Breastfeeding Network Peer Support - Reducing health inequalities in our communities

Peer support can provide vital social, emotional and practical support for families. We offer support and information around infant feeding and early parenting on hospital wards, at home visits, over the phone or via text message. We run community-based peer support groups offering a place where parents and babies/toddlers can meet other local families to reduce isolation and build supportive networks.

Scotland has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world and we know that 8 out of 10 women stop breastfeeding before they wanted to. This is important because breastfeeding has wide-ranging benefits for the mental and physical health of women and babies in the short and long term.

All of our services have a focus on supporting families living in areas with high deprivation. We know that babies born in these communities may be facing other types of inequalities and disadvantage, and they are also much less likely to be breastfed, which increases health inequalities. In Scotland our peer support volunteers and staff supported over 3000 parents last year. We also run the National Breastfeeding Helpline offering friendly, non-judgemental, independent, evidence-based infant feeding support and information to anyone in the UK who needs it.

Training volunteers, offering volunteering opportunities and supporting families across Scotland with feeding their new baby all combine to help reduce health inequalities and work towards the aim of all babies having the best chance of reaching their full potential.



Supporting parents and babies

Peer support from people with lived experience is an effective way to support parents

Support empowers parents and builds confidence

Being breastfed reduces the risk of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections for children, as well as reducing the risk of obesity

Breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancer for women

Targetting support towards the mums and families who need it most can help them to breastfeed for as long as they choose - improving health outcomes and helping children reach their full potential



Training peer support volunteers

Training is always free for volunteers

Volunteers are mums with lived experience of breastfeeding

Training is targetted towards women living in areas of high deprivation, young mums and those from diverse communities

Our training offers an accredited and recognised qualification for women

Training builds on existing knowledge and strengths in each community

Volunteers can access ongoing learning, supervision and support

Breastfeeding is valued in communities making it easier for women to achieve their goals

Increased knowledge and skills in communities

Increased self-efficacy

Increased confidence

Changing the culture in communities to be more positive about breastfeeding

Decreased health inequalities

Decreased isolation and loneliness

Training & volunteering develops new skills and brings people from different backgrounds

Volunteers feel they have something valuable to offer their community

Increased self-esteem

Parents and volunteers build supportive networks

Both volunteers and parents benefit from the peer relationship

Mums are empowered to make informed choices

Supporting volunteering activity

Volunteers feel connected to their local community

Volunteering activity is located in communities most likely to benefit from peer support

Communities with high levels of deprivation with lots of voluntary activity do better in relation to health outcomes

Peer support brings people together and builds social capital

Volunteering opportunities increase capacity and knowledge in each community and help volunteers develop transferable skills for work or study

Peer support groups are a valuable and trusted resource in communities

national breastfeeding helpline
0300 100 0212

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