

OBS
OXFORDSHIRE
BREASTFEEDING
SUPPORT



OXFORDSHIRE BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Annual Report 2024/25



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Introduction from the Board of Trustees

The year 2024/25 has been a period of significant transition and renewed focus for Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support (OBS). Following the end of the five-year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, our primary focus has been on ensuring the sustainability and continued resilience of our services, particularly as the cost of living crisis continued to impact families. This has meant a concentrated effort on fundraising, reinforcing our team, and invigorating our community relationships.

We have welcomed a number of new trustees to the board, bringing fresh perspectives and expertise that will be instrumental in guiding our strategic direction. Their arrival, alongside the expansion of our facilitator team with the addition of experienced cover facilitators, marks a period of stability and growth for OBS. Some of the most welcome news of the year was the recruitment of our own Hannah Dingwall-Jones into the newly created role of Operations Manager. Service-users and donors may well have interacted with Hannah in her previous role of Administrator and will recognise her wonderful organisation and heartfelt commitment to the charity. Appointed in February 2025, Hannah has already proven herself adept at providing leadership and expertise to the charity; with her firm hand on the controls we look forward to a strengthening of OBS in 2025/26.

The Board of Trustees would like to take this opportunity to proudly thank our staff and volunteers for their commitment to OBS. Without you we couldn't do any of what we do to support our families. As we look ahead, we are confident that the foundations laid this year will enable us to continue providing consistent and high-quality breastfeeding support to families across Oxfordshire for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zoe Townsend', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Zoe Townsend

Interim Chair of Trustees

Administrative Information

- **Registered Name:** Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support
- **Registered Address:** 2 Wytham Street, Oxford, OX1 4SU
- **Email:** team@oxbreastfeedingsupport.org
- **Registered charity no.:** 1176948

Trustees

- Laura Prentice - Deputy Chair
- Dr Ashvina Segaran - Secretary and Safeguarding (March 2024 - December 2024)
- Hannah Marshall - Fundraising
- Zoe Townsend - Team Liaison and interim Chair
- **New Trustees (joined January 2025):**
 - Dr Francesca Holt - Safeguarding (January 2025 - March 2025)
 - Kristi Johnson - Communications
 - Ali Lawrance - Strategy & Impact
 - Ilze Malan - Treasurer

- Dr Rain Irshad - Equality Diversity and Inclusion (left November 2024)
- Khatsha Ali - External Communications (left September 2024)

Non-clinical Staff

- Hannah Torrence - Clinical Director
- Catriana McKie - Systems and Safeguarding Lead
- Hannah Dingwall-Jones - Operations Manager

Clinical Facilitators

- Lisa Mansour (also EDI Lead)
- Charlotte Gilman
- Cathy Berry

Cover Facilitators:

- Kathryn Goldsby-West (joined September 2024)
- Julie Gallegos (rejoined February 2025)

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.



Overview of OBS 2024/25

The 2024/25 financial year was defined by a strong emphasis on internal and external sustainability. Following the conclusion of our major grant funding, we embarked on a year of consolidation and strategic refocussing. This was a continuation of the work started in the previous year, where we adjusted the balance of our services to increase our face-to-face provision in areas of need. Key initiatives included the recruitment of new trustees to strengthen our governance, welcoming cover facilitators to our team, and shifting key in-person session venues to better serve our community. We also focused on enhancing our existing services, including providing specialised training for our team and volunteers.

OBS supported families across Oxfordshire with:

- 596 first visits, 509 return visits:
 - 932 in person visits in 235 sessions
 - 52 individual online consultations
 - 71 families seen at antenatal sessions
 - 45 contacts with 30 Family Nurse Partnership families
- In person sessions run in five locations in Oxfordshire every week: Barton, Kidlington, East Oxford, The Leys/Littlemore, and Didcot, reaching 460 unique families over 932 visits in the year.
- Monthly virtual Preparing to Breastfeed antenatal breastfeeding education sessions, supporting 71 families.
- Moderated Facebook group with 3,500 members (1,740 active), who are supported by a dedicated breastfeeding specialist responding to posts, and by volunteer peer supporters.
- One to one remote consultations online with 52 sessions provided in 2024-25.

