



OXFORDSHIRE BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Annual Report 2020/21: Pandemic response



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Administrative information

Registered name Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support

Registered address 21 Complins Close, Oxford, OX2 6PZ

Email team@oxbreastfeedingsupport.org

Registered charity no. 1176948

Trustees

Dr Juliet Rayment (Chair of trustees)

Dr Ilana Levene (Deputy Chair of trustees)

Louise Ellis ACA (Treasurer)

Elizabeth Horwell

Wanja Knighton

Sev Gunes-Lasnet

Danielle Beaumont-Orr (Secretary)

Contracted facilitators

Jayne Joyce (Project Lead)

Lisa Mansour

Charlotte Gilman

Catriana McKie

Julie Gallegos

Emily Tammam

Introduction from the Chair of Trustees



As for everyone, 2020 did not turn out how we expected. We started 2020 celebrating our new grant from the National Lottery Community Fund and then faced a pandemic which drastically disrupted the support available to new mothers.

We are tremendously proud of the way we have been able to completely transform our operations, our care model and our ways of working. As a consequence we have been able to continue delivering breastfeeding support to even more of the county than we did before the pandemic. We have achieved all this without once meeting face to face!

In response to the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in the Summer, we kickstarted our action to improve support for *all* families, beyond our original plan for 2020 to help make the biggest impact on supporting our communities during the pandemic and into the future.

This year we welcomed Danielle Beaumont-Orr as a Trustee and Kawther Alfasi as our Operations Lead. We are looking forward to reopening our face to face services during 2021. This is an exciting time for OBS - we have embraced many aspects of our new way of working and the next year offers us a chance to reassess how and where we work, to offer families in Oxfordshire the support they need.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliet Rayment".

Juliet Rayment, Chair of Trustees, April 2021

Aims and objectives

OBS aims 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.

The services we delivered prior to the Covid-19 pandemic to achieve this mission are listed [here](#).

Achievements and performance

Drop-in breastfeeding support sessions: 2020 Plan B!

At the start of 2020, we had big plans for developing new partnerships, opportunities to engage new communities and to open new face to face sessions. Then at the start of March we quickly embarked on '2020 Plan B' because of the Covid-19 pandemic. On March 16th we suspended all our face-to-face work and diverted all funding from our six drop-in sessions to 1:1 consultations by Zoom or telephone.

*"During lockdown, at home, I was able to access 1:1 support from a smiling OBS face. She gave me encouragement that I was doing the right things, along with expert advice, tips and reassurance that it *would* get better. The true value is that nearly 6 months later, I still see that morning's zoom call as a turning point in our feeding journey. It did get better." (Rebecca, Sept 2020)*



Supporting your family from pregnancy to weaning

OBS in 2020

850 online consultations

356 Zoom Group attendances

955 new service users

900 more Facebook members

14% more families

38% more visits

than 2019



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We were delighted to partner with Didcot Baby Monday and Botley Bridges to offer support to 198 people at their new Zoom groups. Then in June 2020, we launched our own **OBS Zoom Group** and we have been very pleased at the positive response. Our group combines skilled feeding support with social support rooms hosted by volunteers, and breakout rooms on topics such as sleep and complementary foods. 96% of users who responded to our 2021 Impact Survey felt welcome at the online group.

“Just wanted to thank the team for organizing the Sleep session today. Found it extremely helpful and highly recommend it to all mummies!”



Botley Bridges
Supporting local families

(Yasmine El Masri, March 2021)

Virtual breastfeeding support group

New



New

Thursdays ★ 12:30 - 1:30pm on Zoom

OBS
OXFORDSHIRE
BREASTFEEDING
SUPPORT

★ **OBS Group** ★

Register at bit.ly/OBSgroup

Registered Charity 1176948



Antenatal breastfeeding education sessions

OBS
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SUPPORT

Supporting your family from pregnancy to weaning

**150 families came
to our online
antenatal groups**



**1/3 came back
after having their
baby**



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A closed, closely moderated Facebook breastfeeding support group

Our Facebook group increased rapidly in size and activity from the start of the pandemic, from 1600 members to 2500.

