

# News release

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## **New Graduates Join Breastfeeding Cause**

A group of Sunderland mums have been celebrating after successfully completing a breastfeeding peer counsellor course.

As part of the Bosom Buddies Breastfeeding Support Group, 20 mums from across Sunderland have completed their training to become volunteer peer supporters. The 10-week course, designed by the La Leche League, aims to train mums who have breastfed their children to help support other parents with their breastfeeding concerns.

The group's achievement comes as Sunderland Children's Centres brings in new city-wide initiatives to help families become more comfortable with the idea of breastfeeding in public.

For Amanda Dunbar, the breastfeeding peer support coordinator who helped the group to reach this milestone, the event was even more special as six years ago she was standing in their place.

She said: "It makes me extremely proud each time a group graduates and I'm delighted that this has been one of the largest groups in several years. Everyone has worked really hard to get here and they are all dedicated to helping other parents give their children the best start in life.

"It's amazing to think that my training has come full circle. Only six years ago I was graduating from my own Bosom Buddies course - now I'm working with other mothers in Sunderland to help them do the same.

"I now have an internationally recognised qualification in lactation consultation and work as a full-time peer support coordinator. Bosom Buddies gave me the first step towards

this career and I am so grateful. It is brilliant to go to work everyday and feel that you are helping people to do something positive within their own family.”

Amanda trained as a Bosom Buddy volunteer in 2005 in order to help other mothers who may have been experiencing issues with breastfeeding. She enjoyed it so much she then graduated to become a La Leche League of Great Britain breastfeeding counsellor.

From there she worked with the health service to deliver support across the city while studying for her lactation consultant exam – the only internationally recognised qualification in the field. She has now returned to her roots as a peer support coordinator for the city’s aspiring Bosom Buddies.

Rachel Francis was one of the new graduates. She added: “Breastfeeding is one of the best things you can do for your child as it builds their immunity and forges a strong bond between mother and child. I’m really excited to start working with families to help them understand what an important difference it can make to their baby’s life.

“Sunderland does a brilliant job of promoting the benefits of breastfeeding to new parents and the Bosom Buddies groups are just one part of the campaign.

“I think the new breastfeeding mannequins which have been placed in Children’s Centres and health centres to promote this natural activity are another really good initiative. They encourage people to become more comfortable with the idea of nursing in public and they have gone down really well with all the other mums I’ve spoken to.”

Bosom Buddies is open to all mums throughout Sunderland, whether they are mums-to-be, new mums or mothers who are experiencing problems with breastfeeding. The support group allows more experienced mothers to offer advice and support on breastfeeding issues in an open and friendly environment. Alongside the trained Bosom Buddies peer councillors there are also Health Workers present at each meeting to provide full support to mothers.