Written evidence submitted by Hampshire Breastfeeding Counselling
(PHP0112)

Background

In North Hampshire the changes to PH funding for breastfeeding support have left us high and dry regarding funding. We have for three years run 8 drop-ins in the north of Hampshire all funded through grants from the county (Children's Services, Borough Councils, Public Health etc). Public Health now have responsibility (they tell us) for community breastfeeding support yet despite 12 months of letter writing (150 women have written), deputations to the council - Lindsey Lawman, local mum got a standing ovation from the full council at Winchester for hers, 1500 responses to a PH survey on drop-ins - still no funding.

All this despite the service seeing 500 women this year and respondents in our recent survey telling us breastfeeding rates at 6 weeks are 86% rather than the Wessex figure of 34% - and the women that attend for one to one support with a professionally trained breastfeeding counsellor are there because they are having problems - so this percentage is actually quite amazing.

Money spent by PH gives them no financial gain - the CCGs will be the beneficiaries of reduced hospital admissions (babies are 5 x less likely to be admitted in the first year and an overnight stay costs between £400 and £600 depending on which source you use), reduced breast cancer rates (4% reduction in breast cancer for each 12 months of breastfeeding) and so on and so forth. The CCGs won't fund the drop-ins because they say it is a Public Health responsibility. Midwifery say they would contribute if the health visiting service, Public health and the CCGs all shared the cost. Stalemate.

What cost you might be wondering? £37 000 delivered this gold plated service last year seeing 500 women and 500 babies... with approx 1400 face to face visits, this is 20% of the women who initiated breastfeeding - yes 1 in 5 women access this service that is not commissioned, that no one will take responsibility for. It is a contracted service (no salaries) run by a not for profit organisation and delivered by professionally trained breastfeeding counsellors (2.5 years training). This service is about to be replaced by health visitors who have done (according to the NICE guidelines) the "minumum basic" training (UNICEF Baby Friendly - 2 days - not years!)

Our evaluation was published last week in MIDIRS Midwifery Digest.

We have produced maps, reports, evidence, been published, there are 150 letters... 1500 women responded to a Public Health survey, we have been covered in local press, BBC SOuth Today, radio stations (x 5) - we don't know how else to work this system - but I tell you for sure it is failing breastfeeding mothers.

Why support breastfeeding in the community?

Breastfeeding is known to reduce health inequalities and is beneficial to both mother and baby. Benefits to the baby include protection against chest infections and gastroenteritis, reduced incidence of asthma, protection against childhood diabetes and lower obesity rates. Women who breastfeed have lower levels of breast cancer and ovarian cancer in later life (Department of Health 2012).
Despite breastfeeding being widely accepted as the ideal way to feed a baby, many mothers find breastfeeding unsustainable. Eighty-six per cent of mothers who stop breastfeeding in the first two weeks report that they would have liked to breastfeed for longer (McAndrew et al 2012). With early discharge of women into the community, some as early as hours after the birth, the role of community support for breastfeeding is increasingly important.

The UNICEF report, Preventing disease and saving resources (Renfrew et al 2012) used quantitative models and found that if 45% of women exclusively breastfed for four months, and if 75% of babies in neonatal units were breastfed at discharge, every year there could be an estimated:

- 3285 fewer gastrointestinal infection-related hospital admissions and 10,637 fewer GP consultations, with over £3.6 million saved in treatment costs annually
- 5916 fewer lower respiratory tract infection-related hospital admissions and 22,248 fewer GP consultations, with around £6.7 million saved in treatment costs annually
- 21,045 fewer acute otitis media-related GP consultations, with over £750,000 saved in treatment costs annually
- 361 fewer cases of necrotising enterocolitis, with over £6 million saved in treatment costs annually.

In total, over £17 million could be gained annually in the UK by avoiding the costs of treating four acute diseases in infants. Increasing breastfeeding prevalence further would result in even greater cost savings. The report concludes that:

‘for just five illnesses, moderate increases in breastfeeding would translate into cost savings for the NHS of £40 million and tens of thousands of fewer hospital admissions and GP consultations.’

and that:

‘investment in effective services to increase and sustain breastfeeding rates is likely to provide a return within a few years, possibly as little as one year’.

**How have the Hampshire BFCs community breastfeeding drop-ins been funded?**

**June 2013 – May 2014** – Children’s Services Grant HCC. Children’s Centre managers in Basingstoke and Andover asked the breastfeeding counsellors to apply in partnership with them for a Children’s Services grant to deliver a pilot project for community breastfeeding support.

