



Supporting your family from pregnancy to weaning

OXFORDSHIRE BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Annual Report 2021/22: Pandemic recovery



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Administrative information

Registered name Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support

Registered address 11 Brunstock Beck
Didcot
OX11 7YG

Email team@oxbreastfeedingsupport.org

Registered charity no. 1176948

Trustees

Dr Ilana Levene (Chair)
Louise Ellis ACA (Treasurer)
Dr Juliet Rayment (Strategy)
Sev Gunes-Lasnet (Fundraising)
Danielle Beaumont-Orr (Safeguarding & Team Liaison)
Dr Rain Irshad (appointed September 2021)
Khatsha Ali (appointed September 2021)
Anna Hodges (appointed September 2021)
Wanja Knighton (resigned May 2021)

Contracted clinical facilitators

Jayne Joyce (resigned April 2022)
Lisa Mansour
Charlotte Gilman
Julie Gallegos
Cathy Berry

Non-clinical contractors (management and administration)

Jayne Joyce (Project Lead; resigned April 2022)
Kawther Alfasi (Operations Lead; from April 2022 Interim Project Lead)
Catriana McKie (Digital Lead)
Charlotte Gilman (Fundraising)
Lisa Mansour (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; from April 2022 Interim clinical Lead)
Hannah Dingwall-Jones (Administration)

Introduction from the Chair of Trustees

Welcome to our 2021/2022 annual report!

Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support has been on an incredible journey of growth and momentum since we registered as a charity in 2016. This year we continue to grow in our influence, financial diversity and ambitions.

We were expecting the year to bring challenges of a return to hybrid and physical working after a year of predominantly virtual breastfeeding support, and we have taken up this challenge, continuing to learn how to use the best parts of old and new as you'll see in these pages.

We didn't expect a different challenge coming at the end of the year - that our wonderful Project Lead, Jayne Joyce, would be offered the chance of a lifetime to become one of a small team of international authors for a new edition of La Leche League International's flagship book *The Art of Breastfeeding*. We are so grateful for Jayne's unending and inspirational commitment to OBS, and our previous incarnation OBCG, and wish her all our congratulations and good wishes for her new position, which she started in the new financial year. Thanks so much to Kawther Alfasi for stepping up to become interim Project Lead and to Lisa Mansour as interim Clinical Lead after Jayne's departure. OBS is particularly proud that Cathy Berry, who has been a wonderful OBS volunteer peer supporter for a long time, was able to take over Jayne's clinical work, as she has worked hard to be certified as an Association of Breastfeeding Mothers (ABM) breastfeeding counsellor. Welcome also to Hannah Dingwall-Jones, who was initially appointed as a temporary administrator, taking over Kawther's previous role. They have all shown such hard work, good sense and commitment to OBS, ably supported by the rest of our wonderful team.

I took over as Chair of Trustees this year from Juliet Rayment, who remained my wing-woman, much relied upon as we navigated the year's challenges. Thanks to all my wonderful Trustees who started or finished the financial year with OBS - Louise, Juliet, Sev, Danielle, Wanja, Rain, Khatsha and Anna. A group of dynamic and passionate women who strive to help OBS deliver our charitable purpose in the most effective and efficient way (despite all having extremely busy lives and young children). As always we are on the lookout for new trustees as people move on, so do get in touch if you're interested in the role.

Here's to the next phase of the journey!