We received additional funding to support the rapid increase in our online workload. Our peer supporter volunteers stepped up to take more responsibility on Facebook, including producing information threads about issues such as sleep.

Jayne, Project Lead, wrote an [article](#) for the AIMS (Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services) magazine about supporting breastfeeding on Facebook.

94% of users who responded to our 2021 Impact Survey found the Facebook group helpful. They found searching special information threads and previous posts particularly useful. The Facebook group is a deep vein of expertise through experience for anyone to use.

“The Facebook group bolstered my mental health as a sometimes pretty scared first time mum. Just being able to scroll through other peoples’ posts and replies made me aware, at any time of day or night, that I was not alone”. (Jozie, Facebook group member, Sept 2020)

Other social media platforms have helped us to stay engaged with our service users throughout the pandemic.



Facebook Live broadcasts (April to August)

Facebook “Happy Hours”.

Live Q&As incorporating our volunteers.



Regular social media posting on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter,

Emails to our list



A podcast for [Black Breastfeeding Week](#) (August 2020), and more to mark Disability History Month.

Low-cost loan of breast pumps

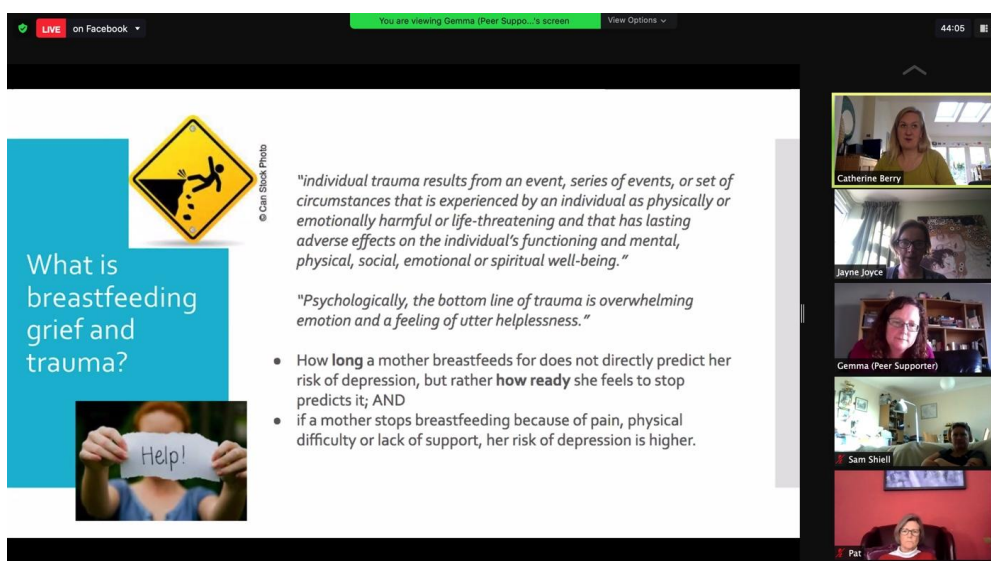


We continued our breast pump loan service, run by volunteer Sam Sheill, throughout the pandemic. We loaned 56 times in the year 2020-21, using some of our Lottery funding to increase our stock of pumps in order to meet the new demand.



Peer supporter training

Our peer supporters have taken on more roles and responsibilities since the start of 2020, helping to shape and improve our services. Online meetings have allowed them to connect with each other in a way that wasn't always feasible when volunteering at different drop in sessions. The peer supporters have also taken opportunities in their termly supervision sessions to develop each others' skills, and knowledge of areas like breastfeeding grief and trauma.



OBS peer supporters Cathy & Gemma leading a Zoom training session for our volunteers, Dec 2020

Three new peer supporters, plus two midwives, an IBCLC/neonatal nurse, have joined our volunteers this year and all have been involved in Facebook and the OBS Group.

