



Upon the suspension of NHS antenatal classes due to Covid-19, Breast Buddies volunteers recognised that families would be missing out on both important information around infant feeding, as well as the chance to meet and interact with other expectant parents.

With the support of NHS Tayside's Infant Feeding team, we worked quickly to consider how Breast Buddies could help support families across Tayside. We set out to create a virtual alternative to the existing NHS infant feeding parent education class that would meet three aims:

- To highlight the variety of support that exists
- To facilitate socialisation and friendships
- To provide key information to support informed decision-making around how babies are fed.

Why?

We decided that an interactive presentation with links to relevant, evidence-based articles & videos would be a good starting point. Volunteers led the creation of this presentation and worked together to cover breastfeeding in depth, as well as the basics of formula feeding and responsive caregiving more generally.

After receiving this, families would be invited to a virtual class, held on Zoom. The classes were designed as person-centred, focusing on the questions or concerns of the families present, with the presentation being used for reference throughout.



What?

The presentation was finalised in April and we immediately started to advertise the classes on social media. Working closely with the NHS Tayside Infant Feeding team ensured midwives were aware of the class and could also provide women with further information. This was an important way of trying to reach families who may not use or have access to social media.

Classes were run by each of the three separate Breast Buddies projects and organised by women's estimated due date. This allowed mothers to get to know their local coordinator and peer-supporters. Importantly, it also gave families an opportunity to meet other local families whose babies would be born at a similar time. These relationships were further encouraged by the creation of a WhatsApp group after each class, supported by the same peer-supporters that had hosted the class.

How?

Our pilot group ran at the end of April with three Tayside mothers and some of their partners present. The feedback and data gathered from these mothers told us that the class was a resounding success but also helped us to evaluate and go on to adapt the materials and class design.

Since the classes launched, we have had more than 125 pregnant women from Tayside note their interest and to date have hosted 18 classes, with more planned for the rest of the year. These women tend to be first time parents and often 'attend' the virtual class with a partner or supportive figure. Nearly every class has resulted in a WhatsApp group being created and used by the mothers for weeks or even months after the class.



Who for?

In order to collect feedback and evaluate the impact of the class, participants are invited to complete a survey **immediately** after the class, **10 days** after the class and **6 weeks** after the class. Engagement with this evaluation process has been limited but the data gathered shows that:

- 100% of respondents felt the class answered the key questions they had about breastfeeding.
- 100% of respondents felt that they were now more aware of the breastfeeding support available to them.
- 100% of respondents felt the class & further support had positively impacted their breastfeeding journey.
- 89% of mums said that their baby received breastmilk from birth.
- 94% of mums said that their baby was still receiving breastmilk at day 10.

So what?

We have been delighted by the feedback received which seems to confirm that our initial aims are being met. Nichola, Dundee, from our pilot group tells us about her experience of the class and the subsequent support from Breast Buddies:

"Global pandemics are not exactly a daily occurrence and I was isolated and scared. Reaching out to this group not only helped me start but continue my breastfeeding journey. Without their help I can confidently say I would not be still breastfeeding my little girl today. I didn't realise how invaluable that help would turn out to be. Whilst pregnant I was also put in touch with two mamas that were expecting around the same time. The bond we and our babies now have is incredible and I feel like they have always been in my life. Breast Buddies has been & continues to be a comfort to us all we are so unbelievably grateful."



Florence, Jack and Lanah

Breast Buddies provide breastfeeding peer-support across Tayside via three 'sister' projects: **Breast Buddies Angus** (run by Voluntary Action Angus), **Breast Buddies Dundee** (run by Home Start Dundee) and **Breast Buddies Perth and Kinross** (run by Home Start Perth).