

# *Jenna's Journey From new mum to employment as a Breastfeeding Link Worker*

My name is Jenna and I have two children. My breastfeeding experience started when I was pregnant with my first child Charlie.

Before my booking in appointment with the midwife I had already read loads of pregnancy and birth magazines I was that excited, that when she asked if I wanted to breastfeed, I felt there was no question about it. I definitely wanted to give my baby the best start in life!

My mum had struggled through lack of support to breastfeed me and occasionally felt I was putting too much pressure on myself wanting to breastfeed. She suggested I buy bottles etc just in case, but I felt like this was giving up before I had even started. I was determined to do this for myself and my baby!

Anyway eight days early Charlie arrived into the world. We had skin to skin straight away and I was totally overwhelmed by just how I simply adored this new little person I had just met!

The feeding didn't come as natural and easy as I had hoped. Charlie had jaundice and was a very sleepy baby and just didn't seem interested in feeding. I did receive a lot of support on the ward though and eventually we got him latched on and a few days later I came home.

Things appeared to be going well at first. At the beginning of feeds it was a little toe curling but the midwife assured me that this was normal. I was discharged and as Charlie was a December baby the next few weeks of Christmas and New Year passed in a bit of a blur. The only thing I was certain about was feeding was becoming more and more painful. In hindsight I really wished I had asked for help but I just thought as he was feeding more it would be and that it would pass. I realise now how little I knew. I had had very sore cracked nipples that were scabby and bleeding. I was just dreading feeding Charlie. Someone suggested putting brandy on my nipples to heal them! I cannot say strongly enough, do not do this, it did not work and it was excruciating!!!! I had tears streaming down my face on every feed ....but I still just wanted the best for him, to me, I came last!

By the time I went along with Charlie for his 6 week check, when the health visitor asked if everything was okay, I just burst into tears. Things clearly were not! It turned out I had thrush and mastitis, due to incorrect attachment. I received treatment for the thrush and mastitis and some information and support.



Also the nursery nurse who had done the peer support training came out to see me a couple of days later. She reassured me on positioning and attachment and watched him feed. By this time the thrush and mastitis had cleared up and I was feeling 100 times better. I couldn't believe I had waited so long to ask for help. It was a turning point and from then I had THE most wonderful experience with my son.



**“It was a turning point and from then I had THE most wonderful experience with my son.”**

When it came to having my daughter Scarlett I was a little anxious. I knew I wanted to definitely breastfeed again but was also a little scared about the same thing happening. Though one thing for sure I knew, it didn't have to be painful and I was definitely going to ask for help if I needed it.

In actual fact it wasn't the case. Scarlett arrived in to the world 2 days after she was due and during the first half hour of our beautiful skin to skin cuddles, attached all by her self! It was such a fantastic feeling!

Once home the feeding was still great but I was now a mum of two. I didn't want Charlie to feel left or pushed out. However it's surprising how much you can do whilst feeding. Reading stories; play dough, jigsaws, drawing so many things. Though my favourite was all cuddling up watching a Disney movie! An added bonus was when Scarlett was napping I had no bottles to sterilise or kettles to boil, well apart from my own cuppa. So I could use that time just for me and Charlie.

From the beginning I have to say my husband Kevin has always been so supportive and encouraging. Kevin and my family are so proud of how determined I was and how I overcame initial problems to give our children the best we could.

**“Watching them grow up and get bigger is a reward in its self, knowing I did that!”**

I did my peer support training and went for this job because I wanted other women to feel as empowered as I do. I started off completely at the other end of the scale with only little information I had found myself, thinking in order to achieve it you had to put up with any pain or problems. Now I know this is not the case and with the right information and support, it is the most amazing experience as a woman, as a mother you could wish for!