"All the peer supporters have such helpful, positive, encouraging, respectful responses."
(Facebook group member)

Madi, a graduate student, is our first volunteer working beyond direct breastfeeding support and she now helps us with social media.

Skills development for volunteers & health professionals



The infographic features the OBS logo (Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support) with the tagline 'Supporting your family from pregnancy to weaning' and a graphic of three raised hands in purple and teal. The main title is 'OBS' volunteers in 2020'. Below this, it lists: 'Our peer supporters have given: > 300 hours to online groups > 2500 hours to the Facebook group.' It also states: 'Other volunteers have given over 300 hours to OBS too.' The website 'www.oxbreastfeedingsupport.org' and 'Registered charity 1176948' are listed at the bottom right.

OBS' volunteers in 2020

Our peer supporters have given:

- > **300 hours to online groups**
- > **2500 hours to the Facebook group.**

Other volunteers have given over 300 hours to OBS too.

www.oxbreastfeedingsupport.org
Registered charity 1176948

Several of our peer supporters are extending their breastfeeding support skills through additional training through the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers and La Leche League. We are delighted that one of our peer supporters has taken on a new paid role as a Maternity Support Worker.

Observation placements

Our relationships with local universities and health visitors have grown during this year. Virtual working has provided many more opportunities for student midwives to observe our practice and observations have increased a third from the previous year. OBS facilitators were also invited to speak at two virtual midwifery feeding study days at Oxford Brookes University.

Health Visiting service staff have observed in several different settings and consulted OBS facilitators on issues such feeding beyond a year and how to identify online resources for parents with specific needs.

Coordination and advocacy at a strategic level

OBS reconvened the Oxfordshire Countywide Breastfeeding Strategy group and has initiated a revision of the joint 2016 guideline on faltering growth. OBS has brought a GP service user onto the strategy group, which is a major new strength.

We have worked with Abingdon Baby Cafe to support their transition to online working - for example supporting them to set up their own Zoom group, with production of publicity materials, creating a basic online data collection system and training their team to use it.

As a key partner in Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance, OBS was very pleased to hear about the progress that Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Trust have made towards both Maternity and Neonatal Stage 3 accreditation.

OBS has also recruited milk donors for the OUH milk bank, collected images and videos for a maternity infant feeding team video project and attended the Oxfordshire Children & Young People's Forum.

Widening access to breastfeeding support

Supporting Black communities

In response to calls from the Black Lives Matter movement to act on disparities in health outcomes for Black families, we have brought forward much of the work we had planned for the next few years to improve access to our services for Black families and others who might otherwise feel OBS was not for them.

As an urgent response, we contacted all local healthcare professionals encouraging proactive, early referral to feeding support for families experiencing racism. We have worked to further increase the diversity of our facilitators, and think carefully about the language and images we use in our social media and our website.

Our first [Black Breastfeeding Week campaign](#) in August saw us platform stories from four local breastfeeding mothers



OBS facilitator Lisa Mansour has taken on the role of OBS Equality, Diversion & Inclusion Lead and she wrote about her [personal journey to becoming a Lactation Consultant](#)

“...sometimes with nothing more than bold determination (I was a single mother, had no higher education, earned a low wage and am the daughter of an exiled refugee Egyptian father). The system itself is very much skewed towards those with more money and education than I had.”

Black Breastfeeding Week also saw the production of our first [OBS podcast](#) by Trustees Wanja Knighton and Juliet Rayment. We followed that up with a [Disability History Month campaign](#) later in 2020.

Our new EDI Working Group includes service users and professionals representing a range of underserved communities including parents with disabilities, neurodiverse parents, and Muslim women. Group member Dr Marie Tidball made some short videos for our new [YouTube channel](#) about her experience of breastfeeding as a parent with physical disabilities. This working group has suggested key areas to focus on, including representation (in terms of facilitators, volunteers and images) and disability supportive technology.

