us know if you watched them too!

Peer support

Motivational Interviewing based peer support

BfN is involved in a study funded by the NIHR to develop and test the feasibility of providing 'motivational interviewing based peer support for breastfeeding'. Mary Whitmore is a member of the Study Management Group and Anthea Tennant-Eyles and myself are members of the Study Steering Committee.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a counselling approach, which is designed to strengthen personal motivation and explore the person's own reasons for change, with attention to the language of change.



The study is taking place in Wales (Ely and Merthyr) and in Fleetwood, Lancashire. The peer-supporters in the study received some training in using MI, as well as other aspects of providing peer-support relevant to the study.

The study aims to test whether or not it is feasible to deliver a mother-centred, intensive peer-support service to help mothers who live in disadvantaged areas to breastfeed for longer.

Some familiar techniques are used along with some new ones:

- Asking open questions
- Affirming (recognising and commenting on the mother's strengths and abilities)
- Reflective listening
- Summarising
- Giving information
- Evoking change talk

MI supports behaviour change and has been applied in many settings including medication adherence, weight loss and dental health care, and in areas around the transition to parenthood such as smoking cessation and breastfeeding. Supporting breastfeeding is a new area in which MI is being applied and further research is needed to understand if and how it might support parents.

Examples:

"Just tell me what you think I should do!"

Where we might offer a couple of suggestions, and accept these feelings; the MI approach might include a response: "It sounds like there are a few options there, I'm just wondering which one do you feel would work best for you?"

"I really can't cope at all"

Again our approach would be to listen and accept what the mother is saying and we might offer some suggestions which could include stopping breastfeeding. An MI approach might include affirming the mother's strengths in what she has already achieved.

It is fascinating to see how our approach could be developed further and be of value to the mothers and families we support.

Examples adapted from Rollnick R., Miller, WR., Butler, CC. (2008) Motivational Interviewing in Health Care.

Phyll Buchanan

A little help can go a long way

If you ask any breastfeeding mum what they would most value in the early weeks of parenthood, a welcoming and relaxed place to seek first rate help and support would probably be top of the list. And this is undoubtedly why the BfN's Drop-in Centre in Letchworth is proving such a success.

Situated within Icknield Children's Centre, in one of the most socially deprived areas of Hertfordshire, the drop-in group helps up to a dozen women each week and is run by volunteer BfN Supporters Jane and Emma, together with five volunteer Helpers, Amanda, Julie, Lindsay, Lucy and Sian.

As you walk through the door, it's clear that the women who run this group care passionately about helping other mums in their community, and the combination of their expertise and down-to-earth approach makes this a very accessible service.

Jane, who initially ran a group from her own house, has been supporting women to breastfeed for the last seventeen years, and has recently been instrumental in rolling out similar drop-in groups in other parts of the county.

In the area where the group is based, breastfeeding figures are below the national average, and Jane acknowledges how difficult it can be for mums when it is not accepted as part of the local culture.

Recounting her own memories of early motherhood, Jane said: "In my immediate circle of friends, I remember that I was the only one still breastfeeding at six weeks.

"I was very lucky to have a supportive health visitor, otherwise I may not have continued."

To help overcome these cultural barriers, Jane and Emma have been delivering breastfeeding education sessions in local ante-natal groups, with the hope that women will feel more equipped to cope with the challenges of breastfeeding if they learn about its advantages while they are still pregnant, and if they are forearmed with information about what to expect.

The approach is clearly paying off, as many of these women are now returning to the drop-in group once their babies are born.

Baljit, a mother of two, who attended the drop-in with her new-born son, said: "As soon as I walked in, one of the volunteers recognised me from the ante-natal group. I've had quite



a few problems with feeding since leaving hospital, and it makes such a difference to know you can come somewhere like this whenever you need advice and reassurance."

Pictured left-to-right:
BfN Helper Lindsey Cook, with BfN Supporters Jane Neesam and Emma Faulkner.

Anna, another local mum of two who visited the drop-in with her four-day old daughter, said: "Already, I've been given some great tips by Jane that nobody else has mentioned to me, and this is by far the friendliest group I've found. I'll definitely be coming back if I need support in the future."

Talking about the importance of this kind of drop-in group, Jane explained that it is all about building opportunities for mums to socialise and support one another, and also increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

"I always tell mums that even if they can just feed their baby in those first hours and days after birth, then it will still make a really significant difference," she said. "It's so important that women have somebody to tell them what an incredible job they're doing."

Rachel Gregory



Thanks to Rachel Gregory (pictured on the left with her children Ruben and Delphine) who was keen to offer her writing services to BfN and took time to visit the Letchworth drop in and talk to the mums and BfN staff.

If you are involved with any of the BfN drop-ins and would like to share your experience we would love to hear from you.

Hello from East Berkshire

My love with BfN started 17 years ago when I was working with health visitor team as a community liaison officer. I came across issues faced by breastfeeding mothers and having breastfed both my children, I took up helper training. It was not an easy task as I lived outside town and had to deal with issues like childcare and travel. I enjoyed training with BfN and the group became my extended family.

In 2013 public health was moved to local authorities and my portfolio was obesity/breastfeeding. Soon, Rebecca went on maternity leave and her post came up. I am continuing to volunteer as it is rewarding. Recently, we had a heart touching experience when a mum brought in brownies just to say thank you. She also generously baked for us again on our cake sale last month where we raised more than £50.



My dream is to open a breastfeeding café where mums come along together, relax and share their experience of breastfeeding and the support received from BfN! I believe that dreams are important in life. You need to keep going. You never know when it would become reality!

Shah-Bano Razvi

Congratulations and Thanks



Congrats to probationary supporters Sara Newman and Eliza Wilson.

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