Ilana Levene, Chair of Trustees, April 2022

Ilana

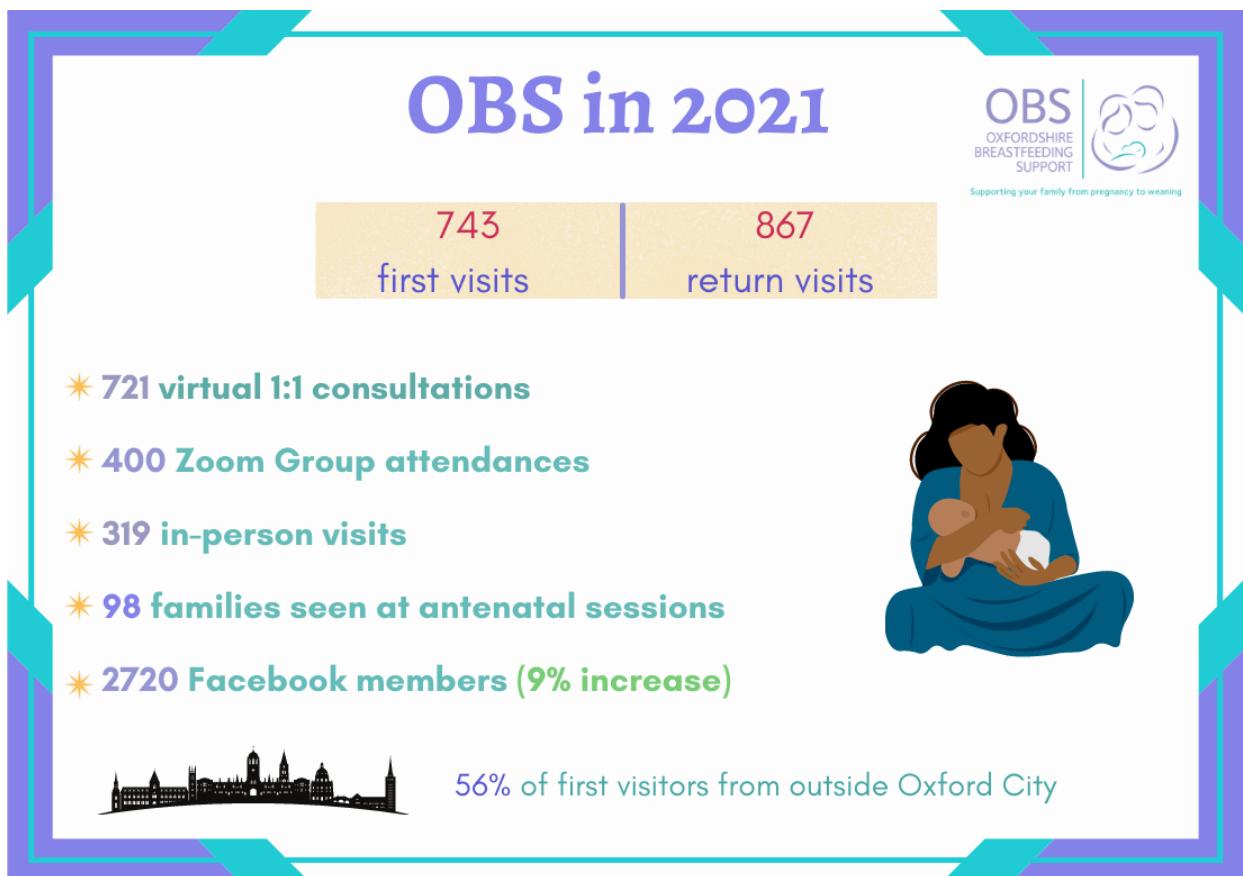


Aims and objectives

At OBS we believe that breastfeeding, and breastmilk, are deeply important. Our mission is to “increase breastfeeding, provision of breastmilk and responsive feeding for babies in Oxfordshire by:

- Educating and empowering Oxfordshire families to define and achieve their feeding goals.
- Taking a lead role in developing an integrated network of breastfeeding support throughout Oxfordshire, so that all parents can access skilled, timely, local breastfeeding help.”

Achievements and performance



"My daughter has just turned 1 and I'm so pleased to say that I managed to breastfeed her the whole of this time, despite the many challenges I found. Being a first time mum and doing it all during lockdown was very tough but it was made more manageable by knowing that help was out there and it was really great help and advice, never feeling that I had a stupid question."

Victoria, August 2021

In person sessions

Just over 16 months after we closed all our drop-in sessions and switched to 100% virtual working to prepare for the pandemic, we reopened our first in-person sessions. We trialled two per week in July - at Donnington and Didcot - and opened two more in September, in Barton and Kidlington. The venues were chosen based on our 2021 Impact Assessment, which stressed accessibility, parking and good transport links as key factors for our service users.



We are pleased to continue our partnership with Didcot Baby Monday, while our session at Barton Neighbourhood Centre runs alongside a lively toddler group, which provides a welcoming social space for families.

It felt both deeply familiar and a little strange to be back in the room with parents again. Masks were required and capacity was limited, yet the special magic of being in the room and connecting families together can still work. It was wonderful to see our volunteer peer supporters in action, listening and affirming with their characteristic empathy, and to have student and healthcare observers at our sessions once again. Our new booking system - [Calendly](#) - has also enhanced the quality of our service, enabling families to describe their feeding issue and to request any needed adjustments, such as privacy screens, a quieter environment, pronouns or other words they would like us to use.



Cathy, OBS volunteer and cover facilitator, supporting families at Donnington Doorstep

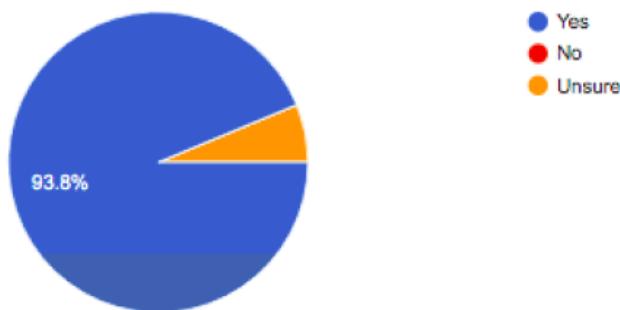
"I imagine people probably don't get in contact so much unless there is something wrong so I wanted to make sure you know how helpful you are to women and their babies. I don't want to sound dramatic but you honestly changed my life! You literally had the biggest impact on my life and mood over and above all of the other services I have experienced since becoming pregnant so I am so grateful."

