

Exploring tongue-tie in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital – an audit and a workshop

As part of on-going leadership and innovation within our health service the Parentcraft team identified an area needing exploration in order to provide best practice to the breastfeeding dyad within their care. The issue that was addressed was tongue tie in the breastfed baby.

Following department discussion, a diary recorded breastfeeding babies where tongue tie was identified or suspected and referred to the Lactation team. In a 5 month period in 2015 the Lactation Team identified 39 babies out of 1383 recorded live births (2.8%) of newborn babies who had issues with tongue-tie during their hospital stay. All of these babies were breastfeeding with some degree of difficulty and required additional lactation support. We appreciate that there could have been more babies that had no feeding issues, both breast and bottle feeding, who had a degree of tongue-tie but they didn't come under our direct care and were missed from the audit.

Initial diagnosis or suspicion of tongue tie was made by examination of the clinical picture and oral examination of the newborn by member/s of the Lactation Team. Parents were informed of the findings. In some cases the paediatric team were involved or informed of findings however referrals for assessment of tongue tie +/- frenotomy services were sent by the Lactation Team on parents' request directly to private practitioners of the parents' choice who offer frenotomy services.

With the results of the audit, the Lactation team gained the support from their line manager to organise a workshop on tongue tie and breastfeeding with a multidisciplinary approach involving representatives from the hospital, community, peer support and voluntary organisations involved in breastfeeding support of mothers and babies. The workshop was presented by Nicola O Byrne, IBCLC and well attended by health professionals and support groups from across the North East.

Following on from this workshop staff feel more educated and confident in identifying issues surrounding breastfeeding and tongue-tie. We continue to find that breastfeeding with the presence of tongue-tie can be challenging and has greatly increased our workload in the last 12 months. Parents appear to be more aware of tongue-tie when we meet them first which is possibly related to increased public awareness highlighting our need to be more educated in this area

Submitted by: Geraldine Gordon, IBCLC Parentcraft Team

<http://www.babyfriendly.ie/research.htm>