They were particularly excited to hear that OBS trustees Wanja Knighton and Ilana Levene have helped to found a national collaboration called Spectrum, which is working to set up an open access library of images of the lactating breast in diverse skin tones.



The Family Nurse Partnership

One of the most exciting consequences of the pandemic has been a new programme of work with young parents who are supported by Family Nurse Partnership. We have worked with 7 FNP families so far, initially for an antenatal consultation, usually with

their nurses. We then provide flexible postnatal support via WhatsApp, Zoom etc. We are expecting this work to expand during 2021-2.

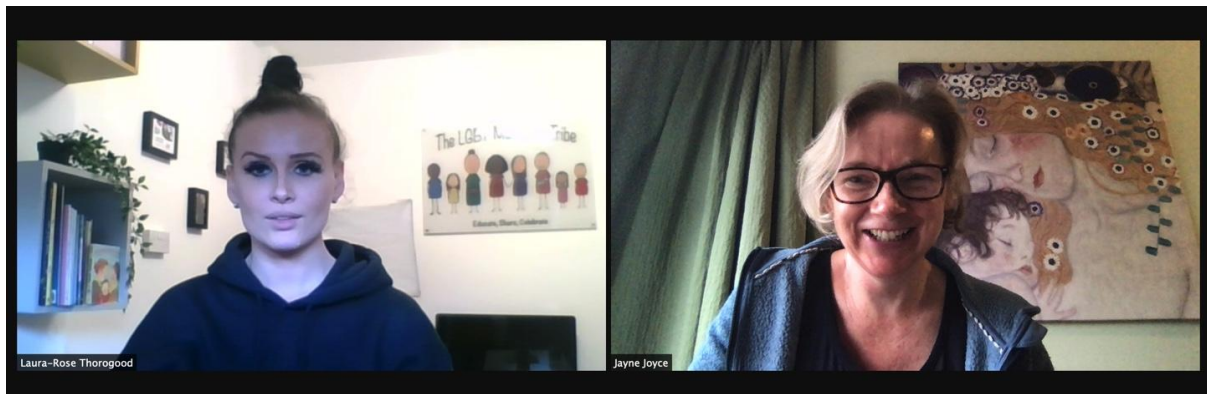
“With help from OBS and Charlotte I have been able to breastfeed [my son], I have been supported fully and will continue to breastfeed. An amazing charity helping me with something beautiful.” (FNP service user, Dec 2020)

“I just wanted to say thank you for such a lovely call! [My client] felt so relaxed with you and she said she feels so much more confident now she knows how to ask for help when the baby comes. We really appreciate the work your team does”.
(FNP nurse, June 2020)

We have continued to use [Language Line](#) and have found other flexible solutions for service users’ communication needs, for example connecting families with breastfeeding counsellors who speak their first language, and providing email support for a deaf parent who doesn’t use BSL.

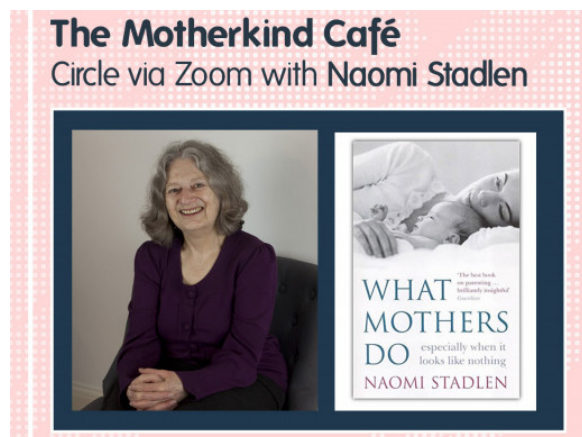
LGBT Service Users

OBS service users from the **LGBT community** introduced OBS to [The LGBT Mummies’ Tribe](#), a grassroots organisation that supports LGBT parents and advocates for better care from health professionals and other services. We introduced LGBTMT to [La Leche League GB](#) who are going to co-produce resources on feeding for LGBT families.



