AIMS For a better birth...

Introducing ABM: The Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

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By Emma Pickett, Chair, ABM

The Association of Breastfeeding Mothers was founded in 1979 and gained charity status in 1980. Originally formed by a small group of women trained in breastfeeding support, our breastfeeding counselling course has now been joined by courses for professionals and partners and new members across the UK and beyond. Our foundation courses ('mother supporter' course for volunteers and foundation course for professionals) give a grounding in breastfeeding support, and our online courses are accessible through a range of devices.

Trainees can then go on to take our advanced courses which usually take around 18-24 months to complete – our breastfeeding counselling course for volunteers and advanced course for professionals (including those who may not have breastfed). Our online partner course is aimed at husbands, partners, friends and wider family and helps someone to support a new breastfeeding mum. It also contains tasks and activities a couple can do together to prepare for their feeding experience. Our training team consists of lactation consultants, health professionals, doulas and breastfeeding counsellors. We update the content regularly as evidence and new thinking emerges.

ABM breastfeeding counsellors take calls to the National Breastfeeding Helpline in partnership with the Breastfeeding Network as well as answering emails, calls on our own helpline, webchats and giving face-to-face support.

The ABM is part of the national conversation around breastfeeding. Recently we have contributed to a project developing guidelines on perinatal mental health for infant feeding supporters, attended sessions of the all-party parliamentary group on infant feeding and inequality, attended Baby Feeding Law Group meetings, contributed to NICE guidelines and been part of a conversation around the establishment of a Breastfeeding Alliance. As well as working closely with the Breastfeeding Network to run the National

Breastfeeding Helpline, we are often around the table with La Leche League, NCT, and Lactation Consultants Great Britain (LCGB), whether it's at a meeting with UNICEF Baby Friendly, discussing Start4Life projects or debating breastfeeding rights in the workplace with Maternity Action and ACAS.

As a small organisation, we have particularly benefited from the development of social media in recent years, with more than 23,000 followers on Facebook alone. Our Pinterest page is a comprehensive database of breastfeeding resources with more than 70 separate boards. We also use social media to have daily conversations with our members and trainees. Our membership and our trainee numbers are the highest they have ever been in our 40-year history. We are able to provide a flexible response to national stories and contact our membership perhaps more easily than larger organisations might. The #FEEDME photo campaign we took part in along with RAN Studios saw our Facebook posts regularly reach more than a million views. This was a campaign focused on presenting positive images of a diverse range of London mums and we are looking to expand the campaign further in the future.

2018 has seen a change to our logo and website as we look forward to our 40th year in 2019.

www.abm.me.uk