**June 2014 – May 2015** – Health and Wellbeing Grants (Borough Councils) In order to continue the drop-ins pilot project for a second year – in partnership with the Children’s Centres, Hampshire BFCs applied for Health and Wellbeing grants from both Andover and Basingstoke Borough Councils.

**Autumn 2014** – Hampshire BFCs opened discussions with CCG Commissioners following the success of the pilot and sought ongoing financial support for the project. This approach was encouraged and received favourably and it looked hopeful at the time.

**December 2014** – Children’s and maternity commissioner for North and West CCG, Sally Pastellas put a proposal for funding to the CCG board for funding the drop-ins as an effective intervention with long term health benefits and potentially reducing CCG costs – her proposal was rejected.
January – March 2015 Hampshire BFCs explore other options and open discussion with Public Health, Maternity and Southern Health (who commission health visitors).

March 2015 – produced full evaluation report (executive summary attached) of the drop-ins (a shortened version has been accepted for publication by MIDRS Midwifery journal in March 2016).

March 2015 – Head of Midwifery Caroline Brunt agrees to fund the drop-ins for two months (June and July 2015) to enable heads of service to come together to look for a joint funding solution – heads of Public Health and Southern Health with Maternity fail to agree on this.

May – June 2015 Seventy five women write individual letters to the heads of the CCG, Maternity, Health Visiting, Public Health and their MPs to ask them to consider funding the service in a sustainable way. Heath Visitors let their managers know that they support the continuation of the specialised breastfeeding service. Women make a five minute film to show the work the drop-ins do and women speak about the support they receive. Healthwatch get involved.

June 2015 – Director of Public Health Dr Ruth Milton calls a meeting with Hampshire BFCs, two local councillors and Executive Member for Public Health, Patricia Stallard. At that meeting Dr Milton agrees to fund the drop-ins for a further eight months (to March 2016) in order to give HCC time to undertake an evaluation of what is on offer to women in Hampshire with a Task and Finish Group.

30th June 2015 – The first Task and Finish meeting takes place, chaired by Dr Sallie Bacon (Public Health). Eight women from across the county attend with their babies to speak about the support they have received.

24th September 2015 – Second Task and Finish Group meeting cancelled

12th November 2015 – Third Task and Finish Group meeting takes place. Although six months has passed the evaluation of what is on offer has not been completed and the evaluation of what women want has not yet begun – Acting Head of Public Health Dr Bacon confirms that there is no intention of funding the drop-ins beyond March 2016. Healthwatch withdraw the offer to run focus groups for women due to delays.

November – December 2015 – more women write to heads of service and their local MPs to explain how the specialist service supported them to breastfeed. Service user Lindsey Lawman applies for a deputation at the full council meeting

To watch the 5 minute clip service users made about the drop-ins go to youtube.com

Search: Breastfeeding drop-ins, Test Valley, Basingstoke and Deane

Evaluation of Hampshire BFCs breastfeeding drop-ins 2015

Executive summary
‘The other sources of support were great but no one else had the knowledge that the ladies at the drop in did.’

This report summarises the results of an evaluation of the Hampshire BFCs Ltd breastfeeding drop-ins where support was provided to 479 breastfeeding mothers between February 2014 and January 2015 in Andover, Basingstoke (Brookvale), Chineham, Kingsclere, Overton, Tadley and Whitchurch.

The drop-ins were funded by grants from Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane and Test Valley Borough Councils. Hampshire BFCs Ltd (a not-for-profit organisation) is managed by three NCT-trained breastfeeding counsellors who work with nine other breastfeeding counsellors to deliver the service. Breastfeeding initiation rates for North Hampshire are just under 80%, yet at 6–8 weeks less than half of mothers (48% Wessex Area Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGS)) (NHS England 2015) are giving any breastmilk to their babies. Eighty-six per cent of mothers who stop breastfeeding in the first two weeks report that they would have liked to breastfeed for longer (McAndrew et al. 2012). The key aim of this service is to assist women through early difficulties giving effective, evidence-based and skilled help to enable them to breastfeed for as long as they wish to. The information from this evaluation shows:

- Of the mothers registered with Andover and Basingstoke GP surgeries who initiated breastfeeding, 17.6% registered at a Hampshire BFCs drop-in.
- Ninety-three per cent of mothers who attended a drop-in reported that their breastfeeding issues were fully or partially resolved as a result of attending and 87% reported that their confidence in breastfeeding improved as a result of attending.
- Nearly half of the mothers who attended were referred by health professionals or Children’s Centre staff.
- Of the mothers who accessed the service, 17.3% were not white British. A more ethnically diverse range of mothers seek support at these drop-ins than is representative of the general population in these areas.
- Over half of mothers first attended a drop-in when their baby was under four weeks old and 71% had a baby under eight weeks. Of those surveyed, nearly two thirds returned for a second visit and almost half (46%) came three or more times, sometimes for support with a complex problem, sometimes for a different issue as their baby grew.
- Mothers accessed support at these drop-ins for a wide range of breastfeeding concerns, including help with painful feeding, low milk supply, tongue tie and mastitis, as well as for reassurance that they are feeding effectively and for help to improve positioning.
Over 98% of the mothers surveyed would recommend these breastfeeding drop-ins to other mothers.

At six weeks, 84% of these babies were *exclusively* breastfed (10% more than in last year’s evaluation), compared to 38.3% for North Hampshire CCGs area (34.4% Wessex area) at this stage (NHS England 2015).

More than 40% of mothers self-reported that their baby had a tongue tie. Thirty per cent of these mothers decided not to get their baby’s tongue tie divided.

Of the 121 responses from mothers of babies at least six months old at the time of the survey, 69% had exclusively breastfed for at least the first five months and less than 20% had weaned off the breast completely before their baby was six months old. Nationally, only 34% of babies are receiving *any* breastmilk at six months and just 1% are exclusively breastfed (McAndrew *et al* 2012).

This drop-in project has so far exceeded the initial aims in many ways. It is seen by the mothers who have sought support as an effective and vital service which was crucial in enabling them to breastfeed their babies.

Now that they are well-established, these drop-ins have become the point of sign posting for health professionals for more complex situations. Health visitors, midwives, GPs and Children’s Centre staff have all referred to Hampshire BFCs Ltd drop-ins and breastfeeding counsellors. The exemplary partnership working with health professionals and Children’s Centre staff has been critical in achieving outstanding outcomes.

When grant funding expired in March 2015, Maternity Services and then Public Health agreed to fund the service until March 2016 while a full review of breastfeeding support in Hampshire was undertaken. To date, over 100 women have written to heads of service to explain how the service benefited them and to petition for these drop-ins to be funded in an ongoing way. This report demonstrates that these breastfeeding drop-ins would be a worthwhile investment for commissioners on a long-term basis, providing measurable improvements in breastfeeding duration, with a consequent impact on maternal and child health.

### Comparison of data collected by Hampshire BFCs comparing breastfeeding drop-ins in Andover, Basingstoke and surrounds in 2014 with new data for 2015. Forty per cent of women who attended this year responded to the recent Survey Monkey survey.

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<tr>
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<th>2014</th>
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<th>% change</th>
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<td>479</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>+17%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total registrations</strong></td>
<td>479</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>+17%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of women who initiated breastfeeding who registered at one of the drop-ins (eg 1 in 5 women accessed a drop-in in 2015)</strong></td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>+2.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issues fully or partially resolved by attending</strong></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Breastfed for longer as a result of attending</strong></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>+4.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusive BF at 6 weeks (Wessex 34%)</strong></td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>% signposted to drop-in by health professional</strong></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>+6%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Would recommend</strong></td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attended more than once</strong></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in confidence?</strong></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Was baby tongue tied?</strong></td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>+2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusive BF at 6 months (National rate just 1%)</strong></td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
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Quotes from 2015 data:

I had sympathetic, one to one, focused support that drew on lots of experience, research and best practices, which enabled me to find what worked for me and my baby.

It’s the only place you get the SUPPORT every mum needs

They are warm, empathic, patient, knowledgeable, determined to overcome problems, dedicated - an invaluable team for supporting breastfeeding mums. I wanted to make it to a year feeding my son 11 years ago; he self-weaned at nine months. Looking back, I think I did a lot "wrong" - not feeding on demand (a schedule was advised), discouraging night feeds, mixed feeding, etc. He didn't get enough nourishment or comfort from breastfeeding to bother continuing, I think. There wasn't a drop-in service like this then; I was on my own. This time, with my daughter, feeding is deeply established. At 11 months, it's the centre of her world for comfort and still for nutrition. There is no sign of her feeding less any time soon. And this has been achieved with the support of the drop-ins. NICE and WHO can't advise mums to feed for one to two years, and the NHS can't say it will save however many million pounds if mums breastfeed for 18 months, if the support isn't there to enable mums to do so. Breastfeeding can be sore, problematic, exhausting, draining, restricting at times; my experience of the drop-ins has helped it be, in the main, a wonderful experience.