Project Lead Jayne meeting with Laura-Rose Thoroughgood, founder of LGBT Mummies Tribe, Nov 2020

The MotherKind Cafe



This year we connected [MotherKind](#) postnatal mental health support group with bestselling author and psychotherapist (and breastfeeding counsellor) Naomi Stadlen. Naomi led an online [discussion](#) for MotherKind. OBS continued to support the MotherKind team with strategy after they secured their first grant funding.

Our partnership has restarted in 2021 with two joint MotherKind/OBS virtual sessions

for families on “feeding grief and loss”. This is a topic on which our facilitators and volunteers have received training during this year and we plan to do more joint sessions with MotherKind.

“It has been a really positive connection, and one that I hope has benefitted mothers to feel less isolated, and stigmatised for seeking support with their mental health after having a baby”. (Emily, Coordinator, MotherKind Cafe)

Supporting research

We have continued to support good research by disseminating surveys online. A Midwifery Masters student at Oxford Brookes University has carried out a project on infant sleep location, which was originally suggested by one of our facilitator team.

All about our service users

Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen an increase in the number of families coming to us and from a far greater area. OBS service users now come from across the county (Figure 1) and unlike in previous years, only 44% of users came from Oxford city this year, a large drop from 84% in 2019.

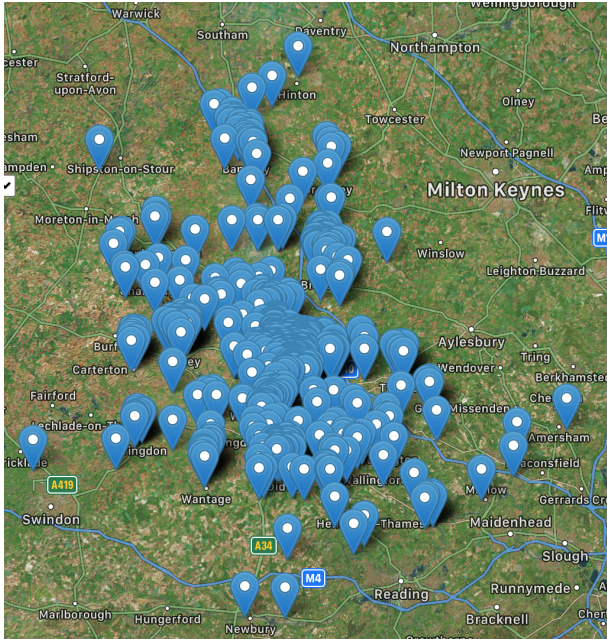
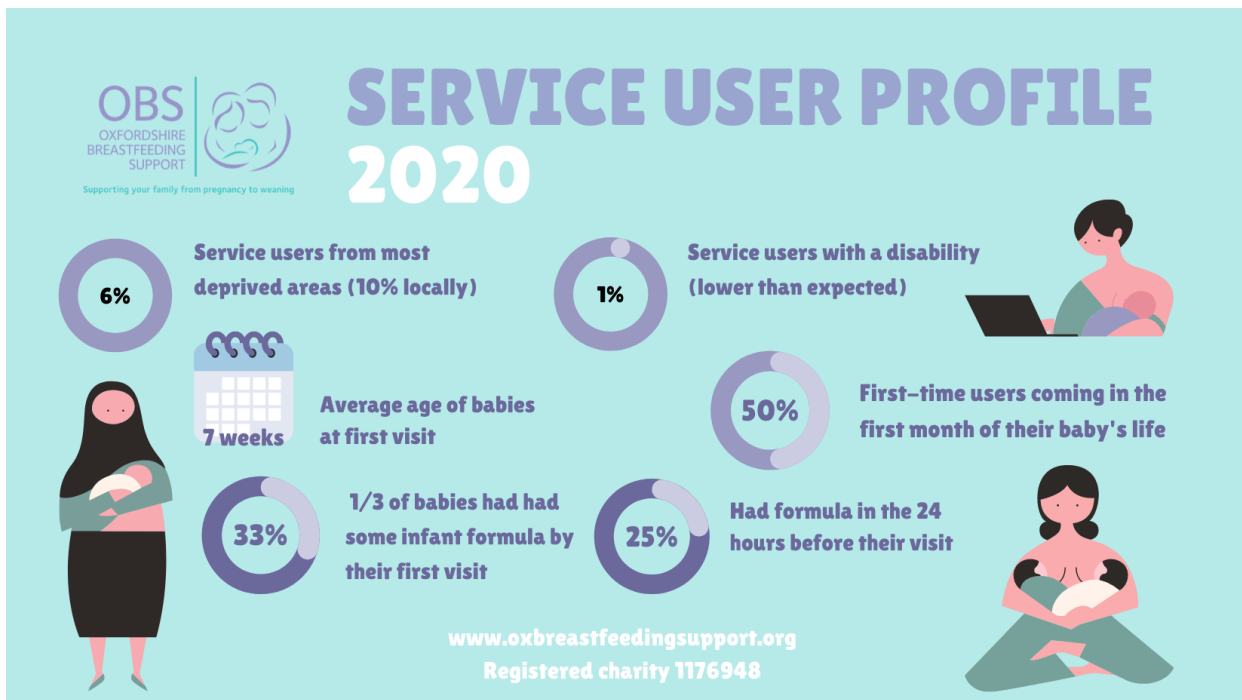