Katherine, May 2021

In October we surveyed service users to find out what they thought of our new-look, bookable in-person sessions. We sent our survey by email to every family who had attended an in-person session since we restarted them on July 2nd. **111** surveys were sent out. **32** responses were returned. **80%** of attendees said our service fully or partially helped resolve their feeding problem .

Would you recommend OBS in-person sessions to a family member or friend who needs help with feeding?

32 responses



We also received constructive feedback on ways in which we could improve our service. Based on this, we made a number of modifications:

- Splitting sessions into two timed 1-hour slots, and booking half the families separately for each hour
- More comfortable seating at Kidlington
- A longer session at Donnington Doorstep
- More focus on encouraging the social dimension of our sessions



Virtual 1:1 consultations

The biggest learning and innovation from virtual working is how effective Zoom consultations can be. We love how they enable us to give 1:1 time to families, and to increase access to families who would struggle to come in person due to distance, mobility, transport, caring responsibilities and other barriers. We have started to offer some consultations at the weekends/in evenings, which enables women to attend with their partner for language and emotional support. Online consultations also provide us with much-needed flexibility and resilience: sessions that are cancelled for any reasons, such as sickness or Covid-19 absences, can be converted to 1:1 slots. Fortunately, we have only had to do this a handful of times.



"Every time I wanted to give up, I talked to Lisa. It really helped that I always got a response within hours of sending in a request for one-on-one support. Talking to Lisa gave me goals and made me focus on trying new things, instead of how miserable I was. And then, a little after eight weeks, I woke up one day to realise that breastfeeding no longer hurt at all. It was definitely gradual, but I was surprised to find that none of my feeding sessions were painful anymore. I could look at my daughter and enjoy this time with her."

Majd, August 2021

"I just wanted to say a huge THANK YOU to Jane Joyce for her help last week. She spent time with me, my son Otis and his nanny Olivia to help us work out a plan for my return to work as Otis was refusing to take a bottle. Jayne was so kind and helpful and totally put my mind at ease. It was my first day in the office today and following Jayne's advice I breastfed right up to the last minute and was totally chilled....I have Jayne to thank for such a peaceful start to the next phase of my feeding journey with Otis. Thank you!"

Lucy Dixon, December 2021



OBS Zoom Group

Our OBS Zoom Group changed focus, in response to the reopening of in-person sessions and 15 months of experimenting to find out “what works” at each stage of the pandemic. The frequency of OBS Group reduced from weekly to fortnightly last summer, after the easing of Covid restrictions.

From September it has run monthly, offering two parallel learning and discussion groups on “hot topics” related to breastfeeding, such as normal infant sleep, returning to work and starting complementary foods. We no longer offer feeding support within the group; this need can be met more effectively via in-person sessions and virtual consultations. This has reduced the level of facilitator input, diverting costs to providing more 1:1 consultations. Each session is co-led by a facilitator and our trusted, longstanding volunteer health visitor (and Holistic Sleep Coach) Vanessa Campion.

Group Breakout Rooms		
Thursdays 12:30pm - 1:30pm		
Date	Topic 1	Topic 2
Oct 21st	Normal newborn sleep	Return to work - with Deepa Santhosh
Nov 18th	Sleep 6-12 months	The unhappy breastfed baby - crying, allergy, reflux
Dec 16th	Normal newborn sleep	Starting complementary foods

Register at calendly.com/oxbreastfeeding
Donate to OBS at <https://localiving.org/donation/obs>
Registered Charity 1176930



Welcome to this
OBS Group session on
Starting
Complementary Foods



We have produced presentations for each OBS group topic, which lends these sessions consistency, and the ability to be delivered by new facilitators in future.

“Dear Team! I wish to thank you for the amazing sesion today. It was really helpful and I have heard so many great information. I hope I will be able to attend on another great session soon.”

Eva, March 2022

Antenatal breastfeeding education sessions

We have continued to offer monthly antenatal education sessions on Zoom. Attendance figures are higher than pre-pandemic levels: sessions take place in the daytime, and we frequently see people attending from their workplaces, including partners and other supporters. We also offer bespoke antenatal consultations for mothers for service users with previous feeding trauma and/or risk factors for complex feeding problems.

Antenatal service users are invited to join our private Facebook group, and are also welcome to attend our in-person sessions to chat with facilitators, volunteers and other families.

"I found the resources that were signposted really helpful. It was also useful to get to know the people delivering the session so that when I had to come back for support immediately after having the baby I felt much more confident to speak to the facilitators even though I was stressed and exhausted."

