**My Breastfeeding Story**

It never crossed my mind not to breastfeed. I had a very straightforward, complication-free pregnancy (my first), and a textbook homebirth at 39 weeks. So, naturally, breastfeeding would be straightforward too. The midwives made sure my daughter was latched and feeding before they left, and we were visited again that evening by another midwife who checked the feeding again. I remember her very clearly saying “she’ll probably sleep for her first night”….which of course she didn’t. It was exhausting!

The following day we were struggling to get her latched and it was really stressful. Of course, when the midwife came round, she latched no problem! Nevertheless, when we were on our own it just didn’t seem to be happening. It got to the point where I was squeezing colostrum onto a sterile teaspoon and feeding her that way. My husband and parents did their best to help, and my daughter’s weight always followed her line, but it still felt so difficult.

At about 3 weeks old, my daughter developed oral thrush. I was concerned that my GP didn’t give me any medication for myself, and phoned the National Breastfeeding Helpline (in the meantime I had been assigning myself symptoms from Doctor Google!). The counsellor I spoke to was very reassuring, and fortunately I never developed any symptoms myself.

By this point we had started using a dummy, as my daughter liked to suck and I didn’t know it’s not recommended so early if breastfeeding. Her latch got worse! I went to see a breastfeeding supporter at the local Children’s Centre, but my daughter slept the whole time. So we went cold turkey on the dummy for a bit and worked on the latch.

At 5 weeks I said to my mum, tearfully, “I still don’t feel like I’ve cracked this breastfeeding thing”. And then, the very next day, it clicked.

From then on it was plain sailing for a few months. Around 5 months, I made my next call to the NBH. My daughter was not feeding much during the day, but she sure was making up for it at night! The counsellor I spoke to was, again, really reassuring and I felt so relieved to speak to someone who understood what I was going through. That was when I knew I had to train to help other mums breastfeed.

I decided the ABM training suited me best, and completed the Mother Supporter module in November 2014. The following Autumn I did peer support training in my local community and now volunteer at a weekly drop-in while I complete my Breastfeeding Counsellor training. I hope to be finished by July 2016, and will then be taking calls on the NBH.

We’re expecting our second baby in October and I feel so much more ready for breastfeeding. My now 2-year-old is still going in the morning and at bedtime. I’m not sure how I feel about tandem feeding yet, but we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it!

Tamzin West