Particularly with the biting issues afterwards I felt so much more relaxed and confident about how to proceed that I was never bitten again which meant I continued feeding until my baby
was over 1 year whereas I had been seriously considering before the visit I was on the verge of giving up because it was such an issue.

They explored all potential problems and were fully aware of all aspects of feeding difficulties. They were able to identify health issues that my doctors could not due to their level of expertise.

I arrived in pain and not knowing what do, about to give up and turn to formulae reluctantly but I was given amazing support from (the breastfeeding counsellors)

The breast feeding drop in centre was the only place or more specifically person (the breastfeeding counsellor) who noticed my baby was tongue tied. We were having real problems and I had bleeding nipples. I was in the hosp for 4 days post birth and saw numerous medical personnel in this time, saw 2 midwife's out of hosp, saw the health visitor multiple times and even saw my GP multiple times....no one picked it up till I saw (the BFC) at Brookvale.

Advice on positions and latching was amazing. Transformed breastfeeding from a constant battle to enjoyable

Given advice and different ideas of things to try. Most of all helped me with my confidence in tackling the problems. I can't describe how reassuring it is to know there is somewhere to turn to help you with something so challenging (at first) and emotional. The team there specialise in breastfeeding which really is needed.

Someone sat with me, listen to me, watch me feed and give me simple understandable guidance. I was then able to put this into practice during the session so I could make sure I felt confident and comfortable doing it.

Because I knew that whatever issues I might come up against, the support would be there to see me through them and continue with feeding. I had very sore nipples at first. I recall crying through an entire feed when my baby was five days old and I thought I'd have to give up - the prospect of which upset me enormously. But repeated visits to the drop-ins have supported me every step of the way. My "baby" - toddler! - is 11 months old this week, and she still feeds throughout the day and night, and I imagine will for at least another year. The drop-ins are like a safety net, which prevent you from "falling off" breastfeeding when it gets tough.

I tried everything. But the drop ins were the only people who could give professional advice and didn't make me feel rushed or that I was taking up too much of their time. They made me feel relaxed, and restored my confidence.

More specialised and consistent. I found that I got conflicting information from midwives and health visitors

In the clinic, i was given time to talk through the issues i was having in a very relaxed environment and shown different positions that helped, including in a breast feeding chair. The advice was clearly based on a wealth of experience. By contrast, the midwives tried hard to help but hadn't managed to come up with ideas that helped and the environment was less relaxed, more time pressured and more focused on the baby's health rather than breastfeeding help for me.
Excellent, up to date, evidence based knowledge. Practical pointers that you can't get from the Internet. Always felt well supported emotionally and safe to discuss very personal problems.

It was 100% about breast feeding rather than health checks etc

It is more informative less rushed and I have more confidence in them as they actually explain things better. It feels like they are better trained.

It changed my experience of Breastfeeding

I think this type of support should be offered to all mothers, it is brilliant

They are a life line to mums that feel they are failing and maybe don't want to say that out loud to others around them.

Unequivocally. Despite what the books/experts say, breastfeeding often hurts at the start - a bit or even a lot. Our breasts are designed for this, yes, but they're not yet practised. Mums today don't tend to grow up surrounded by other breastfeeding mums, and aren't having 10 children and breastfeeding for the best part of 20 years. Support and experience have to come in a different guise in our modern world, and the drop-ins meet this need superbly. Without accessing the support of the counsellors, and sometimes just knowing they were there, I honestly don't think my daughter and I would have got this far with breastfeeding.

I would have stopped breast feeding a long time ago if it hadn't been for the drop in clinics, they have helped me give my son the best start in life.

The care I received pre and post baby was second to none and feel very grateful for living where I do and having the wealth of support and resources available. Becoming a first time mum is scary and having this network was amazing!!

Thank you! Thank you for giving me the ability to feed my baby. I wasn't given the opportunity to go to a breast feeding clinic with my first child and it broke my heart to stop breast feeding :-(   Thank you so much xxxx

It would be really sad if this kind of support stopped being made available

By continuing to provide funding for the breastfeeding drop ins there is ultimately savings made elsewhere. Without the support of drop ins there would be a lot more babies readmitted to hospital for weight loss.

I was so thoroughly understood, respected and cared for that I left feeling truly empowered.

I cannot imagine these drop-in sessions not existing. It is so important for women to feel there is somewhere they can go to get support from people who really know about breastfeeding. The level of knowledge in these drop ins far outweighs that of midwives, health visitors or gps

10 March 2016