

## Didcot Baby Monday Grant Report November 2020

In March 2020 Didcot Baby Monday were allocated grant funding of £1,100 which we planned to spend to cover our core weekly costs of £110 for a period of 10 weeks, covering the months April, May and June 2020.

- Breastfeeding support £80
- Room hire (Didcot Baptist Church) £29
- Refreshments £1

Unfortunately, when the Covid-19 lockdown was announced in March we had to suspend our face-to-face sessions. We responded to this by revamping our closed Facebook group and inviting our attendees and new mums to join, stay in contact and support each other through the difficult times ahead. Over 150 members have joined the group since March.

By Easter the world of Zoom was showing its potential so in late April we started weekly virtual sessions. These were mainly focused on social connection, but some were also attended by our lactation consultant to provide infant feeding advice and support.



Zoom sessions were initially well attended by mums who had been to Didcot Baby Monday pre-lockdown however we struggled to engage mums who had given birth since March, despite the numbers joining the Facebook group.

During June and July we ran some topic-based sessions on introducing solid food, normal infant behaviour, and postnatal physical and mental self-care which were more successful in attracting new attendees.

By June the restrictions were easing allowing us to meet outdoors in small groups and it became clear that this was much more appealing than Zoom, so we focused our attention on outdoor social meet-ups over the summer. We have also tried to encourage members of our Facebook group to reach out to each other informally.

With the weather becoming colder and more unpredictable we were hoping to be able to restart indoor sessions. Government guidelines allow support groups for new parents to continue, even throughout this lockdown. Up to 15 adults are currently allowed to attend (children under 5 are not included in the headcount). However, having access to a venue is proving to be a barrier for us.

The Baptist Church carried out building works over the summer and, due to the pandemic, these were delayed and we were not able to access the room safely until completion. Works are now complete however we have been advised that bookings from outside groups will not now be restarted until February. We are therefore seeking an alternative venue to allow us to meet inside over the winter. Our sessions were previously held at the Civic Hall until 2017, therefore we have discussed booking the Northbourne Room with the Deputy Manager. If lockdown is lifted as planned on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, we hope to hold sessions here on Monday 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> of December as well as during January if there is availability.

Our arrangements for running a Covid-secure indoor group would be:

- pre-booked only, not drop-in
- limit of 8 adults initially (increasing over time if there is demand and we feel this is manageable)
- details for contact tracing taken online prior to session
- attendees asked on arrival to confirm they do not have Covid-19 symptoms nor should be self-isolating
- masks worn
- room well ventilated
- attendees asked to bring a blanket to lay their baby on
- no toys or refreshments provided
- attendees seated at 2m intervals
- facilitated by a single volunteer (with none of their own children in tow)

These sessions would provide peer-support only. Our partners at Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support adapted swiftly to providing support in the new virtual world, offering 1:1 video call support on request, Facebook live Q&A sessions, a weekly Zoom group and answering questions posted in their closed Facebook group. This is working well in terms of provision of clinical breastfeeding support and their lactation consultants have no plans to return to face-to-face support before the spring. Our volunteer who would be running these 'mini-DBM' sessions is a trained breastfeeding peer supporter and can talk to parents about normal baby behaviour and signpost to where to seek further help.

We also plan to carry on with outdoor meet-ups (when the weather allows) and to run a few more topic-based Zoom sessions including the fourth trimester, sleep, and going back to work. These will continue even if we are able to meet indoors to ensure that we remain accessible for parents who are not comfortable with meeting indoors yet.

It has been widely reported that during the pandemic new parents across the country are struggling to access support that would normally be available to them via midwives and health visitors. Contact with family and friends is restricted along with opportunities to meet other parents and form support networks in the community. This has left many new mums feeling isolated and unsupported, often following difficult birth experiences. Seeing a friendly face and having a conversation with another mum in the same situation cannot make up for all of this, but it can make a difference to a new mother's mental wellbeing. We are grateful for the Town Council's financial support in enabling us to do our bit to help in these difficult times. Anything that you may also be able to do help with publicity to reach more families would be greatly appreciated.

### **Finance**

Due to the pandemic we have not been able to spend the grant allocated to us in March in line with the proposals set out in our application. The following sets out expenditure which we have incurred which we believe meets the terms of the grant, i.e. to be of benefit to the residents of Didcot.

Zoom Licence: 3 months @ £14.39 = £43.17

Lactation Consultant Support: 8 x 1 hour Zoom sessions @ £40 = £320

Insurance = £81

**Total = £444.17**

**Balance Remaining: £655.83**

The following sets out how we are now forecasting to spend the remaining grant:

Zoom licence 1 month @ £14.39 = £14.39

Lactation Consultant Support: at 2 x 1 hour Zoom sessions @ £40 = £80

*TBC:*

Room hire (Civic Hall): December - 3 weeks x 1.5hrs @ £20.50 p/hr = £92.25

Room hire (Civic Hall): January - 3 weeks x 1.5hrs @ £20.50 p/hr = £92.25

Room hire (Baptist Church): Feb-April - 12 weeks @ £31 = £372

**Total = £650.89**