

Submission to Inquiry into Breastfeeding

My qualifications to provide comment/suggestions:

- Currently lactating mother (feeding my seven month daughter, who enjoyed six months of being exclusively breastfed)
- Previously breastfed my son for 15 months
- Experience of breastfeeding problems:
 - Breast abscess requiring surgical drainage
 - Nipple trauma
 - Mastitis
 - Blocked ducts

I wish to address Terms of Reference point (d) – “initiatives to encourage breastfeeding”. I submit the following suggestions to encourage greater rates of commencement of breastfeeding, and to enable the successful establishment and continuation of breastfeeding:

❖ Provision of **extensive ante-natal education** on breastfeeding including information on:

- Maternal and child benefits from breastfeeding
- Breastfeeding techniques
- What to expect when breastfeeding (eg it can take weeks to learn)
- Myth-busting
- Possible problems and ways to overcome them
- Where and how to get help if problems arise

In addition

- Provision of written handouts on all this information (the info may not seem relevant to parents-to-be, until after the baby is born).
- Inclusion of a live demonstration of breastfeeding by a new mother/baby (so many new mothers have never even seen how breastfeeding is done).

❖ Provision of **qualified Lactation Consultants on post-natal wards**, dedicated solely to providing specialised help on breastfeeding. This would mean that assistance is provided by professionals who are not distracted with dealing with other post-natal issues. It would also minimise the problem of mothers receiving conflicting advice from different midwives who may or may not be qualified on lactation.

❖ Provision of ongoing and **immediate, on-call lactation assistance** for all new mothers in the first six weeks to enable them to successfully establish breastfeeding. Obtaining an appointment for breastfeeding assistance in a week's time does nothing to address the immediate problem of being unable to latch a hungry infant to an engorged and bleeding breast.

❖ Provision of **education to GPs** (and other health professionals) on the existence and availability of lactation assistance services, so that women in need are referred for specialised assistance.

Thank you for considering these suggestions.

Rachel Stevens
27 February 2007