Real life experience for student midwives at a Baby Friendly University

Swansea was the first university in Wales to achieve Stage 1 Baby Friendly accreditation for its teaching programme. In addition to classroom learning, clinical experience in this area is vital, but student experiences of breastfeeding support in practice vary widely. How can students gain additional experience to become competent, confident practitioners in the area of breastfeeding?

Establishing a new breastfeeding group has a dual purpose. For mothers; support and knowledgeable advice is available. For students, they are supported and supervised by a midwife educator as they gain experience in offering breastfeeding support, while hearing real women’s breastfeeding stories can have a profound impact on their learning.

A survey of attending parents and students after six months found this group to be of great value to both. Students felt that they learned from mothers and that their practice improved as a result of attending. Mothers found the group friendly, welcoming and supportive and the presence of midwives and students was a factor encouraging them to attend. 18 months on the group remains popular and a second group is planned.

By Rachel Evans, Student Midwife, Swansea University.


360 Cafe New Mum and Breastfeeding Group

You don’t feel judged or overloaded with information.

I feel very supported there.

I chose the group because of the midwives and students there.

It’s been fantastic to be part of a service improving the support available for breastfeeding women whilst optimising students’ opportunities for gaining practical skills.

New Mothers

Needs: breastfeeding support from peers and professionals, social and emotional support.

Offer: opportunity to students, support to each other.

Attending the group has improved my practice in breastfeeding support.

There’s help on hand and it’s very friendly.

A good place to practise breastfeeding in public and get advice.

Student Midwives

Needs: experience, confidence, supervised learning.

Offer: knowledge, enthusiasm, support.

I felt positive about being able to offer support.

Good to learn about women’s individual experiences.

Improved my communication skills.

I can see how important groups are for new mums.

Midwife Educators

Needs: opportunities for students to become competent and confident in breastfeeding support.

Offer: expert advice, supervision for students.

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