



Role of the Breastfeeding Peer Supporter

Context:

Breastfeeding Peer Supporters are mothers of any age who have breastfed their own baby/s or are still breastfeeding and wants to support other mothers to have a positive breastfeeding experience. In Swindon this role is carried out by volunteers, who have successfully completed a 10 week training programme, received a satisfactory DBS check and undertaken a planned volunteer induction to the clinical/non-clinical environment. Peer supporters aim to promote, protect and sustain breastfeeding within their local area. Providing factual evidence based information as required.

1. Who can be a Breastfeeding Peer Supporter?

1.1 To be a breastfeeding peer supporter you must be:

- A mum who has breastfed (or is breastfeeding) and who has a positive attitude to breastfeeding.
- Willing to undertake the peer support training course.
- Prepared to become a peer supporter, which is a voluntary role, for at least 6 – 12 months after completing the training course.
- Willing to have a DBS (Criminal Record) check done, in line with all staff and volunteers who work with or have access to children and babies in any setting.
- Willing to undertake safeguarding training.
- Willing to attend regular peer support networking / update sessions. A minimum of three per year.

2. Desirable qualities for a Breastfeeding Peer Supporter

2.1 As a peer supporter you will need the following:

- To be enthusiastic about breastfeeding and breastfeeding support.
- To be caring and have a non-judgmental attitude to other people.
- To be able to work well as part of a team.
- To be a good communicator.
- To be tolerant and understanding towards people from different social, religious, ethical and cultural backgrounds.
- To be reliable and adaptable.

3. Role of Breastfeeding Peer Supporter

3.1 This is a role which is primarily to promote breastfeeding and to provide basic breastfeeding information, guidance and support, and includes the following:

- To be easily identifiable as a breastfeeding peer supporter – name badge provided.
- To promote Breastmates in Swindon.
- To promote breastfeeding in a friendly and sensitive manner, in accordance with Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) standards and the local healthcare facility's Breastfeeding Policy.
- To offer support and encouragement to breastfeeding women and their families, as requested by a health practitioner or by the woman herself, and within the boundaries of the breastfeeding peer support training.
- To be aware of the process for reporting feedback, e.g. reporting concerns to the appropriate health practitioner or designated member of staff.
- To be aware of and maintain the confidentiality of individuals.
- To be responsible to the named health practitioner for the clinical/non-clinical area.
- To maintain effective communication links with other peer supports, health practitioners and breastfeeding counsellors.
- To be aware of infant/child safety issues and how to deal with any safety concerns arising.
- To be aware of health and safety issues including environmental risks and infection control.
- To keep up to date by attending regular supervision sessions, highlighting any personal training needs to the peer support mentor and participating in an annual review of practical skills.
- To participate in evaluation of training and of the peer support service, as directed by the relevant health practitioner or the breastfeeding coordinator.

4. Breastfeeding Peer Supporters have a voluntary role with Breastmates

4.1 Community environment - aspects of the role specific to this setting:

- To work alongside healthcare practitioners who have a responsibility for supporting mothers/parents with infant feeding.
- To help to create a welcoming environment, which is easily identifiable as breastfeeding friendly.
- To welcome new and existing group attendees.
- To set up and clear away for the group as needed/negotiated
- To assist with paperwork, which relates directly to breastfeeding or data collection, registration and evaluation forms, as requested by the infant feeding lead/HV.
- To undertake a planned induction to Breastmates, under the guidance and supervision of an experienced peer supporter with support from the Breastmates Co-ordinator.

5. Role limits and boundaries

5.1 Breastfeeding Peer Supporters WILL NOT be expected to:

- Diagnose or offer treatment advice – this should always be done by an appropriately qualified health practitioner
- Take on extra responsibilities outside of the role description – as a peer supporter you are aiming to encourage and to support; you should not be tempted to lend money, to offer childcare, to change nappies or to encourage other mums to become dependent on your support.
- Be involved in other community activities e.g. cleaning!
- Undertake lone home visits/contacts.
- Give personal details to other mothers/parents, unless you choose to do so as an individual and not in your capacity as a peer supporter.
- Participate in any formal record keeping, which is entered into patients/clients notes, unless requested in exceptional circumstances e.g. where a safeguarding issue has been identified or suspected.
- Give formal advice/instruction on parenting issues beyond the scope of a breastfeeding peer supporter.
- Tolerate any inappropriate language or behaviour which is deemed to be aggressive, threatening or intimidating.

6. Maintaining knowledge and skills

6.1 Support and updating for Breastfeeding Peer Supporters

- Peer supporters who have completed the breastfeeding peer support training are encouraged to attend regular Peer Support Supervision Sessions, which are held every 2 months and provide an opportunity to networks, share good practices, reflect, gain practical support and regular updating of skills and knowledge.
- You will be provided with safeguarding and basic life support training.
- In the community a health practitioner will have responsibility for supporting your role. You will be given their contact details as a source of expert advice, guidance and support.
- For any matters arising which requiring immediate attention, the peer supporter must seek the support of a Breastmates co-ordinator or infant feeding lead.