

## **DML Excellence Awards 2016 Report**

**Project No:** 121 – The Implementation of a post natal breastfeeding support clinic to increase the duration of breastfeeding for mothers attending the National Maternity Hospital

**Address:** The National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street.

**Location:** Ireland East Hospital Group

### **Brief Description (up to 200 words)**

Low breastfeeding rates in Ireland are a national public health issue. It is consistently reported in the literature that breastfeeding and human milk are the reference normative standards for infants feeding and nutrition (AAP 2012). Breastfeeding is associated with improved infant and maternal health. Despite the AAP and The World Health Organisation promoting exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, Ireland's breastfeeding initiation rates are the second lowest in Europe (ESRI 2013). At the National Maternity Hospital, breastfeeding initiation and discharge rates are consistently higher, in line with The Department of Health and Children's Five Year Strategic Action Plan (2005). During 2014, a breastfeeding initiation rate of 71.5% is reported as the highest in Ireland.

Additionally, it is recognised that breastfeeding mothers are most likely to stop breastfeeding between discharge from hospital and 6 weeks post partum (Carroll *et al.* 2015). In order to improve the duration of breastfeeding with this cohort of mothers who attended the hospital, a post discharge breastfeeding support clinic was implemented and facilitated by the lactation support team.

### **Main goal(s) and aims of the Project**

The aim of the project was to promote, support and protect the duration of breastfeeding in mothers attending The National Maternity Hospital.

### **Objectives**

- Develop a midwifery led breastfeeding support clinic with one to one consultation with an experienced lactation consultant.
- To facilitate the application of theory to practice in the clinical environment.
- To identify early challenges to breastfeeding ie sore nipples, sore breasts, latch issues, or poor weight gain, offering solutions to identified challenges.
- To increase the initiation and duration of breastfeeding by at least 2% and 4% per year for socio-economic group 5 and 6, respectfully, as advocated in The Department of Health and Children (2005).
- To act as a resource for in-house ward midwives, public health nurses and GP's supporting mothers to breastfeed.
- To provide support and encouragement to mothers to continue breastfeeding up to 6 weeks and beyond.

## **Outline of Approach – main steps taken to implement the Project**

Antenatal mothers were invited to attend a “Preparation to Breastfeed Class” facilitated by the hospital Clinical Midwife Specialists in lactation, towards the end of their pregnancy. The breastfeeding support clinic was introduced and mothers were encouraged to attend.

It is recognised that factors such as socio economic status, age and education level influence breastfeeding rates, therefore, the Clinic Midwife Specialist (Lactation) attend the public outpatient department to facilitate a discussion on the importance of breastfeeding for mothers and babies. In addition, antenatal staff promote and support breastfeed during the antenatal period providing written and verbal information on classes and clinic to mothers to increase breastfeeding in the cohort of mothers.

Following discharge from the National Maternity Hospital mothers are invited to attend a weekly drop in breastfeeding support clinic every Thursday facilitation continuity support.

The clinic is facilitated by two Clinical Midwife Specialists (Lactation) to provide clinical excellence in a one to one consultation.

Education and learning is also facilitated with the attendance of both Midwifery students and student public health nurses allocated to the clinic.

Referral from within the hospital, baby clinic, public health nurses and GP’s in the community is facilitated.