

Do you want to become a Peer Support Volunteer? Find out more in Angie's story

My name is Angie Lee. I am mum to 22 month old Angus James and I work part-time at Sheffield City Council. This is my first volunteer role.

I am a breastfeeding peer supporter and Chair of MOMS @ Kings Oak. My role involves giving information and support to breastfeeding mums and mums to be, by providing encouragement through the tough times sometimes experienced during breastfeeding.

Most of the support I give is to mums who drop into the group's weekly coffee morning. I have however also given information and support to family members, friends and even strangers over a latte when I've been in town and at Meadowhall!



I had decided before my baby was born that I would try to breastfeed. We had a few set backs in the hospital though as Angus had a few minor health problems when he was born. Because he did not feed properly his health was suffering so the hospital staff suggested that I should give him a formula feed 'top up'. I did not particularly enjoy my early breastfeeding experience.

When Angus was about 10 weeks old I found myself in need of support. Because of my experience in the hospital I was reluctant to seek their help, however, my Health

Visitor put me in touch with the breastfeeding link team at VAB. I spoke to Ange Beaumont who helped put my mind at ease and assured me that I wasn't being neurotic. It turned out I had the worries I had were those that most breastfeeding mums experienced at some stage - *my baby is feeding all the time, what should I do? What time of day should I try and express? I can't measure how much milk he's getting, how do I know he is getting enough?* and so on.

When I phoned Ange I was at my wits' end and **I was about to turn to the bottle - of formula that is!** - thinking that I had 'failed' Angus. But her support gave me the boost I needed to continue breastfeeding and I happily and successfully nursed my baby until he was ten months old.

A few months later, the Link Workers were running the first La Leche League training course in Wombwell. I was really interested in the subject but I also realised that the training would enable me to give other mums the kind of support I had received from Ange. If I could help just one mum in the same way Ange had helped me that would make me so happy.

Once we finished the training course the group had to decide how they would like to use their newly acquired skills. This is when we set up our weekly coffee morning at the local Children's Centre.

I have benefited immensely from doing the training. Initially it gave me the information I needed when I was breastfeeding Angus and when he was being weaned. It has also given me the information that I think I should have had received before Angus was born so I will have the confidence to make the right decisions from the outset for our next baby.

I have also represented the group at Barnsley Town Hall and again at the Wombwell and Darfield Area Forum. As a result the group received a set up grant from the Wombwell and Darfield Area Forum!

This also re-introduced me to formal meetings with people in a more professional environment and helped prepare me for my return to work.

The coffee morning is a very sociable and it gives me and Angus chance to meet new people and support them through tough times. I know it sounds like a cliché but being able to help people is really rewarding and gives me a real boost. I made some great friends from the experience. I think breastfeeding peer support is great. It helps the mums who seek our support because they know that we have been through what they are experiencing, and survived!

