

My Breastfeeding Journey



One mother, two children, two very different breastfeeding experiences.

Charlie has two children Grace (7 years) and Gabriel (2 years). She breastfed both of her children Grace for 5 1/2 months and her son Gabriel for 14 months. They were both very different breastfeeding experiences, due to support and information.

Charlie's story

During the first couple of days breastfeeding Grace I had very sore cracked nipples but like many women I just persevered, curled my toes and held my breath every time I put her to the breast. I thought that, this was what breastfeeding was like and fed through the pain. As the days went by the soreness and pain stopped and we had a very happy, warm and loving breastfeeding experience.

When Grace was 5 1/2 months I was due to return to work. At the time I worked as a Woman's Wear fashion Buyer and I had to go Paris for Fashion Week. I was dreading having to leave my baby for a week. I didn't know anything about expressing and so assumed that I had to stop breastfeeding. Two weeks before I was due to go to Paris I started formula feeding Grace. The first time I tried Grace wouldn't stop crying; she wanted to feed from my breast and didn't understand why I was putting a bottle in her mouth. I had tears streaming down my face. I did not want to stop breastfeeding and didn't have the information I needed to enable me to carry on. I stopped feeding Grace over night and as a result I became very sore and engorged.

When I became pregnant with Gabriel I knew that I was going to breastfeed. This time I wanted to feed until we were naturally ready to stop. When I was pregnant with Gabriel I saw some information at the hospital about meeting breastfeeding mums, I went along and found out about peer support training.

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I started the La Leche League Peer Councillor training when Gabriel was 3 or 4 weeks old. It was wonderful being with like minded mums and at the same time gaining a wealth of information about how our bodies as feeding mums worked, I was hooked! The support from the other mums and the trainer's combined with the information I

learnt was invaluable. Any hiccups we encountered I knew we'd overcome together. This enabled me to feed Gabriel until he wean naturally at 14 months.



Charlie

I loved every minute of feeding Gabriel. Breastfeeding is such a small, important precious time in a child's life, which needs to be nurtured and encouraged.

On completing the course I felt a great sense of achievement and was determined to do something with this new knowledge and experience. I knew I wanted to help and support others mums with their feeding. I enquired about ways of using my training and was sent in the direction of Anne Amott a Breastfeeding Link Worker; who I had previously met at groups and breastfeeding functions. Part of Anne's role was to coordinate the breastfeeding peer support volunteers at Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT). After completing BHNFT's induction process and the necessary security checks I was a fully fledged volunteer. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to offer support to mums and their new babies at the hospital, all the while gaining more experience in the art of breastfeeding.

After volunteering at BHNFT for over 12 months a Breastfeeding Link Worker position became available. It sounded too good to be true! A job doing something that I felt so passionate about. I applied and successfully got the position and here I am! It is a very different role to my previous job. The role of Breastfeeding Link Worker brings its challenges and is very rewarding, with no two days the same. I am proud to be part of a project which will make a big difference to the people of Barnsley, the community and helping Barnsley achieve UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Status. Now I've come full circle and part of my role is to look after BHNFT's breastfeeding peer support volunteers amongst other things and I am able to pass on information which is invaluable for breastfeeding mothers and babies.

**If you would like to become a BHNFT breastfeeding peer supporter contact
Charlie at Voluntary Action Barnsley 01226 320108 or
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