OBS service user, March 2022

Facebook

Our private, closely-moderated Facebook group is a supportive, friendly environment in which mothers can seek feeding support, from other parents, OBS peer supporters and our specialist facilitator team. We are continuing to experiment with its format, channelling it as an avenue for social connectedness between families as well as for providing evidence-based information.

We have introduced regular ‘buddy thread’ Facebook posts, in which we invite members to *‘post connection requests below and link up by PM’*. We have seen the following connections made:

- Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, Hungarian & French speakers
- Two-mum families
- Chatting about returning to work
- Breastfeeding toddlers & sleep

With the support of our volunteers, we also held a Facebook Live Q&A in May 2021 on breastfeeding and the Covid-19 vaccine. Our volunteers included a consultant midwife and consultant doctor.

Other social media platforms have helped us to stay engaged with our service users and supporters.

Facebook Live Q&A Breastfeeding & Covid Vaccination



Mon 31 May
8:30-9pm
On our private
group

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Regular social media posting on Facebook and Twitter.



Increased presence on Instagram

Sharing video clips of 'what to expect' at our sessions

Emails to our list

OBS Volunteers

We have continued to encourage growth in the skillsets of our existing volunteers, and to successfully train new volunteer peer supporters via the ABM Peer Supporter course. Volunteers are integral to our work at every level: they are a friendly, welcoming face at our sessions, providing support and reassurance, and normalising infant behaviour. Their scope is diverse: some regularly commit to in-person sessions; others respond to queries and concerns with evidence-based information on Facebook, or provide tech support during our busy online Zoom groups.

"I really enjoy being part of the support system that OBS offers to families wherever they are on their breastfeeding journey. I love meeting the different families and find that my experience and knowledge comes in useful at times. Not only is it great to see how families benefit from the assistance and encouragement they get from OBS but I too benefit from being part of a friendly and kind community of volunteers and facilitators of the OBS team."

Vanessa, Volunteer Health Visitor



Our peer supporters have given:

- > 400 hours to online and in-person groups
- > 2000 hours to the Facebook group

- We have successfully inducted 7 new volunteers (6 ABM-trained peer supporters, 1 student midwife)
- 1 of our teenage FNP (Family Nurse Partnership) clients completed the ABM course
- 1 of our Peer Supporters is working at OEH as a maternity support worker
- 1 Peer Supporter is training as a Breastfeeding Counsellor
- 2 of our peer supporters - Meg and Cathy - became Breastfeeding Counsellors, and the latter started working as an OBS cover facilitator
- Sam, Peer Supporter, continues to operate our important low-cost pump loan service. We loaned 63 times in the year 2021-22.
- Vanessa, our volunteer health visitor, supported us in producing [information leaflets on normal infant sleep](#).



**Babies often start
waking more at
night around
4 months.
What's changed?**

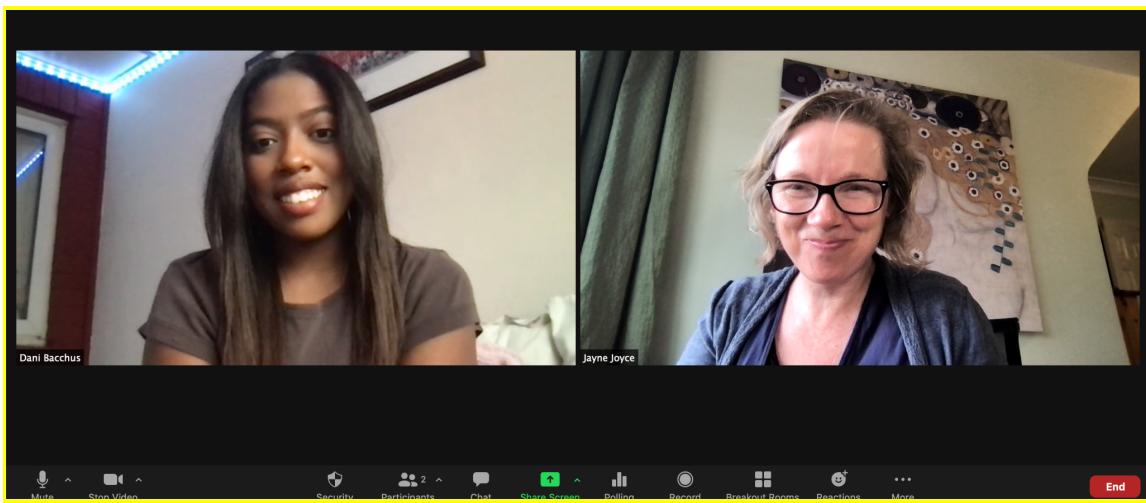


See our leaflet
Sleep At 4 Months
oxbreastfeedingsupport.org

Registered Charity 1176948

For students and health professionals

We are delighted to have restarted observations for students and healthcare professionals at our in-person sessions, enabling them to increase their breastfeeding knowledge and competences. We also offered observations of our online Zoom groups, antenatal sessions and online 1:1 consultations. Observers can book to observe our in-person sessions via Calendly, and sign up to a WhatsApp group to be notified of last-minute, online observation opportunities.