“The support offered at OBS is unmatched, and without OBS I would not be breastfeeding right now. It is an integral service and one that has contributed significantly to the positive outlook I know have with regards to feeding. I couldn’t have done it without them and I know that with their support, the rates of breastfeeding will continue to increase with more knowledge shared.”

- Anonymous service user, January 2025

There have been several areas where we have developed the shape of our service:

- The shape of our session in the Blackbird and Greater Leys area has expanded, thanks to funding from Well Together, and in 2024 the session began to run on alternate weeks between Windale School in Blackbird Leys and John Henry Newman School in Littlemore, providing a mix of bookable slots and drop in spaces for local families.
- New members of our team, including:
 - new Trustees, including Trustees for Safeguarding and Strategy.
 - a new Operations Manager
 - new Cover Facilitators to allow us to more flexibly run sessions during staff holiday or absence.
- An ongoing commitment to increasing the accessibility of our sessions.

Achievements and Performance

This year's achievements were driven by a commitment to resilience and community engagement.

- **Venue Transitions:** Successfully moved two long-running in-person sessions to new, accessible venues, ensuring continuity of service for families in Didcot and East Oxford.
- **Data Reporting:** Aligned our data analysis and reporting to match our financial year, providing a clearer and more cohesive picture of our operations.
- **Strategic Leadership:** Our Systems and Safeguarding Lead, Catriana McKie, chaired two meetings of the County Wide Strategy Group, fostering greater collaboration across the county.
- **Community Partnerships:** We continued to build strong local partnerships. Notably, our Kidlington session venue provider, the Kidlington Hub, relaunched as Kidlinks, and we have been working closely with them to support families in their community.
- **Widening Access:** In a continued effort to make our services more accessible, the OBS team and a number of our volunteers completed courses and sessions on supporting autistic families.

Key Events and Milestones

- **April 2024:** The end of five years of vital funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.
- **June 2024:** The Didcot session was successfully moved from the SOHA building to the Didcot Library.
- **July 2024:** The East Oxford session venue changed from Comper School to the Old Schoolhouse.
- **August 2024:** Hosted a volunteer picnic to celebrate and thank our dedicated volunteers.

- **December 2024:** An in-person volunteer session was held at Barton, focusing on listening skills.



In Person Sessions

Our in-person drop-in sessions remain the cornerstone of our service, providing immediate, face-to-face support. In the previous year, these sessions reached 596 unique families over 1,105 visits, demonstrating their significant impact. This year, we navigated venue changes smoothly in Didcot and East Oxford, maintaining our service delivery without interruption. These sessions continue to be a vital space for families to receive clinical advice and peer support.

Our current in-person sessions are held: on Tuesdays at the Barton Community Centre; on Wednesdays, at Kidlinks, Kidlington; on Thursdays at the Old Schoolhouse East Oxford; and on Fridays at Didcot Library.

This year we were delighted to open additional Thursday sessions expanding on our previous groundwork in The Leys area. Following receipt of dedicated funding we are now able to offer sessions alternating between Blackbird Leys and Littlemore. The Leys has some of the lowest breastfeeding initiation rates in Oxfordshire and we're thrilled to be able to build on our earlier work in the area as well as expand into the under-served area of Littlemore. The sessions have become well-established and welcome families each week. We continue to work closely with other local groups including Oxford Hub Parent Power, AFiUK, Early Lives, Equal Start, Peeples, Ivy Midwives, Health Visitors, and GPs.

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for your support, advice and kindness at the Kidlington session last Wednesday. I had been so worried about my baby refusing milk and speaking to you was so reassuring."

- Anonymous service user, September 2024

Virtual 1 to 1 Consultations

Virtual consultations have continued to be an essential tool for providing accessible support, especially for those unable to attend in-person sessions due to geographical or logistical barriers. Our team of facilitators continues to offer confidential and tailored advice via video calls. In 2024, we provided **52 one-to-one remote consultations**.

