LBPS Postnatal Ward Report – April 2015

Analysis of data gathered from Lewisham Breastfeeding Peer Supporters volunteering on the Postnatal Ward at University Hospital Lewisham from August 2014 to December 2014.

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Introduction

It is now over a year since Breastfeeding Peer Supporters began providing voluntary support on the postnatal ward (Maternity 5) at University Hospital Lewisham.

Through the volunteer project we aim to provide another level of infant feeding support for mothers, fathers and babies alongside that given by midwifery staff and Maternity Support Workers.

During the period between August and December 2014 five of the seven breastfeeding peer supporters who have received orientation to volunteer on the ward actually spent time on the postnatal ward. In October 2014 in an attempt to discover the reasons why more peer supporters are not able to provide support on the postnatal ward an online survey was sent to all peer supporters. The results of this survey were presented in the 'Barriers to Peer Support on the Postnatal Ward Report’ (Oct 2014). 21 peer supporters took part in the survey and the results showed that most peer supporters are keen to volunteer on the ward and those who already support are keen to do more, however the main factors preventing them from doing so are childcare, time and experience. In identifying the barriers for those who wish to provide support or those who wish to do more we can work out how best to support the volunteers.

The role of a Breastfeeding Peer Supporter is to provide extra support to mothers, fathers and babies whilst they are staying on the postnatal ward. Volunteers visit mothers at their bedsides and support them with evidence-based information on infant feeding. They use the skills they have gained through their training to listen to mothers and help support them to get their breastfeeding off to the best start.

In December 2014 Jill Moore hosted the second supervision session for volunteer Breastfeeding Peer Supporters. The meeting was well received and appreciated by peer supporters who were given the opportunity to share their experiences and talk about ideas to improve the support given to mothers. Ongoing supervision specifically for those volunteering on the ward will improve confidence in the volunteers. We aim to provide bi-monthly sessions although peer supporters are encouraged to contact Jill Moore or myself at any time if they have specific issues or concerns.
This report analyses information taken from mothers supported by Breastfeeding Peer Supporters in order to determine the success of the project and identify any areas where improvements can be made.
Number of mothers given support

During the period from August to December 2014, Breastfeeding Peer Supporters saw a total of 81 mothers on the postnatal ward.

Five peer supporters visited on 19 occasions. The chart below (Fig 1) shows how many mothers were seen during each of the 19 visits. Peer supporters are able to visit mothers at their bedside, volunteer for an average of 2 hours and see an average of 4 mothers per visit.

Fig 1 – Number of women seen per visit by LBPS over 19 visits from July-Dec 2014
Age of mothers

There was no data on age for 12 of the 81 mothers seen (9.7%). This missing data is omitted from the chart below showing the percentage of mothers seen from each age group where age was recorded. The average age of mothers seen by LBPS during their visits between July to Dec 2014 was 32 years. Only 2% of mums under 20 were seen during these visits and 26% of the mums seen were under 30 years.

Fig 2 – Percentage of mothers from each age group seen by LBPS during visits from July-Dec 2014.

The chart below (Fig 3) shows the comparison between the age of mothers giving birth in England & Wales, the age of mothers seen by LBPS on UHL postnatal ward and the percentage of each age group attending Lewisham Baby Cafes. More women in the 20-24 age category are being seen on the postnatal ward than in the cafes.
Fig 3 – Percentage of mothers from each age group seen by LBPS during visits between July-Dec 2014 compared with the percentage of mothers in each age group giving birth in England & Wales 2012 (ONS) and the percentage of each age group attending Lewisham Baby Cafes (Baby Café Report February 2015)
Ethnicity of Mothers

The chart below (Fig 4) shows the ethnicity of mothers seen by Breastfeeding Peer Supporters on the postnatal ward between July-Dec 2014.

Fig 4 – Percentage of mothers in each ethnic group seen by LBPS on the postnatal ward during visits between July-Dec 2014

The chart below show the comparison between the ethnicity of Lewisham’s population, the women attending Lewisham Baby Cafes between Oct – Dec 2014 and the women seen on the UHL Postnatal ward between July- Dec 2014.
We can see from the chart (Fig 5) that between the two services peer supporters are able to access women from a variety of ethnic groups. We can see that more women who describe themselves as ‘white’ access Baby Cafes than other ethnic groups, however on the postnatal ward more women from other ethnic groups are able to get breastfeeding support from a volunteer.
**Location of mothers**

The chart below (fig 6) shows the percentage of mothers from each Lewisham ward seen by Peer Supporters whilst volunteering on the postnatal ward. A large percentage of mothers did not enter their full postcode on the register or were from outside Lewisham (25%), however each ward is well represented. Peer supporters also give information to mothers on where to access support once they have left hospital (Baby Cafes/Breastfeeding groups).

![Location of mothers seen by Peer Supporters on UHL Post Natal ward](image)

**Fig 6 – Percentage of women from each Lewisham Ward seen by LBPS on the postnatal ward between July and Dec 2014.**

**Age of babies & Type of Support**

The majority of babies seen by Peer Supporters whilst on the postnatal ward were between 1-3 days old. Peer Supporters have found that the kind of support they are providing to mums on the ward is very different to that in the groups. Most notably mums are
receiving information about Positioning & Attachment, general breastfeeding info and hand expression, as opposed to a large percentage of mums attending the Baby Cafes to receive social support and help with a wide variety of problems.

As well as supporting mums and babies according to their individual needs, the key points that Breastfeeding Peer Supporters should be communicating to mothers on the postnatal ward are:

- Teaching hand expressing and why it’s important
- Feeding Cues – how to tell your baby is hungry
- Responsive feeding
- How to tell feeding is going well (wet & dirty nappies, content & happy baby, swallowing)
- Explain about colostrum and the size of a newborn’s stomach
- Talking about how often to expect the baby to feed.

We have also recently begun auditing the peer supporters using the UNICEF Health Visiting Staff Interview tool. The aim of this audit is to ensure that mothers are receiving consistent information and to understand where there may be a need for additional training. We will be looking to ensure that all volunteers on the postnatal ward are supporting the information given by midwives to ensure that mothers feel confident with hand expressing, how to tell that their babies are getting enough milk and the key principals of positioning and attachment. We are also keen that all mothers receive information about responsive feeding and creating a loving relationship with their baby.

The chart below (Figs 7) shows the type of support given to mums on the postnatal ward.
Fig 7 – Different types of support given to mothers on postnatal ward by LBPS during visits between July and December 2014.
Summary

Thanks to the addition of peer supporters on the postnatal ward at Lewisham hospital we can see a wider range of women in Lewisham receiving access to peer support than those dropping into the Baby Cafes. In the most recent Baby Café report from NCT (Feb 2015) only 4% of mums seen were under the age of 25, as opposed to 9% seen on the ward. Although the majority of women seen by peer supporters on the ward and at Baby Cafes describe themselves as ‘white’, across both services we are seeing women from a variety of other ethnic groups and therefore representing the population of Lewisham more closely.

Recommendations

- More volunteers are required on the ward. Encouraging more peer supporters to volunteer on the ward instead of the community would be beneficial.
- More structured support would ensure more women have access to volunteer support
- Specific training and regular supervision is required for those volunteering on the ward.
- Ensuring data collection is effective and easy to manage for volunteers.
- More volunteers with specialist skills (NICU support/twins, etc)
- Feedback from midwives, Maternity Support Workers, doctors, hospital staff, mothers, fathers and peer supporters would be valuable to assess the success of the project.

Thanks to Jill Moore for the ongoing support of the project, providing information and orientation for Breastfeeding Peer Supporters and leading supervision sessions.