Dani B, student midwife, ready to observe a 1:1 consultation

"Observing OBS has been so useful as a student midwife, especially during the pandemic. The team have provided so many opportunities for us to observe, which has been great for increasing knowledge and skills. OBS is a truly amazing service that Oxford is very lucky to have! I will continue to recommend this service to women I care for."

Amy, 3rd year student midwife, Oxford Brookes University

Other opportunities offered for the development of breastfeeding support skills included:

- 2 hours of training for GP trainees
- 1 whole day skills teaching and 1 whole day skills assessment for student midwives
- 2 sessions jointly for Brookes midwifery students & the medical school, on normal birth and infant feeding: a recently launched initiative. A 3rd one takes place in April.
- Providing consultations for and/or sharing resources with staff from a number of healthcare providers and voluntary organisations.



We presented our service to the HV service practitioners' Breakfast Club and the HV Teen Champions meeting, which was well-attended by Health Visitors from all over Oxfordshire. We have continued to participate in the Countywide Breastfeeding Strategy Group, which revised the Oxfordshire guidelines on faltering growth.

Sharing best practices is critical to continuous improvement, both of our own services and those with which we collaborate. In the preceding year...



Widening access

We have taken incremental but important steps towards making adjustments for service users with specific accessibility needs, and ensuring that everyone feels supported at our sessions. In response to our learning from the '[Peer to Peer Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Series](#)', facilitated by the Oxford Hub, we created a 'back door' to our booking systems, inviting people to give us their phone number for a callback from the Operations team if they need help with making a booking. Over the phone, we can also fill in our forms with families if necessary.

We have purchased a privacy screen and obtained access to private feeding spaces at our in-person sessions, in order to meet the needs of mothers who feel uncomfortable feeding in front of other people, and the needs of those who benefit from minimal background noise in their sensory environment.



Following feedback from service users on how their own mothers and female relatives served as their feeding champions, we have adapted our messaging to make it clear that all feeding supporters are welcome at our sessions.



Deepa Santhosh, current Masters in Midwifery student and former infant feeding lead for an NHS trust, began working with our team as a Guest Facilitator at some OBS Zoom Group sessions and provided her first OBS 1:1 Zoom consultation with a family in Hindi. We look forward to working with her more closely in the coming year, and to reaching diverse communities through her skills, experience, and proficiency in five languages.

OBS co-sponsored Black Breastfeeding Week 2021 in August. We also contacted two of Oxford's largest majority Black churches - Word Foundation Christian Ministries and New Life Covenant Church - who are happy to share information about our services with families in their community.

Family Nurse Partnership

Our work with Family Nurse Partnership has expanded, offering joint virtual antenatal conversations and flexible postnatal feeding support to teenage mothers via text, WhatsApp, and virtual consultations. **Over the last year, we saw 27 new FNP clients, compared to 15 in the preceding 12 months.** We also arranged our first home visit with an FNP nurse, and offered support via Facebook PM for a young mother with mental health and domestic abuse issues with social care involvement.

We love supporting our young and teenage mums with feeding!

"I am thankful for OBS for helping me breastfeed for as long as I have. Without them I would not have overcome any hurdles I have faced."

- Amy, OBS service user

Registered Charity 1176948

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SUPPORT

Supporting research

We have continued to support good research by disseminating surveys online, including research by an Oxford Brookes Midwifery students' Master's dissertation on baby sleep location, developed in response to a suggestion from the OBS team. Our volunteers also participated in a focus group with a local obstetrician who is designing a research project on inequality in health outcomes for women after birth.

We directly supported Kath Townsend, MSc student in Public Health with UWE Bristol, with her research on 'Mothers' perceptions of video calls for breastfeeding support during the Covid-19 pandemic'.

All study participants were recruited from our service users.

In December 2021, Kath's findings revealed a generally very high level of satisfaction with video consultations.