Of families who booked 1:1 virtual appointments, 25% did not have a session local to them, but were able to access OBS services online. 20% had a health condition that made it difficult for them to access an in person session. 15% had caring responsibilities for older children, and a further 15% did not have transportation to reach a session. While we have been offering fewer 1:1 sessions as demand for them has lessened in the years following the pandemic, they form a crucial part of our services, ensuring that they remain accessible to families who would otherwise not be able to receive support from us.

"Thank you so much for your support, I actually felt listened to and supported."

- Jen Campbell, service user, May 2024

Facebook Group

The OBS Facebook Group continues to be a vibrant and active community. With **3,500 members** (and approximately 1,740 active in the previous year), it provides a valuable platform for peer support and shared experiences, complementing our professional services.

The other breastfeeding mums were a great community.

- Facebook group member

It's a life line especially when you can't leave the house.

- Facebook group member

Collaboration and Partnerships

We continue to strengthen our relationships with local organisations. This year, all our facilitators completed the LGCB course on **Supporting Autistic Families to Breastfeed**, demonstrating our commitment to widening access and ensuring our team is equipped with the skills to support a diverse range of families.

Our work with the Family Nurse Partnership continued in 2024/25, providing breastfeeding support to 35 parents under 19 in person and by telephone, video call, and online messaging. A session was also run for the FNP nurses, drawing on our popular Breastfeeding Grief and Loss sessions, about how to support clients who had not been able to breastfeed as they had anticipated.

Our collaborations with health professionals and researchers continued in 2024/25 and we welcomed 19 observers at our sessions. These include health visitors, child health workers alongside nursing and midwifery students from Oxford Brookes University. These visits and observations are informative and enriching for both the health professional and OBS.

"I just wanted to extend my sincere thanks for the opportunity to spend time with your team and observe Cathy during my recent visit. It was a genuinely valuable and informative experience, and I really appreciated the warm welcome.

It was inspiring to see the care, knowledge, and dedication that goes into the support you offer to families. Cathy was fantastic her approach was compassionate, insightful, and clearly impactful for the family she worked with.

It was wonderful to witness the positive difference your service is making in the community."

- Emy Ashby, Community Public Health Nurse

OBS Volunteers

Our volunteers are the heart of OBS, and this year we prioritised their development and well-being. We held a series of volunteer supervision sessions allowing the volunteers to engage together as a community while updating their skills and knowledge. In April a former peer supporter joined us to collaborate on a session focused on supporting autistic people to breastfeed. This was based on the LGCB course all facilitators have completed ensuring this knowledge is spread as widely as possible across the organisation. Following a general supervision session in September, the December group was led by our Systems and Safeguarding Lead, Cat McKie, and focused on listening skills and how volunteers could support each other during our in-person breastfeeding sessions.



Volunteer supervision

Theme: Supporting Autistic service users at sessions and online

29th April at 12.30, online

With guest Anna Lawrence



Registered Charity 1176948

Fundraising

With the conclusion of our lottery funding, fundraising became a critical focus. We are proud to have had a successful fundraising year, which included a particularly successful campaign in the **Big Give Women & Girls** match fund raising £10,228. These efforts are essential to our long-term sustainability and enable us to continue our vital work for free.

OBS continues to benefit from the generosity of its supporters. Over the course of the year, we raised almost £8,000 via **Local Giving**, with an additional £1,500 in Gift Aid. Over £2,000 was raised with card donations at the sessions. Furthermore, we secured several significant donations from individuals which have been crucial in helping us meet our operating costs and expand our service offerings, including an anonymous donor who provided match funding for two seasonal campaigns over the winter, raising nearly £2,000.

In April the Family Choir club held what has now become an annual concert and raised £370 each for OBS and for another local charity SSNAP.

Financial Report

Financial Review

This year OBS brought in an income of £64,286 (2024: £78,307) and spent £60,372 (2024: £70,249), leaving the charity with a small surplus in funds at the end of the period. This was mainly due to the charity's income generation plan to build other sources of income.

This financial period saw OBS receive £7,500 from the Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) and Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) on behalf of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) for our 'Feeding Your Baby' sessions in the Leys and Littlemore.

