



# OXFORDSHIRE BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

## Annual report

2018/2019





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Many thanks to our service users, volunteers and health professional colleagues for generously allowing us to use their photographs in this report. Photos have been credited as requested by those pictured.



# Administrative information



<b>Registered name</b>	Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support
<b>Registered address</b>	21 Complins Close, Oxford, OX2 6PZ
<b>Email</b>	team@oxbreastfeedingsupport.org
<b>Registered charity no.</b>	1176948
<b>Trustees</b>	Dr Juliet Rayment (Chair of trustees) Dr Ilana Levene (Deputy Chair of trustees) Harriet Batten (Secretary) Louise Ellis (Treasurer) Elizabeth Horwell Dr Claire Inness Dr Heather Thomas
<b>Contracted facilitators</b>	Charlotte Gilman Jayne Joyce Lisa Mansour Catriana McKie Emily Tammam



## From the Chair of Trustees



[Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support](#) (OBS) believes that everyone should be able to breastfeed their children for as long as they wish, and we know the difference that good support makes to the mental health and wellbeing of parents and babies. In 2018/19, our breastfeeding drop-in sessions supported 628 families who needed help, coming to us from across the county and recommended by their friends, midwives and health visitors. We also continued to give accessible support to over 1500 women through our Facebook group, building a community of knowledge of breastfeeding that equips women to support the next generation of parents. Our antenatal education sessions help women to set up a positive start to feeding their newborns and we trained eight service users to join our

volunteer team as peer supporters. This year we have developed our relationships with organisations working with those most in need of support during pregnancy and the early weeks of parenting and we look forward to working together with them in the coming year.

Our [impact evaluation](#) has shown how much we are valued by the families who come to us and the healthcare professionals who refer them. The feedback we received led us to make our Donnington Doorstep session more accessible and to open a new drop-in session in Barton in September 2019. The number of inquiries we have received this year to open more sessions shows the demand for our services and we hope to expand outside of Oxford city over the next few years.

We accomplished all this in the very first year of OBS, following our re-birth as an independent charity on April 1st 2018! We now have seven trustees - all former or current service users - and have had an overhaul of how we organise and run the organisation, to help us focus on the future. OBS's success and resilience this year has been thanks to the amazing work of our [volunteers](#). They not only support families at our drop-ins and online, but they fundraise, run our pump loan system, support our antenatal workshops and help us to ensure that our service is meeting service users' needs. We continue to rely on the generosity of our supporters to continue to make a real difference at a critical time in people's lives. You can donate to OBS at [www.localgiving.org/charity/obs](http://www.localgiving.org/charity/obs).

Juliet Rayment, Chair of Trustees



## Structure and management

OBS is an independent charitable incorporated organisation ([CIO](#)) that supports breastfeeding and develops the network of breastfeeding support in Oxfordshire. It evolved from the Baby Café group (part of NCT), having operated as a local franchise since 2006.

The charity [trustees](#) are responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits. The trustees meet together as a body four times yearly and are ultimately responsible for decisions taken in relation to running OBS. Trustees will usually serve for terms of two or three years and may be re-appointed for a second term.

A team of contracted [facilitators](#) is responsible for day-to-day running of the organisation, and delivery of breastfeeding support and other services. [Volunteers](#) work alongside facilitators to aid the smooth delivery of services.



Nathalie Aduma, student nurse, with a family at the Donnington Doorstep session.



Peer supporter Gemma with Ines and Aksel.



# Aims and objectives

OBS aims to increase breastfeeding, provision of breast milk 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.

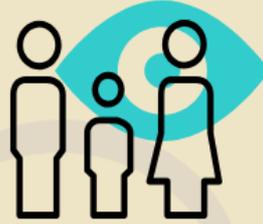
Formal consultations and ongoing conversations with our service users and volunteers shape how we deliver our services. Currently we provide:

1. Drop-in breastfeeding support sessions facilitated by skilled specialists, supported by volunteers.
2. Antenatal breastfeeding education sessions.
3. A closed, closely moderated Facebook breastfeeding support group open to anyone in Oxfordshire who is pregnant or lactating.
4. Low-cost loan of breast pumps.
5. Peer supporter training, equipping women who have breastfed to provide basic voluntary breastfeeding support to other families in a supervised context.
6. Opportunities for accredited volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and qualified health professionals to develop their breastfeeding support skills and achieve further external qualifications.
7. Observation placements for student health professionals to increase their breastfeeding knowledge and competencies.
8. Coordination and advocacy at a strategic level to develop and improve breastfeeding support in Oxfordshire across all sectors.
9. Specific provision for vulnerable families who are less likely to access breastfeeding support services, in partnership with existing professional and voluntary services.
10. Support for good-quality research into breastfeeding and parenting.



# Achievements and performance

1379 Drop-in visits



628 families coming to Drop-ins



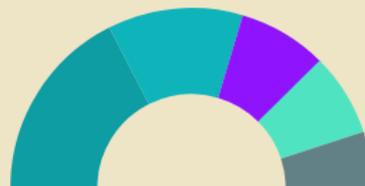
4 two-hour sessions  
48 weeks a year



755 hours of  
volunteer time



Where do visitors  
travel from?



OX4 (35%) OX2 (24%) OX3 (16%)  
OX1 (15%) Other (10%)

# Drop-in breastfeeding support sessions facilitated by skilled specialists.

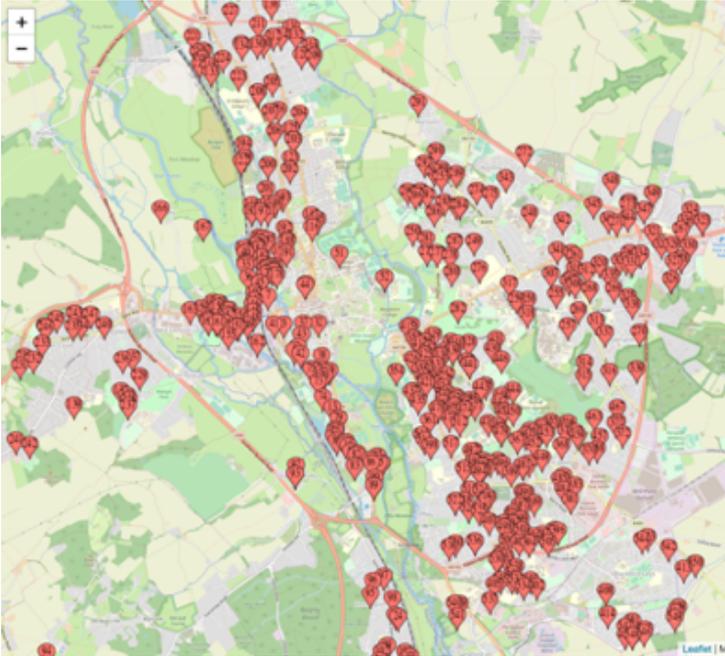


Figure 1. Home location of first-time users of drop-in sessions in 2018. Data for users residing within Oxford city are shown.

Our drop-in sessions continue to be well-attended by women from across the county, with 1379 total visits in 2018/19. Overall, OBS users live in postcodes that have slightly higher measures of deprivation than those seen in mothers booking their pregnancies in our geographical area. We see a significant number of families of black and minority ethnic background (BAME), although likely slightly lower than the proportion expected. Increasing diversity among our service users is a focus of our ongoing activities (Figure 2).

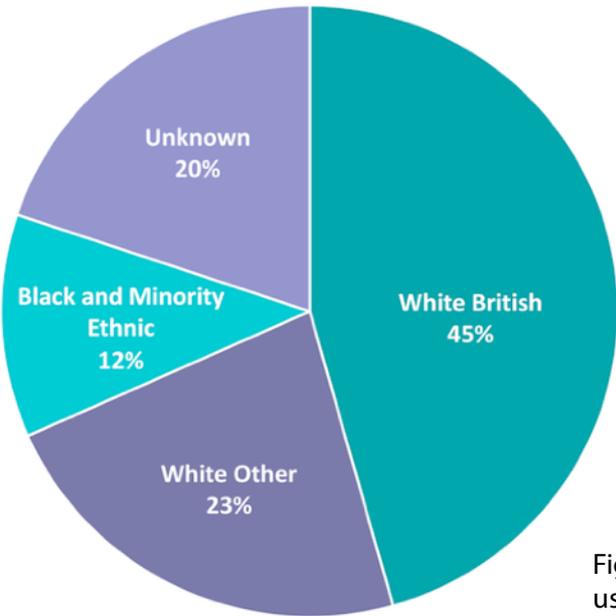


Figure 2. Ethnic origin of service users in 2018/19.

The majority of new referrals (45%) came from midwives, health visitors and GPs, giving an indication of the perceived value of our service to healthcare professionals. A further 20% came to us via friends, additional confirmation of the quality of support that service users feel they received (Figure 3).

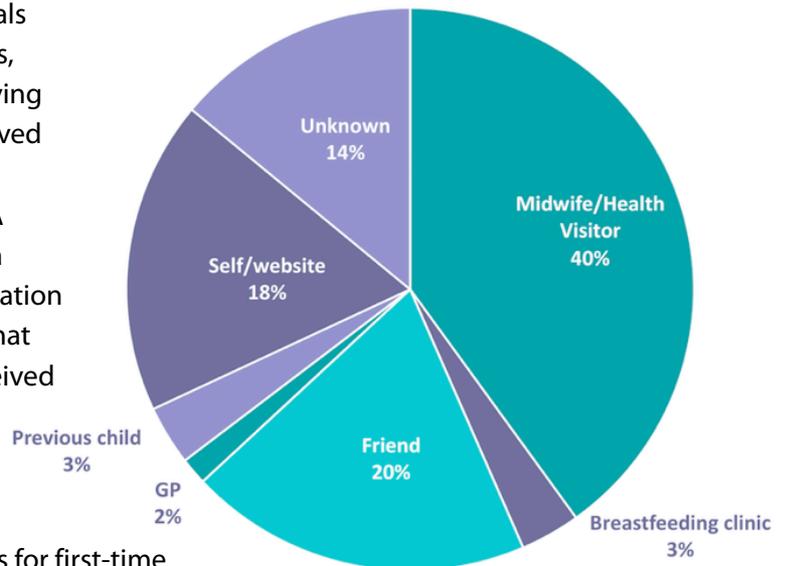


Figure 3. Source of referrals for first-time users in 2018.



Termly volunteer supervision session

*"[OBS] is a real fount of knowledge for all things breastfeeding-related. Their drop-in clinics are a one-stop-shop for a huge proportion of mothers and they are providing absolutely crucial emotional support and warmth alongside expertise related to feeding at the most vulnerable phase of the breastfeeding relationship between mother and child."*  
**Anonymous service user**

The two most common reasons for first-time visits are pain when feeding and concerns over infant behaviour, making up nearly 50% of all new visits (Figure 4). Complex breastfeeding problems (as categorised by facilitators) are defined as those which could not be expected to be dealt with by a community midwife or regular health visitor without specialist input. Examples include tongue-tie and oral aversion. We have categorised faltering growth - another complex issue - separately in order to monitor

numbers of cases in relation to our work with the Countywide Breastfeeding Strategy Group. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of first time visitors presented with a complex breastfeeding problem. OBS works alongside the specialist Maternity Infant Feeding team (which supports babies up to 6 weeks of age) and health visitor enhanced practitioners (supporting babies over 6 weeks of age) to substantially add to the current county capacity to support complex cases across both of these age groups.

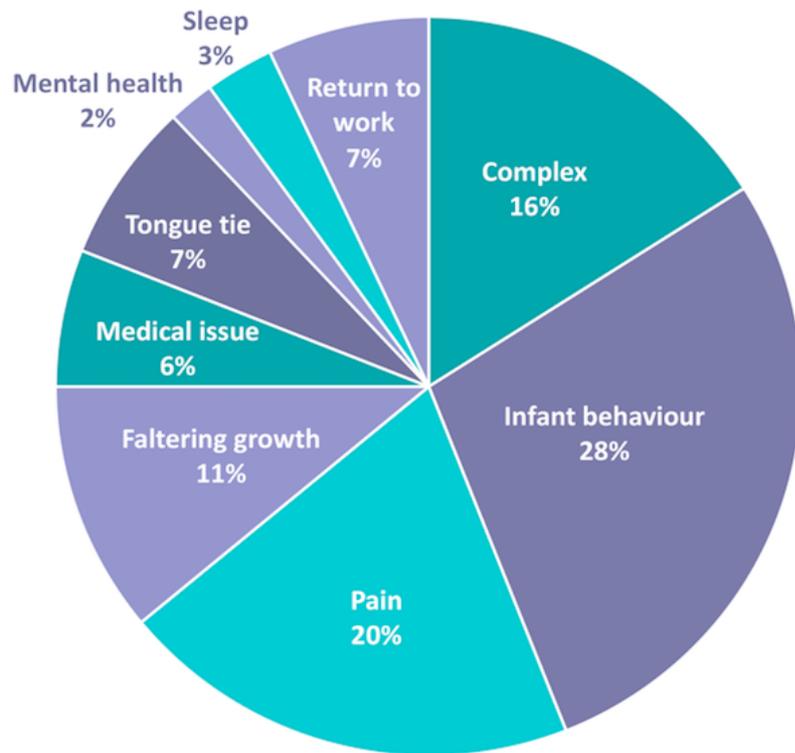


Figure 4. Primary reason for first-time visits in 2019.



Charlotte, with service user and her child. Ines and Aksel (right), with friends at East Oxford drop-in.

### What do OBS drop-in users think of the service?<sup>1</sup>

- **98%** reported that they felt welcome and learnt something new at sessions
- **95%** reported a positive impact on their social and emotional wellbeing, and increased confidence with breastfeeding
- **99.5%** would recommend OBS to others

<sup>1</sup>Impact Assessment Report [http://bit.ly/obs\\_impact](http://bit.ly/obs_impact)

## Case study: Heather

*It was the group of women sharing their stories and offering encouragement that lifted my spirits.*

My first trip to OBS was the first time I took my daughter out of the house on my own. She was about two and a half weeks old. I was nervous and worried that there must be something wrong with me because I was failing so miserably to breastfeed. As I entered the warm and welcoming room of women and families breastfeeding their babies the first words I heard were, "Well done. You made it here. Would you like a cup of tea?" It was the first time as a mother I was told I was doing something well. It was the first time I felt hopeful that I could achieve my goal of breastfeeding. The community of facilitators, peer-support volunteers, other mothers and families helped to support, mentor, and empower me to become the mother I wanted to be.

When my second daughter arrived, I knew I wanted to breastfeed her. I was fairly confident that I knew what I was doing when it came to breastfeeding, but my daughter was losing too much weight and things were scary. It was a facilitator at OBS who identified the tongue-tie that had gone unnoticed by health professionals. It was the group of women sharing their stories and offering encouragement that lifted my spirits. It was the warm smile and sincere concern as I attended weekly OBS sessions that gave me the stamina I needed to continue. It was the advice and encouragement available at OBS sessions throughout the week that enabled my family to persevere until we finally were able to establish feeding. It was hearing again, "Well done. You made it here. Would you like a cup of tea?"



My story is not unlike that of thousands of women OBS has helped. OBS is an institution in Oxfordshire for women who choose to breastfeed. The service they provide to the community has long-lasting positive effects for children and their families. I know that every drop of breastmilk that my children receive benefits them. It benefits me. It benefits front-line health and mental health services. It benefits the environment. Really, when every drop counts, everyone wins.

## Antenatal breastfeeding education sessions

*"I had such a lovely time at the OBS breastfeeding antenatal session - feeling very empowered and wonderful right now!! The clips were really good - very well put together session in general. And such lovely people. It was so great to see breastfeeding in action with a real baby too! Loved it!"*  
**Katie, February 2019**



A total of 77 women, many with their partners, have attended one of our 11 antenatal sessions this year. Sessions equip parents-to-be with essential breastfeeding formation to ensure they are able to initiate breastfeeding and find support if they experience difficulties.

## A closed, closely moderated Facebook breastfeeding support group

Current membership of the Facebook group exceeds 1500, making it the largest online breastfeeding support group in Oxfordshire. This year, 1030 posts received 7986 comments, many from our facilitator team and volunteers, who monitor the group closely to ensure that all responses are timely, accurate and sensitive.

*'The online support is amazing for moral support and for small niggles that you wouldn't want to bother others with. It helps to avoid the dangers of googling something and getting terrible or conflicting advice.'* **Anonymous, OBS Facebook group member**

The profile of those who only access us online is younger than our face-to-face users (16% of online-only users are <29 years compared with 6% of drop-in users) and our online users live all over Oxfordshire. We are proud that this service opens up breastfeeding support to some of those with the highest needs and lowest engagement levels.

An [independent impact assessment](#) demonstrated the value of the online group, which has a high volume of activity and is used by many who are not able or choose not to access our drop-in services. The key benefits identified were its accessibility and the expert nature of the support given.

## Low-cost loan of breast pumps

Approximately 34 loans of clinical grade pumps have been made over the last 12 months. The loan service is managed and run by our volunteer Sam Shiell, who has provided many hours of volunteer time on the loan scheme this year. This has provided a modest but welcome income stream.

## Peer supporter training

We trained eight mothers as breastfeeding peer supporters in our six-week training course in May and June 2018. This brings our total number of peer supporters to 13, including three who are training as breastfeeding counsellors.



Six of our Peer Supporter trainees graduating, June 2018.

*We were delighted to welcome Pat to our recent peer supporter course. OBS didn't exist when Pat breastfed her children, now in their 40s! The whole team, as well as visiting families, have benefited from Pat's kindness and experience and we'd love to recruit more "OBS Grannies" in future years, as well as continuing to develop diversity in other ways.*



## Skills development for volunteers

Our peer supporter programme has been the start of a new direction for many of our volunteers. Three of our peer supporters are now training to be breastfeeding counsellors with a national mother-to-mother voluntary breastfeeding support organisation. They will run groups and help families in person, by phone and online, significantly adding to Oxfordshire's voluntary breastfeeding support capacity. One recent peer supporter is now pursuing her dream of training to be a midwife.

## Observation placements



During the year we provided [160 hours of observation time](#) for student and qualified health professionals, primarily Oxford Brookes University's students of midwifery and students of adult nursing on placement with Health Visiting teams. We also welcomed students of paediatric nursing, a speech and language therapist, a junior doctor and Oxfordshire health visiting staff. Observing our sessions allows healthcare professionals to see what we do and to develop their breastfeeding knowledge and skills.

Emily facilitating at Donnington, with student midwife and family with twins.

## Coordination and advocacy at a strategic level

OBS continues to be a key player in the Oxfordshire Countywide Breastfeeding Strategy Group, which addresses service developments and current issues and needs in feeding support. Tangible outputs include the Oxfordshire Faltering Growth Guideline, which was created by the group and launched in 2017. Other feeding supporters across the UK have expressed interest in this pioneering local guideline and Jayne, OBS Project Lead, spoke about it at

[La Leche League Great Britain's annual conference](#). OBS is developing an accompanying leaflet for parents, which will be trialled with our service users.

As a founder member of the [Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance](#) we have been delighted to see their objectives taken forward with great energy by both Oxford Health and [Oxford University Hospitals Trust](#) (OUHT). The Health Visiting service became fully [Baby Friendly accredited in 2017](#), and the OUHT Maternity Service and Neonatal Unit achieved [Stage 2 accreditation](#) in the autumn of 2018, with full (Stage 3) accreditation eagerly anticipated in the coming year. We feel privileged to have been able to contribute to their success. OBS continues to foster relationships with the wider breastfeeding professional community, through attendance at conferences including the 2018 [UNICEF Baby Friendly Conference](#).

## Specific provision for vulnerable families



### Family Nurse Partnership

Younger mothers and those with additional social care needs have a relatively low likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding. To help address this, we have formed partnerships with local organisations who provide support to these groups, to work together to make our services more accessible to

them. The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) works intensively with first-time pregnant women and new mothers aged under 19 throughout Oxfordshire while the SAPlings (Social Aspects of Pregnancy) project is aimed at women over 18 years old with additional social care needs. Our online community is especially accessible to this group and we're delighted to have welcomed our first FNP clients to our Facebook group during 2019. We have shared our antenatal slide presentation with the FNP team, so they can use it with their clients.

*"The work you all do with the large number of mothers is invaluable...Without [OBS] ...we would have reduced numbers of breastfeeding mothers. We would have an increase of very low mood in mums because they feel like a failure if they cannot get it right. The time you can give to mothers is so important. We love working alongside you all."*  
**Health visitor**



The MotherKind Café, Oxford  
Postnatal wellbeing and emotional support group

The MotherKind Café is a new postnatal wellbeing and emotional support group. As well as being instrumental in introducing the key players, we have assisted them with the development of their policies and procedures, particularly in relation to peer supporter training, with which we have years of experience. We often signpost mothers to their sessions, as they do to ours. We hope to develop our relationship with MotherKind further during 2019–20.

## Supporting research

Lisa Mansour represented OBS on the pilot cycle of the [Oxford Early Years Rapid Action Lab](#). This innovative project, supported by Oxford City Council, brought together families and other early years stakeholders to address the question "How can we work together in addressing priority needs for children 0–5 in Oxford?" by designing and trialling time-limited projects in target areas of high deprivation. Read the full report [here](#).

Lisa also sat on the advisory panel of the [Wellcome Trust](#)-funded [Oxford New Parents Project](#) about the impact of austerity on parenting, led by Dr Jennie Middleton, a former OBS service user and a geographer at Oxford University. The project recruited participants from among our service users, and in December our current Project Lead Jayne Joyce spoke about “Care and the Everyday” at the closing event at the Department of Geography and the Environment. We are a collaborating partner in the application for funding for the next stage of this project.

In 2015/16 a doctoral student in Medical Anthropology at the University of Oxford, [Alice Carrington-Windo](#), did her fieldwork at OBS sessions in multiple locations and carried out interviews with service users to gather material for her thesis entitled “Successful breastfeeding? Investigating Mothers' Experiences of Infant Feeding Policies in the United Kingdom”. She was awarded her DPhil degree in March 2019.

## Case study: Vanessa

*With the encouragement of OBS not only did I feed my own baby but I expressed and donated milk to the milk bank.*

Although we only went into OBS drop-ins once or twice we'd spoken to Jayne over e-messages several times. My baby and I had trouble feeding from the start: she was hungry and upset, I was desperate to feed her myself but worried as she was losing weight. Jayne encouraged



me to relax, to build and protect my supply and to express as much as possible. Eight months on, my tiny little hungry baby is now a giant squidgy porker. I honestly don't think we would've made it without Jayne and OBS. It sounds dramatic but I'd always felt that I would breastfeed my baby and that formula wasn't for us. I felt such a failure and so very sad that I might have to give in. That didn't happen though and in fact with the encouragement of OBS not only did I feed my own baby but I expressed and donated milk to the milk bank to help feed a few other babies too. It's a wonderful service and I sing the praises and recommend it to every new mum I meet!



## Financial report

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the commitment of our fundraising team, we end this year in an excellent financial position, with a structure of fundraising events and donation pathways that will stand us in good stead in coming years. Find our 2018/19 full accounts [here](#).

During 2018/19 a surplus of £5,227 was achieved (2017/18 deficit -£5,144), mainly due to the receipt of some significant donations from individuals.



LocalGiving continued to provide an ongoing source of monthly donations and raised £8,260 for the year. A festive concert, organised by volunteers, made a valuable contribution to fundraising income (total fundraising £5,409), as did the increase in income from breast pump hire (total income £948). A £2,147 donation from Comic Relief enabled time to be spent on fundraising and updating the website following the organisation becoming a registered charity.

Expenses during the year were £40,929 (prior year £40,242). The majority of costs are connected to facilitator time running sessions and managing the organisation, including providing breastfeeding support via our closed Facebook group and communicating with health professionals. Rates for facilitation and management of sessions have been paid at the same level as the prior year. Sundry expenses have also remained broadly consistent with the prior period.

With expenses and activity levels remaining as in 17/18 but income increasing as a result of increased focus on fundraising and continued support of our major donors, overall a surplus has been recorded for the year. These funds have been allocated to be spent in the next financial year to ensure we can increase our activity levels and reach, with a new session due to start in Barton and joint projects with other local organisations in the pipeline.

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.

Louise Ellis, ACA, OBS Treasurer

## Donors

We are hugely grateful to all of our donors. Some of our donor highlights include:

- £3,000 from an anonymous trust
- £2,147 from Comic Relief, which we used to redevelop our website and grow our fundraising capacity
- [Payroll Giving](#) of almost £1,000, thanks to a service user's family
- £500 from [St Mary's Church Iffley](#)
- £3,952 from [Oxfordshire Community Foundation](#) to fund our Peer Supporter training course in 2018 and our antenatal sessions up to August 2019
- £400 from Wolfson College
- £100 from Merton College
- £50 from New College
- £1,000 from Oxford City Councillor Sobia Afridi, Isis Division, for our South Oxford Family Room drop-in
- £848 from Councillor Helen Evans, Iffley Fields and St Mary's, for our Donnington drop-in
- We also have a small number of anonymous major donors both within the UK and overseas, with direct and indirect links to OBS. Their generosity and commitment to seeing the service flourish have amazed and inspired us.



## Risks

The most pressing risk faced by OBS is the insecurity of our funding, and the constant fundraising effort. Our reserves policy aims to sustain our service despite our unreliable and fluctuating income and provide a financial buffer against risk and future uncertainty.



If our National Lottery bid is successful, we will expand our activities. If not, we are robust enough to continue providing a service at, or slightly beyond, the current level, assuming that the fundraising strategy we already have in place continues to yield similar funding.

A significant risk is the relative scarcity of facilitators with the appropriate levels of experience and qualification, willing to work as self-employed contractors rather than in more lucrative private practice.

As far as we are able, we have mitigated against these risks by:

- increasing, targeting and streamlining the involvement of volunteers in our fundraising activities, particularly event planning and grant applications.
- revising the remuneration structure for our contractors for the year 2019–20, to reflect the current needs of the project.
- giving volunteers and cover facilitators opportunities to develop the skills and experience which will enable them to join the team of regular facilitators in due course.



## Looking to the future: OBS in 2019/2020

In order to continue to offer a high-quality and sustainable service to all women, including those most in need, we have identified a number of development areas for the coming year.

### 1. Recruitment of a cohort of peer supporters

Our 6-week training course, with capacity for 10 new volunteers, began in May and this year we plan to increase the emphasis on supporting breastfeeding online, so that our volunteers can play a greater role in moderating our growing Facebook group.

### 2. Improving accessibility

We have negotiated access to a fully accessible downstairs area of Donnington Doorstep to ensure that our drop-in session – previously in an upstairs room with a disabled lift that is no longer working – can be accessed by all families.

### 3. Weekend drop-in session

[Independent analysis](#) indicated that service users would like a weekend drop-in session. In response to this we will be moving our current Friday session at Donnington Doorstep to Sundays in the same venue, to ensure we meet service users' needs as closely as possible.



### 4. Geographical expansion

Mapping of service users has enabled us to identify a cluster of users in an area of the city with no current provision. In response to this need we will be launching a new drop-in at the spacious, newly renovated [Barton Neighbourhood Centre](#) at Underhill Circus in autumn 2019. The session will run on Tuesday mornings

alongside a Stay-and-Play session, and will be facilitated by Lisa Mansour IBCLC. The project will be run on a trial basis for a year in partnership with [Barton Community Association](#) in this area of both relative deprivation and rapid expansion.

We are also planning to work more closely with our partner organisation Didcot Baby Monday, to increase OBS's reach in the south of Oxfordshire.

5. Ongoing consultation with service users and stakeholders

In 2020, we will repeat the impact evaluation to ensure our services are continuing to meet the needs of our users and stakeholders, including feedback from families no longer using the service.

6. Application to the National Lottery Communities Fund

In 2019, we will be applying to the National Lottery for funding to continue to develop our work for five years. Having stable funding will make a huge difference, enabling us to spend time doing what we do best: supporting families in our community. Our 5-year plan will include:

- I. Funding for established drop-in sessions
- II. Continued funding for our new Barton session
- III. Geographical expansion to deprived areas beyond Oxford city in the later years
- IV. A project to understand the local needs of underserved, vulnerable populations and plan innovative solutions.

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