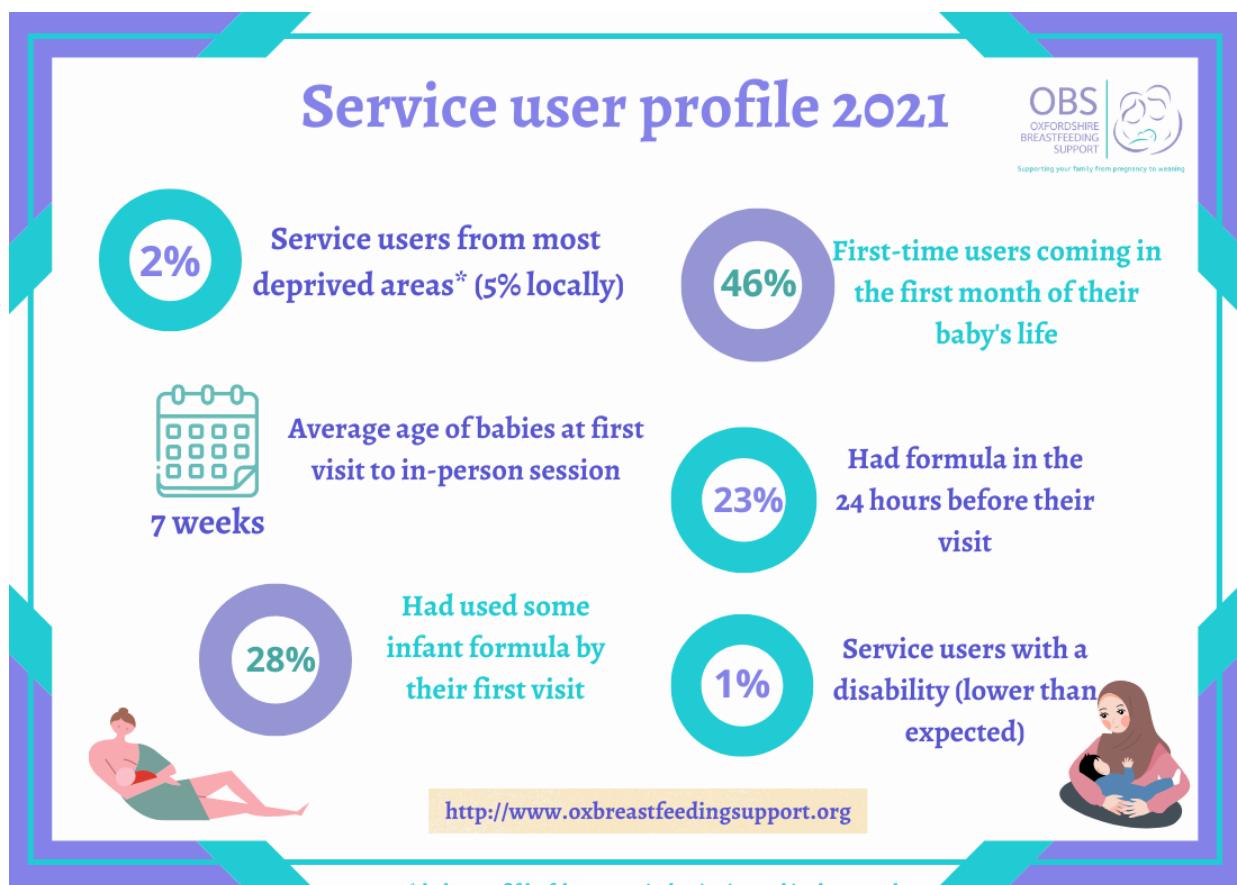


OBS in the news



In August, our Project Lead was interviewed on local radio station Jack FM 11.08.21 talking about [research that is being done on expressing milk for premature babies](#) (a project that is led by our Chair Ilana at the University of Oxford).