Figure 1: OBS first visitor postcodes in 2020.



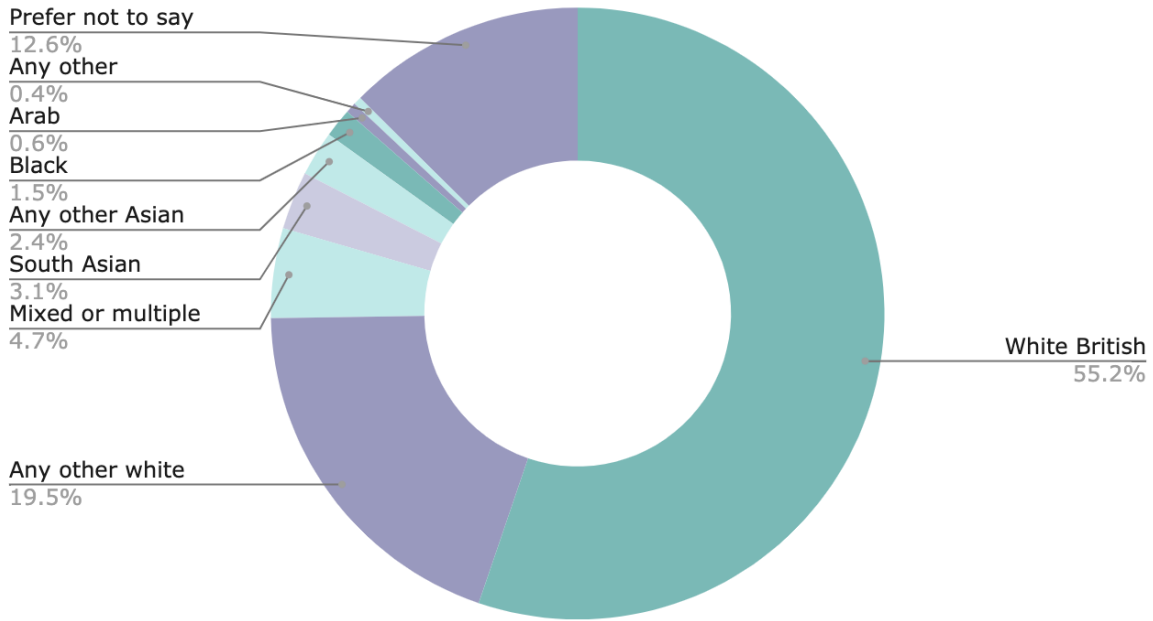


Figure 2: Ethnicity of first time visitors 2020

We are now seeing more younger women, with a greater parity between the age of OBS users and the age of women who are booking their pregnancy locally ('OUH' in figure 3).

