

## Alyson and Thomas

When I was pregnant, I liked the idea of breastfeeding, but I wasn't really bothered either way. Fast forward to when Thomas was born, there was this primitive drive in me to feed him, that's the only way I can describe it - I was his mum and I had to feed him, looking back it was quite obsessive, but I needed to feed him!

Thomas was born at just under 36 weeks. He had a tongue tie which made latching difficult; even after getting it cut, his latch was still ineffective.

He was constantly falling asleep at the breast- he had severe jaundice and was readmitted to hospital for treatment. I expressed to try and establish my supply as suggested by Halton's Infant Feeding Team and gave him the expressed milk in a bottle.

It became apparent we needed more support and were referred to Carole at Halton 0-19 service. Carole and I had weekly appointments where we'd talk through how we were getting on; she's support me with positioning and latch and check Thomas's weight. These appointments were invaluable- I wouldn't be breastfeeding now if it wasn't for her.

These early weeks, even months were a blur of pumping round the clock, trying to breastfeed, giving a bottle, sterilising the bottles and repeat- all this made that little bit harder as I was single and doing it on my own. I was constantly battling blocked ducts and I had a bout of mastitis.

After a month, I ended up giving Thomas some formula- the routine was taking a massive toll on my mental health and my enjoyment of being a new mum, but I wouldn't give up. I continued to express, and his feeds were mainly breastmilk with one or two formulas per day. At two months old he has a second tongue tie cut and there was a slight improvement with his latch, and then slowly, very slowly, it started to improve more.

Christmas day, age four and a half months, Thomas had his first day without a bottle! We'd still have some bad latches, and I'd worry all the time if I was making enough milk for him but breastfeeding gradually became more natural and I didn't have to think about it. Not having to sterilise bottles was amazing!

Thomas and I co-sleep, and I feed him to sleep. If he wakes in the night, a quick feed or comfort nurse and he's back to sleep. If he's unsettled in the day- boob. If he hurts himself- boob. If he's crying and I don't know why- boob! Boob is the answer to everything and I'm so proud that we made it! I love that I'm giving him the very best milk, my antibodies and comfort with each feed.



I plan on breastfeeding as long as he wants it. He's just turned 9 months old, and it doesn't look like he's going to stop any time soon!

Without the support I got, I wouldn't have made it past the first few weeks, and I feel so lucky that I got that support. The tears, the stress, the mastitis, the cracked and bleeding nipples were all worth it, every time I feed him and look down at his little face, the bond it has given us is incredible.