All about our service users



Ethnicity of first visitors 2021

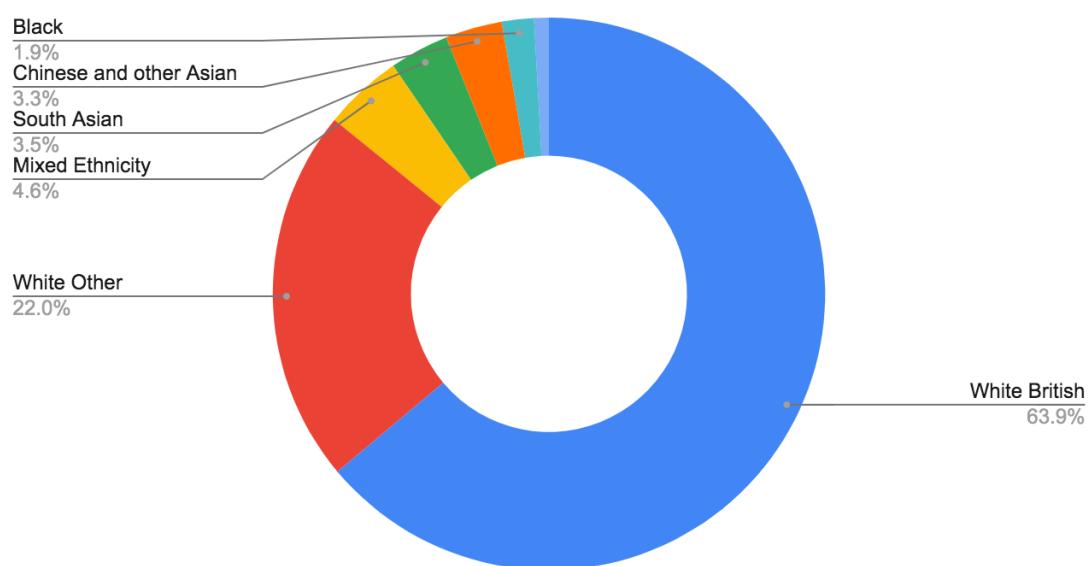


Figure 2: Ethnicity of first time visitors 2021

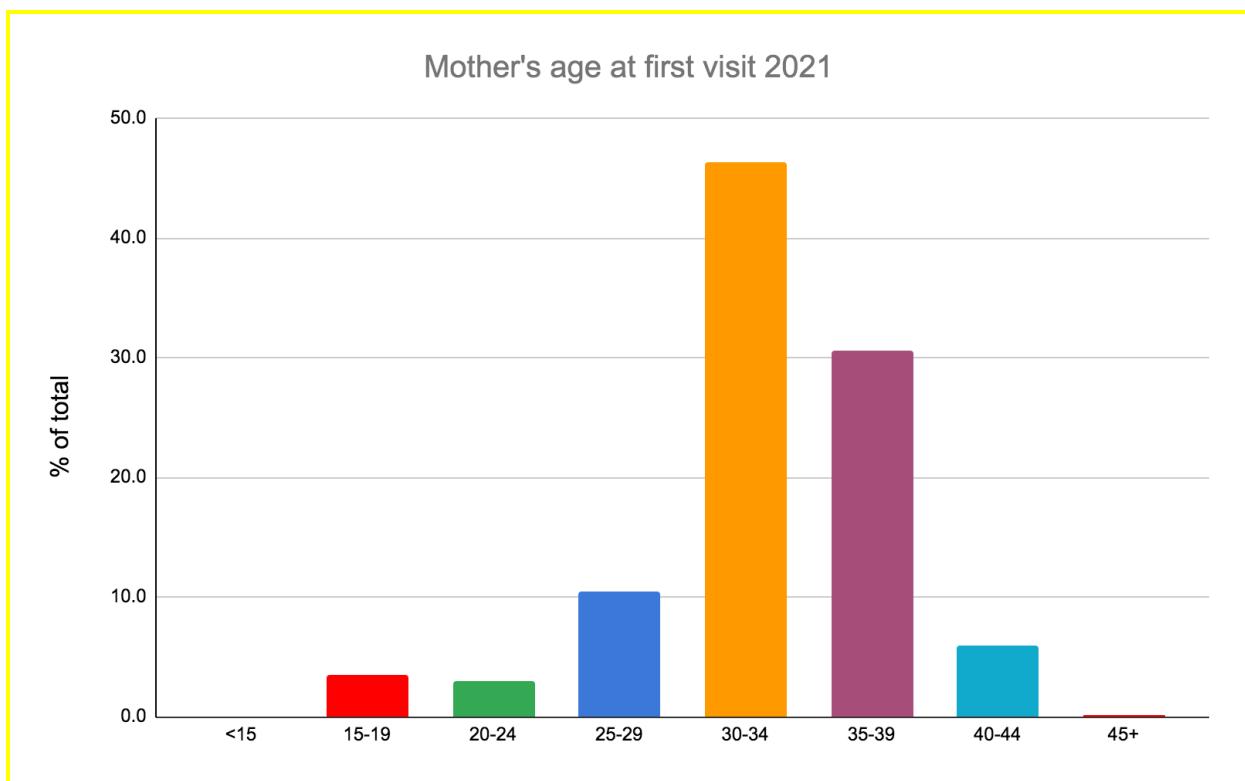


Figure 3: Age of first visitors 2021

We are seeing a dramatic increase in provision of breastfeeding support to teenage mothers through our collaboration with the Family Nurse Partnership.

'I feel very privileged to be working with our young service users. They are more difficult to access and don't arrive through our normal channels so we have made this work possible by developing a strong working relationship with the Oxfordshire Family Nurse Partnership. We work flexibly with clients depending on their needs, offering support through WhatsApp, home visits, facebook, phone calls, zoom, and at our in-person sessions. Working closely with health professionals and offering flexible support to these more vulnerable clients has meant that we have been able to give them feeding support that they deserve.'

Charlotte Gilman, OBS Facilitator and FNP lead

People came to see us for many reasons: most commonly pain, infant behaviour and antenatal preparation. 11% of people came to us for help with sleep, primarily by attending one of our Zoom groups, which is similar to last year (12%). The number of families with suspected tongue tie was the same as last year (6%).

Financial report

Following on from 2019/2020 when we were focusing on obtaining emergency funding to enable us to redesign our service provision to operate solely online, the 2021/22 financial year saw OBS move back to a more stable financial footing.

Our Lottery grant entered the third year of funding, reducing to £29k (2019/20 £35k) as planned. This income was used primarily to fund Didcot and Barton sessions. The planned expenditure on a new location, Banbury, was reallocated to providing ongoing 1:1 virtual and group support as we transitioned to running a sustainable, hybrid model of support.