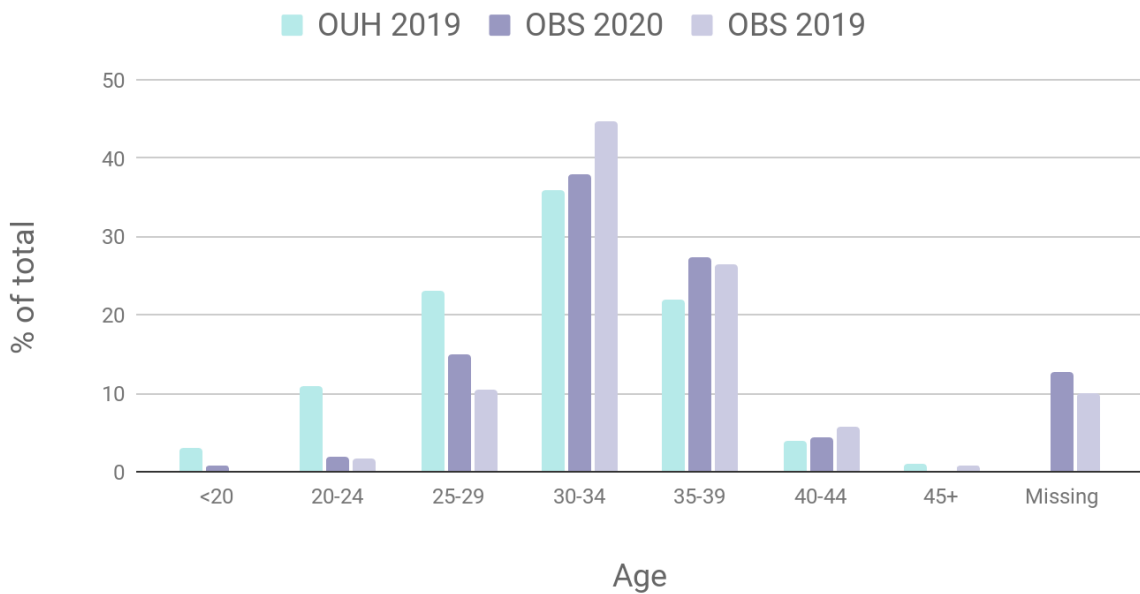


Figure 3: Comparison of age of first visitors

People came to see us for many reasons: most commonly pain, infant behaviour and antenatal preparation. Many more people came to us for help with sleep than in 2019 (12% vs 2% - probably because of the special OBS Group sessions on sleep). The number of people asking about a tongue tie was about half what it was last year (6% vs 12%).

We made fewer referrals to other services this year due to the reduction in the services available outside OBS.

Financial report

This year saw a sudden refocus on applying for emergency funding to ensure that the organisation could respond promptly to the challenges faced by the pandemic. These successful funding bids to OCF and the Lottery, and the opportunity to present our work at The Funding Network's "[Oxford Gives](#)" crowdfunding event in November enabled OBS to reinvent itself as an online provider and helped to ensure that there was no break in the service delivered.

As a result of receiving funding to cover the additional costs of our COVID response the existing funding streams were able to be used towards our core service provision, although the delivery of service changed from face to face to online.

During the next financial year, we have already secured a grant from OCF to assist in the transition from a fully online service to once again holding face to face sessions as restrictions allow.

We are able to continue expanding our service, using the long term funding awarded by the Lottery and also from the continued support of several individuals who are again generously providing significant donations to us for the forthcoming financial year.

