



For immediate release

LIFELINE FOR MUMS THREATENED WITH CLOSURE

An emergency fundraising appeal has been launched to save a vital service used by thousands of breastfeeding mums and healthcare professionals.

The Breastfeeding Network's Drugs in Breastmilk helpline service is at risk of closure due to a lack of funds. This vital service answers around 7000 phone calls and emails every year from mums, families and healthcare professionals, providing them with specific, evidence based information on the safety of medications, procedures and treatments while breastfeeding.

Many mums are wrongly told by doctors or pharmacists they should stop breastfeeding in order to take medication for common conditions including diabetes, migraines and arthritis. The charity says at least 10% of calls are from mums suffering from post-natal depression, a figure which is increasing year on year. By providing mums and healthcare professionals with accurate, evidence based information, the Helpline gives mums the confidence to make their own decisions about whether to continue breastfeeding or not.

Since 1995 this unique helpline offering both support and information has been supported by the Breastfeeding Network's reserves, and has been run by a dedicated volunteer pharmacist. However, the funds have now run out and they urgently need to raise at least £20,000 to keep the service running.

Wendy Jones, Breastfeeding Network Pharmacist said: *"Studies show mums who choose to breastfeed and who also take medication or need surgery need extra specialist information and support to inform their choice to breastfeedⁱ. There is insufficient readily-available information for about the safety of drugs in breastmilk, and mums who need to take medication are often advised to stop breastfeeding. Rarely do we see that this is justified by evidence of the passage of the drug into breastmilk."*

Breastfeeding rates in the UK are amongst the lowest in the world and more than 3 in 5 mums stop breastfeeding before they want to. This figure is even higher for Mums who breastfeed and need to take medication. We also know that breastfeeding mums take fewer drugs too – potentially putting themselves at risk.ⁱⁱ

An independent evaluation of the DIBM helpline published in 2012 found over 90% satisfaction rates with the serviceⁱⁱⁱ and Mums give consistently high praise to the quality of information and levels of service they receive from the Drugs in Breastmilk team: *"Thank you Breastfeeding Network for being there! I can't thank you enough! Just having the confidence to tell the doctors that I know what it is and that there was someone willing to email them if needed was fantastic."*

A campaign launched on social media using #savedrugsinbreastmilkhelpline and is already attracting donations from mums, breastfeeding supporters and health professionals who agree this vital service must be saved.

To donate, please visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/Drugs-in-Breastmilk-Helpline-Appeal/> or text DIBM88 and the amount you wish to donate to 70070 eg DIBM88 £3 to 70070

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Contact details – Felicity Lambert – felicity.lambert@nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk / 07826671222

The **Breastfeeding Network** (BfN) 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

ⁱ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence – NICE - Guidance PH11

ⁱⁱ E Schirm et al 'Drug Use During Breastfeeding' - Netherlands European Journal of Clinical Nutrition (2004) 58, 386–390

ⁱⁱⁱ Rutter & Jones 'Enquiry analysis and user opinion of the Drugs in Breastmilk Helpline: a prospective study' <http://www.internationalbreastfeedingjournal.com/content/7/1/6>