



The Breastfeeding Network

Press Release from the Breastfeeding Network
For Immediate release

CHARITY FOUNDER RETIRES AFTER 16 YEARS SUPPORTING THOUSANDS OF MUMS

Sixteen years ago, Mary Broadfoot, a mother of four young children, along with a team of fellow mothers and breastfeeding counsellors, concerned about the lack of good quality, independent, evidence based support for breastfeeding mothers, decided to set up a small charity to provide just this – the Breastfeeding Network (BfN).

Over the years, BfN has gone from strength to strength and grown over and now supports hundreds of thousands of mums, babies, families and health professionals all over the UK every year.

Mary's key motivation was that mothers must have confidence in the service knowing the Breastfeeding Network would not make money out their feeding choices. She has had an impact internationally, after getting much needed clarification from the World Health Organisation on whether the International Code setting marketing standards for infant feeding companies (WHO Code) was set in stone as written in 1981 or was indeed a 'live' code updated by additional amendments.

Phyll Buchanan, fellow founding member, and current trustee of the Breastfeeding Network, said: *"Mary showed us that keeping our integrity, even if it meant starting anew, was such a powerful message we could overcome many challenges. Women need to trust the support we give, however short or long their time breastfeeding."*

Mary was also the first in the UK to show that a hospital going 'Baby Friendly' helped women to breastfeed. Timely indeed that the UNICEF 'Baby Friendly' conference is also in its 16th year, and taking place this week in Glasgow.

Mary was the guiding light and instigator of the National Breastfeeding Helpline (then called Supporterline) – it was Mary's idea to offer a single, dedicated number anyone could ring to access friendly, independent, breastfeeding support. Prior to this, mums wanting to offer breastfeeding support would have to publicise their own home phone number. With Mary's help, mums now could call one number and know they would get through to a trained breastfeeding supporter, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Mary's work on Supporterline set the precedent for other breastfeeding support helplines.

For the first 11 years of Supporterline, Mary manually logged individual volunteers in and out of the Helpline when they started and finished their shifts – meaning holidays and days off for her were extremely rare.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline (or Supporterline) was launched in 1998, and in its first year it received over 1900 calls. In its second year, this more than doubled to over 4000, and by 2006, this had increased to over 20,000.

In 2008 BfN joined forces with the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers and launched the National Breastfeeding Helpline. Today, the National Breastfeeding Helpline receives over 50,000 calls every year, and offers specific lines in various languages, as well as a dedicated Drugs in Breastmilk line.

After dedicating the last 16 years to the cause of offering mothers support, Mary has decided it's time to move on and finally be able to give more time to her other passions, including spending more time with her own family.

Shereen Fisher, current CEO of BfN says: *'Mary has been a defining influence in the life of the Breastfeeding Network, her clear judgement, integrity and no-nonsense approach has laid a strong foundation on which new achievements can be laid.'*

On her final day, Mary will be presented by colleagues with a Quaich engraved with the words 'for all the mums, for all the babies, for all the families'.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- Contact details – for more information contact **Felicity Lambert, felicity.lambert@nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk / 07826 671222**
- We have photos available of Mary then and now.
- BfN, the National Breastfeeding Helpline and Mary Broadfoot will be present at the UNICEF Baby Friendly conference in Glasgow this week:
<http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Health-Professionals/Conferences/This-years-conference/>

The **Breastfeeding Network** (BfN – www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk) aims to be an independent source of support and information for breastfeeding women and others.

It aims to:

- Promote breastfeeding and a greater understanding of breastfeeding in the United Kingdom.
- Collect and disseminate information on breastfeeding and baby and infant nutrition.
- Provide information and support to parents on the feeding of babies and infants.
- Set and encourage the acceptance of quality standards for breastfeeding support.
- Establish and publish codes of practice for such support

The National Breastfeeding Helpline is open 9.30am-9.30pm, 7 days a week on 0300 100 0212 – www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk