

Name of your Organisation:	Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support
Name of the project TFN funded:	Virtual feeding support during the pandemic
Date Funded by TFN:	Oxford Gives 24/11/20
Were you able to undertake your project as planned?	Yes
If no, please outline how the project has changed.	
Can you describe and/or demonstrate the specific impact that TFN funding has had against your initial objectives?	1. We were able to take on our first professional Operations Lead in January 2021. Kawther Alfasi, who has a doctorate in political science, has helped us streamline our systems and processes to adapt smoothly to the changing shape of the service during the year. 2. We were able to continue running our OBS Zoom Group, experimenting with the format and expanding the offer during the first half of 2021. At peak, up to 40 women attended Group weekly for a mixture of specialist feeding support, educational Q&A sessions with an experienced health visitor volunteer, and social support from our Peer Support volunteers. The learning from Group, in terms of what works, and skills development for our volunteers, has been invaluable and we are planning to continue a modified OBS Zoom Group monthly through the remainder of 2021. 3. We have been able to continue providing virtual 1:1 consultations via Zoom and phone, and to increase capacity at times of exceptionally high demand. When health services are under additional strain (e.g. August/September 2021, during a "baby boom"!) OBS quickly notices the knock-on effects in terms of referral numbers and urgency of need. We can offer additional slots flexibly throughout the week in response to requests from families. 4. We have been able to manage a significant increase in numbers (12% growth since January 2021) and activity in our Facebook group, by funding additional moderator time when needed. Our volunteers have also played a larger role in acting as "first responders" to many Facebook posts, building on the skills they have developed by assisting with our virtual groups. 5. We have redesigned and relaunched our in-person sessions to provide a Covid-safe environment in which families can receive effective help with complex feeding issues. While virtual consultations have proved more successful than we could have imagined at the outset of the pandemic, face to face, in-person care is still the gold standard in feeding support. Since July 2021 we have made a smooth transition to a mixed model, in which families can choose between, or 'mix & match', several modes of care: http://www.oxbreastfeedingsupport.org/index.php/services

	As the pandemic continues, our robustness as a service is increased by the ability to switch between modes, for example were we to have a Covid outbreak among our team, or were another Lockdown to occur, we could easily revert to providing support remotely. In March 2021 we carried out an impact assessment via a virtual survey of service users. There were 209 responses (nearly 20% of our service users during the 12 months since the pandemic began). • 199 responses were from direct service users, 9 from partners and one from the friend of a service user. • The age range, deprivation level and ethnic background of the respondents were similar to those of our service users in 2020 - this showed the potential of this method of questionnaire delivery to bring in the opinions of a representative sample of our users. • 5% of respondents were under 30 years of age and 14% were from minority ethnic groups, or of mixed/multiple ethnic origin. • There were more respondents from Oxford city (53%) than our 2020 service users (44%), reflecting our increased geographic range due to the provision of virtual services. Outcomes: • 93% felt that OBS helped them understand more about feeding their baby. • 87% said that OBS made them feel more confident that they could feed their baby in a way that worked for them. • 95% were satisfied with the support they received in their virtual 1:1 consultation/s. • 94% found our Facebook group helpful. • 72% of respondents wanted OBS to continue virtual 1:1 services even when in-person services became possible. You can find the full report (May 2021) here: http://www.oxbreastfeedingsupport.org/images/OBS_ImpactReport_2021.pdf
What portion of the project did TFN fund?	20%
How many direct beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	2500
How many indirect beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	5000

Were you able to leverage further funding as a result of TFN support?	No
If yes, how much were you able to raise?	
Did you receive any pro-bono support, volunteer offers or introductions as a result of the event?	No
If yes, please can you provide details of the support you received?	
Has the training you received from TFN better prepared you in pitching your organisation to potential funders?	Yes
Has TFN increased your capacity to raise further funds?	Yes
How important was TFN funding in helping you achieve your objectives?	We would have found it difficult to achieve our objectives without TFN funding
Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any other significant changes?	Like most other organisations, 2021 has seen OBS planning and implementing the first stages of our transition back to in-person services, following 16 months of 100% virtual working. We opened our first two in-person sessions in July and two more in September. The hiatus gave us the opportunity for a strategic rethink about service location. We have not returned to three of our previous locations, but instead have launched a new service in Kidlington. This was a strong favourite when we surveyed our service users about the shape of future services, in March this year. Kidlington benefits from excellent transport links with OX2 and Bicester, so we hope the session, run in partnership with the local Community Hub, will serve families from a wide area. In a departure from our previous drop-in model, all our new sessions are pre-bookable with a cap on spaces. This is primarily for Covid safety, but also enables us to provide effective support for complex feeding issues, which now comprise the majority of visits. The continuation of a significant element of 1:1 virtual provision is likely to be a lasting legacy of the pandemic. Zoom consultations (or phone, if families prefer - most don't) have proven more successful and popular than we could

