

The breastfeeding journey of Lia Harness and her family

I don't really know why I decided to breastfeed, it just seemed like the obvious thing to try and do, which is funny because I didn't know that many people who'd done it! Now I am so pleased I did, knowing all the benefits for both of us!

I was induced early, and after a long and slow labour I ended up having an epidural. Luckily that didn't stop Dylan and within the first half hour of being born he latched and we are **still going strong at 16 months old**. Now it's a doddle as he mainly has solids and has gradually cut back the milk, but in the early days and weeks I doubted myself a lot.

I went to our local breastfeeding group when Dylan was about 3 weeks old - mostly for a bit of company but I am glad that I did. Those early hurdles like growth spurts, cluster feeding, and difficulty latching were all reassuringly normal and easily overcome with the help of a peer supporter and other mums! Now **I look back on growth spurts and cluster feeding quite fondly - what better excuse to sit on the sofa with a snack and a dvd** while



poor hubby had to pick up on the cooking and cleaning! Support at home I think was crucial in the early days. My husband made sure I ate and drank, and rested when I could.

Soon after I was put on anti-depressants but having spoken to a mum at the group with similar experiences I knew this was okay. At group I learnt how to feed lying down so I could rest as Dylan was a frequent feeder, particularly through the night! And being as informed as possible; there were a lot of 'myths' thrown at me from friends and family who'd had difficulty feeding in the past but if you know the answers or where to get them from, you can feel confident in your body! No, my milk wasn't going to turn to water, and yes he really could be hungry again already!

The group also helped me start on my feeding in public journey. I am by no means an exhibitionist but faced with the option of a crying baby drawing attention to me or just getting comfortable and feeding him, I had to learn fast! That first feed at group, where our Breastfeeding Link Worker observed to help me with positioning and attachment.....well I ended up half stripping off after getting in a tizzy with some supposedly wonderful breastfeeding tops! As we got better, I could feed him and carry on with life with no one any the wiser.

I recently completed the peer support training which was so interesting and I think it will really help if I have another baby to feed in the future! I was lucky enough to be offered a job elsewhere after the training which I feel shows how good the support and training was that I had in Barnsley.

Obviously as he has got older there have been other hurdles to deal with - too busy playing to feed, getting the milk / solids balance right etc. Lazy latching can still crop up even now! But I've always been able to get support at group and have carried going when I can to be a listening ear to other mums.



He has grown fabulously and is now a healthy, happy toddler and it has been so worth it!