[Find the full 2020/21 accounts here.](#)

During 2020/21 a surplus of £9,707 was recorded (2019/20 deficit £10,026), due to general donation income being higher than expected, as well being able to secure all additional funding needed to meet the increased running costs of our COVID response.

Income for the year was £88,213 (2019/20 £47,568)

Included in this figure is £15,293 of COVID response funding and £35,132 Lottery grant funding. This Lottery funding has been put towards maintaining and increasing the number of sessions we offer as well as investing in new service streams. These areas have been invested in according to our 5 year plan.

Expenses during the year were £78,506 (prior year £57,594).

£15,293 of these expenses were directly related to the COVID response. The majority of costs are allocated to facilitator time running sessions and managing the organisation, including providing breastfeeding support via our closed Facebook group and communicating with health professionals.

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

A [reserves policy](#) has been agreed by 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

- Lottery Covid Response grant: £9,903
- Oxford Gives: £1,400 in this financial year; further £2,923 to be spent in 2021/22
- Local giving /DCMS Covid response: £1,451
- OCF Covid set up costs grant: £5,390
- MidCounties Co op grant for peer supporter training: £570
- Donations from current service users and the community: £9,522
- Two anonymous major donors

As well as Year 2 funding from the Lottery grant of £35,132



Louise Ellis, ACA, OBS Treasurer

Risks 2020-21

The major risks in the next financial year centre on the uncertainty of restrictions on face to face support caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Restrictions are likely to continue to fluctuate with recurrent surges of infection. Getting things wrong risks our facilitators and users being unnecessarily exposed to infection, and has a reputational risk. Running a purely virtual service is the simplest option, but our service users are telling us how much they need and value face to face support. We will need to build a resilient and flexible face to face offering and decide how to balance this with some virtual services.

In a similar vein, OBS will need to decide whether to pursue the expansion plan to Banbury during these uncertain times, when collaborating with stakeholders on the ground is more difficult. Our service users have emphasised that the North of the county

requires a better service, but our virtual provision has already made a big difference to our geographical reach. An expansion that falls flat would be a reputational risk for OBS. Although we have strong links with local NHS and Health Visiting teams, there is a risk that the service they can offer families in Oxfordshire will reduce because of pandemic related pressures. Access to GP services has also become more variable and families' health seeking behaviours have changed according to their perception of risk. This could mean that more babies with medical problems are seen and discussed within OBS. We need to ensure we are identifying these and referring them appropriately.

The political climate is changing at a rapid pace in relation to the field of infant feeding - ['The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days'](#), the *Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly* project and the division of Public Health England will all be very important to OBS and may have an impact on funding sources.

Further deterioration of the economic health of the UK will also be an important factor for OBS' financial health, with potentially less funding for charities available and strain on the disposable income of our users who currently show us such generosity.

Previously identified risks such as safeguarding incidents, families disappointed or unhappy with their experience and inaccessibility to some families remain on our radar.

Looking towards 2021-22

As we move into the new year, we are looking forward to starting to provide face to face services once again. This is a turning point for the charity, as the pandemic has radically changed the reach and access of our services and how we support people.

We will be looking to reopen drop-ins in new parts of the county, in response to the findings from our impact assessment about where our service users really need us to be. We will also be integrating virtual support with face to face services in a way we haven't before. Our plans to reopen face to face services have been fraught with uncertainty, but we are in the process of liaising with potential new venues and making a timetable for us to reopen. We now look forward to opening our Banbury drop-in in Spring 2022.

The next year will see us continuing and expanding our Lottery funded programme to improve access to our services for families who may not see OBS as for them - particularly those who experience racism, LGBT+ service users and those with disabilities. We will continue to provide support to young parents alongside the Family Nurse Partnership and look forward to restarting our work with Motherkind Cafe.

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.
Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature(s) 

Full name(s) Juliet Rayment

Position: Chair of Trustees