Oxford County Council Cost of Living Grant also continued to fund the Kidlington and Donnington face to face sessions as well as helping us provide further online support sessions. The charity also received £355 from the Oxford City Council Community Impact Fund to support our work.

OBS would also like to thank all the wonderful supporters, whose generosity helped the charity increase its unrestricted income to £52,069 through the donations received.

Reserves Policy Statement

The OBS Board of Trustees reviews the charity's reserves policy annually to ensure we maintain appropriate funding to continue our activities without disruption. We review both restricted and unrestricted reserves at each meeting. As our funding comes primarily from uncertain sources—individual donations, grants, and fundraising—holding reserves allows us time to plan for changes, such as reducing services or seeking new funding, should our income be affected by wider economic conditions.

We operate a mix of in-person breastfeeding groups and one-to-one and group online support. The trustees believe it is reasonable to hold enough reserves to allow us to maintain a significant number of in-person sessions. This is particularly important now that we employ staff including all principal session facilitators. Maintaining reserves provides a buffer for unexpected employment costs and ensures we have the funds to continue our service provision without interruption.

In order to assist in the planning of future service levels and to enable giving notice to both service users and facilitators of any reductions in service levels because of lack of funds, the trustees consider it reasonable to hold between 6 and 12 months of expenditure in reserve.

Unrestricted reserves at the end of the year were £54,665 which represents nearly 11 months of expenditure.

Risk Management

OBS remains committed to effective risk management to ensure the safety and security of our service users, staff, and volunteers. Our mission to increase breastfeeding, provision of breastmilk, and responsive feeding for babies in Oxfordshire requires careful and proactive risk management to ensure the stability and continuity of our work. As a small charity with limited resources, even minor risks can significantly impact our ability to serve our community. The Board of Trustees and the OBS Team work hard to identify and address any risks. This commitment helps us protect our charity's future, our reputation, and most importantly, the families we serve.

As with many small charities, the major risk to OBS is financial. Our reliance on a small number of funding sources, including grants and donations, can make us vulnerable to economic downturns or changes in donor priorities. To address this, we continue to diversify our income streams by actively pursuing multiple grants, individual donations, and community fundraising initiatives. We also maintain a robust reserves policy to ensure the continuity of essential services during financial challenges. We have recruited to the previously vacant post of Treasurer Trustee to further strengthen our financial oversight. We thank other trustees, the charity's Operations Manager and the bookkeeper who all took on additional responsibilities to safeguard OBS's finances.

We have also focused on managing clinical risk in light of the sustained increase in both demand and the clinical complexity of our service users' needs. To continue providing high-quality care with our limited staff and volunteers, we have prioritised sessions that offer the greatest benefit, focusing our capacity where it can have the biggest impact. Our safeguarding and systems leads regularly review and update our policies to maintain a secure and supportive service environment.

These safeguards enable OBS to create a secure and supportive service environment, helping us continue our mission of promoting breastfeeding and responsive feeding for families across Oxfordshire.

Looking Towards 2025/26

As we look ahead, we are well-positioned for the future. The foundational work of 2024/25 has strengthened our organisation, from our governance and personnel to our fundraising capabilities. Our focus for 2025/26 will be on building on this foundation to further develop our services and expand the number of families we can reach. We will continue to seek new funding opportunities, cultivate strong community partnerships, and explore new ways to serve a broader cross-section of Oxfordshire families.

With input from a variety of stakeholders, we plan to develop a blueprint for our service in both the near and medium term. We hope this vision will include:

- Reintroducing a social component to our in-person sessions, which we have not been able to do safely since the start of the pandemic due to the level of clinical need, and facilitator and volunteer capacity
- Evaluating our breastfeeding grief and trauma sessions and exploring further services and sessions with a focus on mental health
- Exploring opportunities for additional sessions in partnership with other local groups in underserved areas of the county
- Exploring further opportunities to work in collaboration with local NHS services
- Exploring training, partnerships and future recruitment to better represent and serve minority populations in our community

With a dedicated and revitalised team and board of trustees, we are confident that OBS will continue to thrive and support families for years to come.