In the next financial year the element of our income provided by the Lottery grant will reduce further. We are fortunate to receive a significant level of donor income, but will seek to build other sources of grant funding in order to supplement this. The implementation of an employment structure and further work on equity and diversity will mean that significant levels of expenditure will be incurred in the next financial year, to ensure an appropriate structure for the organisation as it grows in the future.

[View the full 2021/22 accounts on our website.](#)

During 2021/22 a deficit of £642 was recorded (2020/21 surplus £9,705) due to a lower level of grant income being received than in the previous year. This is in line with our budgeted expectations for the year, where we aimed to run at a break even position.

Income for the year was £74,429 (2020/21 £88,213).

Included in this figure is £29k of Lottery grant funding and £30k of donation income. This donation income was unrestricted and we were able to use this funding to meet the running costs of our core face to face sessions and to contribute towards the management overheads of running the organisation.

Expenses during the year were £75,071 (prior year £78,506).

In the prior year £15k was spent on COVID response and during 2021/22 this reduced to £5k as the set up costs for virtual sessions had already been incurred. Expenditure during 2021/22 on project management time was higher than in the prior year, as the organisation is investing in the recruitment of new team members and trustees, and in increasing and diversifying the number of and type of sessions provided, from 1:1 virtual support and group Zoom presentations, to work with other service users such as the FNP.

Other running costs which relate to insurance, fees and consumables have remained broadly in line with the prior year.

A [reserves policy](#) has been agreed by the Trustees and is reviewed annually to ensure that the appropriate levels of reserves are maintained and OBS is able to continue to fund its activities without unnecessary disruption.

Donors

- Two anonymous, long standing, individual donors
- Matched payroll giving scheme
- Lottery funding: £29,000
- OCF COVID response £4,590
- The Funding Network £2,900
- Oxford City Council - £130 towards the provision of tablets and all our other generous donors and supporters

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "L Ellis".

Louise Ellis, ACA, OBS Treasurer

Risk management

A major risk in the next financial year centres on the deterioration of the economic health of the UK and the rise in the cost of living, which could impact OBS' ability to fundraise. There is a risk that our generous individual donors will be less able to support us, which could lead to a decline in our financial reserves. As our financial turnover grows there is also a risk that we will not be able to maintain the same level of fundraising, and that our management staff will exceed their capacity. To mitigate these risks, we have ambitions to hire a dedicated fundraiser in 2022/2023 to ensure that our increased financial reach is sustainable and to help us achieve even more of our strategic plans.

As our service grows there is a risk that we will have insufficient volunteers to meet service needs. Our volunteer base is predominantly made up of women with young children, who are often also working professionally. As a result, there is a continued risk of burnout and rapid turnover because of the multiple demands our volunteers face in their personal and professional lives. We aim to mitigate this risk by expanding our volunteering programme, and recruiting general volunteers who can support us with the social, logistical and administrative dimensions of running in-person sessions.

The departure of our Project Lead presents new challenges - and in turn, opportunities - to build the capacity of our management team, to develop new, sustainable processes and ways of working, and to maintain a strong and cohesive organisational culture.

Previously identified risks such as safeguarding incidents remain on our radar. Our safeguarding policy is reviewed annually, and all staff and volunteers are trained in safeguarding, and provided with regular supervision and support. As our sessions remain bookable-only for the time, we are also aware that we may be discussing more complex breastfeeding cases, and seeing more babies with medical problems. We need to ensure that we are identifying these and referring them appropriately. We will continue to develop relationships with local Health Visiting teams and GPs in order to link up care in more complex cases.

Looking towards 2022-23

The next financial year will bring changes in our organisational structures as we take on the responsibilities of an employer rather than contracting with self-employed staff. OBS

recognises that case law has been changing with reference to self-employed people, to give more protection to those working in the gig economy. Therefore we need to ensure our team has the employment rights they are entitled to. We will be investing in HR support and running consultations to balance the needs of our team and the financial resources of the charity.

The coming year also brings with it the first open recruitment round for clinical facilitators that OBS has ever run, bringing our commitment to equal opportunities to the fore. With equity in mind we have been integrating various initiatives into our recruitment policy, such as automatic interviews for people with disabilities who fulfil essential criteria and blinded application forms.

In 2022/2023 we will be working towards securing a grant specifically for an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (E, D & I) officer. This is because we know that E, D & I needs to be the foundation for all that we do. We won't succeed in making OBS welcoming to all and diverse in its reach unless we invest significant resources into finding out the needs of the whole community and working to deliver, hopefully collaboratively, on those needs.

With all these demands and ambitions, we also need to focus on valuing our team and volunteers, who have always delivered our core services so sensitively and caringly. They have responded to every challenge the last few years has thrown at us, despite stress and hardship, and we wouldn't be here without them.

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature(s)



Full name(s) Ilana Levene

Position: Chair of Trustees