	ever have anticipated. In particular, they have enabled us to increase our reach to populations of parents who would rarely have used our former services: mothers aged under 20 (co-working with Family Nurse Partnership) and families who are unable to access in-person services due to disability, health status, lack of transportation and/or geographical distance. Finally, we are about to appoint 3 new trustees, including two with extensive experience of EDI work in their professional lives. They have been attracted to OBS by our commitment to innovation and inclusion.
Do you have any other comments or feedback on the experience of the TFN process?	This was the first live funding pitch I, and OBS, have ever done and "nervous" doesn't begin to describe it! Jennie made the process straightforward and the resources she provided equipped us not only to pitch successfully at Oxford Gives but also to prepare and deliver future presentations. The virtual platform was easy to use and the event was not only not terrifying, but (almost) enjoyable! It was inspirational to meet other local charities working in very different fields, too. A huge thank you to Jennie, TFN and of course all the wonderful donors, for giving us this amazing opportunity, enabling us to keep serving Oxfordshire families this year.
Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of the project?	MAJD: "When I got pregnant, I knew I wanted to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months. I remember my midwife telling me that many people think that just because breastfeeding is natural, it should be easy. She warned me that it's not. I thought I was prepared for it to be challenging. But I don't think anything can really prepare you. My daughter latched well after birth with the help of the midwives, then I went home a few hours later. That's when the nightmare started. I struggled so much with the pain, even when it looked like she was latched well. I watched so many breastfeeding videos and tried so many positions, but breastfeeding remained the hardest thing I've ever done. I remember telling my friend that I'd get pregnant again, that I'd have an unmedicated birth again, and that I'd forgo sleep again, but that I couldn't go through breastfeeding again, and that was why I wouldn't have another baby. My daughter cluster-fed a lot and was a terrible sleeper. Even when we managed to put her down, she would only nap for 20-30 minutes. This exacerbated my breastfeeding issues. It felt like she was feeding all the time, and it was so painful, no matter what I tried. I reached out to OBS for support and received so many helpful tips from Lisa, but the lack of in-person meetings due to COVID meant that I couldn't receive hands-on support, which I felt like I desperately needed. Still, I learned excellent nipple and breast pain relief, and learned a lot about normal vs. concerning feeding behaviour. I also felt better after Lisa explained to me that

my baby feeds for so much more than just calories. She also feeds for comfort, to feel close to me, to ease gas pain, and to go to sleep.

I hated breastfeeding, but learning its benefits made me keep going. I was also waiting for the six-week mark, because I had it in my head that 6 weeks is a magical time point at which all my breastfeeding troubles will be resolved. That unfortunately wasn't the case.

Still, 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. I didn't silently pray that she would be done, or cry the entire session, or even gingerly rub nipple cream after she fed. I just snuggled my baby and talked to her. I'm not sure what changed. I think it's her head and neck control, and the fact that she latches herself now rather than needing me to do it for her. Ever since she took charge, we've been doing much better.

I'm so glad I kept going, because now it's just a special and lovely time. I'm so lucky that I had OBS's and Lisa's support and understanding when I was going through a hard time. It helped me keep going and push through."

TERRI

"After being induced, I gave birth to my beautiful baby girl on 26 September 20, 5 days past due date.

Having latched herself after birth I thought breastfeeding would be easy, it seemed as though it had got off to a good start! Within a couple of days I realised this was not the case. Feeding time would take hours, often 2 hours or longer. I suffered from painful, pinched and rubbed nipples whilst feeding, leading to them becoming very raw. I knew something was not right but I couldn't figure out what.

The difficulties we had feeding left me doubting whether my baby was getting the correct nutrition. Although nappy changes were more than regular and she was consistently gaining weight, I was constantly anxious for her health which in turn was affecting my own sanity. I was constantly in tears and felt I was failing my child who I thought must still be hungry. I was exhausted because of the lengthy feedings, anxious and incredibly emotional. I needed help!

I was determined to continue, I knew it would give my little girl the best start. With no friends or family nearby (2-3 hr drive), and with Covid restrictions in place I was in a difficult place but I needed help.

I joined the OBS Facebook page and noted that many new mothers struggle with breast feeding, this in itself provided an element of relief, knowing the struggle is common, not just my own. I applied for a 1:1 session with OBS and was given an appointment over Zoom straight away.

My first appointment went through "biological nurturing" - feeding in the reclined position. The facilitator talked me through the position and I was given advice and tips, such as if the baby is angsty try and calm her down before hand as it will make correct attachment easier. I still struggled after this first appt and applied for further support. I was given another appt with Charlotte who was amazing. Understanding and encouraging, Charlotte went through various feeding positions but focused on the ones I felt most comfortable with. She watched mine and Emily's "technique", talked my husband through the process so that he could help me and Emily moving forward, and assured me that breastfeeding would get easier.

I continued to struggle and this continued to take its toll on my mental health. Out of the blue Charlotte emailed me and offered another 1:1 as she had picked up on my very emotional and distressed state. She showed so much compassion. Although encouraging me to continue breastfeeding she also ensured I understood it would be ok to explore other options if it wasn't the right thing for me. She explained OBS was available to support all mothers, regardless of what feeding option they had chosen and that if I wanted to change to formula feeding then she could provide guidance in giving up breastfeeding. This conversation was so supportive, she really cared and that pushed me to continue breastfeeding.

I had a further 1:1 with Charlotte where we discussed more feeding positions. As I was still having problems with nipple soreness, she also suggested I contact the infant feeding team for a tongue tie assessment, something I would never have thought of. Charlotte's intuition was correct. Emily had 40% posterior tie, contributing to a shallow latch, poor gape and inability to sustain tongue over gum line thus leading to pain for me.

After Emily's tongue tie was snipped I was offered further 1:1 support if needed but chose to be further supported by OBS in their weekly Zoom group meeting. The facilitators and peer support volunteers provided encouragement and assurance but also managed my expectations, advising me to keep working on things as Emily needed to learn how to use her "new" tongue and this could take a couple of weeks.

Emily now has no problems with attachment. In fact she does all the work herself and has often sucked the nipple in like a string of spaghetti before I've even lined her up!

	I no longer suffer from rubbed, pinched or sore nipples and now take great enjoyment from sustaining and comforting my daughter. Emily is now approaching 11 months of breastfeeding and showing no signs of wanting to give it up. I too enjoy breastfeeding, it's a time for her and I to connect, it gives her a 'time out' from everything when she needs a break and makes her happy. I am so glad we continued through the difficulties in the early days. Thank you OBS!"
--	---