



Northwest
Human Milk Bank
A Bank for Life



Countess of
Chester Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Listening to our donors

A survey conducted by North West Human Milk Bank (NWHMB) in 2017 to obtain feedback and identify areas for improvements in how we communicate with our donors was undertaken

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Introduction

The NWHMB operates as a “not for profit” service and is part of the NHS. It has been operational since April 2014 when Wirral and Chester Milk Banks collaborated. The service since then has undergone operational development and reorganisation during this period, a new staffing Structure is now embedded and the service is flexible and responsive to changing demands locally and nationally.

The service is fully compliant with NICE clinical guideline 93 and has the recommended Food Safety Management System in place, using Hazard Analysis and Critical Control point (HACCP) principles. NWHMB provides donor breast milk locally and nationally to NHS organisations including Community Services on health professional's request. We also participate in relevant local and national research.

The service is recognised by United Kingdom Association of Milk Banks (UKAMB) and BAPM (August 2016) as the largest supplier of donor milk in the UK. We always have milk available and have never been unable to fulfil an order based on clinical request. This is largely due to the fact that the service is supported by around 120 active donors at any one time across England and Wales.

We continually strive to make improvements to the service and value the importance of constructive feedback from all stakeholders, but particularly our donors to streamline and improve the process. Therefore in early 2017 the NWHMB conducted a survey of active donors to obtain feedback and identify areas for improvements. The results of this survey enabled us to make some important changes which are now in place, particularly in the way we communicate with our donors and the quality of information provided when they enrol with the Milk Bank.

On average, NWHMB enrolls 6 new on-going donors per week, of which around 5 will go on to become “active” donors.

We collect around 150L of unpasteurised milk per month from our donors, both active/ on-going and retrospective donations.

In 2016/2017 financial year, the NWHMB pasteurised 2,046L of milk which was distributed to over 60 different hospitals and CCG's.

Background to the survey

The NWHMB emailed 90 active donors using an on-line Survey Monkey which comprised of 10 questions. Donors were also given space to add comments to enable them to expand on their responses. The rate of responses was 56% (50 out of 90) and overall, feedback was extremely positive.

The questions were designed to gain feedback on communication, our enrolment process, quality of information provided (especially relating to blood screening) and organisation of milk collections. Finally, we also asked donors how likely they would be to recommend being a donor to other breastfeeding mothers.

Feedback - what did we do?

Written versus verbal communication

“Preferred the online/electronic information which covered all essential aspects”

“Often received telephone calls in response to emails. Always easier to read emails than take a call with a new baby”

“I tend not to pick up voicemails, only emails, so it's easier for me to receive communications via that method”

In an age of on-line technology and social media, much of the feedback we received suggested that a number of donors would prefer more written rather than verbal communication with us. Our existing process of recruiting new donors involves them either calling the Milk Bank or submitting an on-line form from our website with a follow up telephone call from us. We recognised that telephone calls when recruiting new donors can be lengthy

and are not always the most effective way to communicate with busy new mothers. We have addressed these points by:

- Developing new telephone enrolment forms with a checklist to ensure the essential information is conveyed more clearly and efficiently.
- Developing a new user-friendly “Being a donor” leaflet as a written follow-up which clearly sets out how donors collect, store and donate their milk including revised hygiene guidelines on handwashing techniques and cleaning of equipment at home.
- Initially contacting donors by email when arranging collections with a follow up telephone call if necessary.
- Greater use of our Facebook page.

Improving our collections process

Overall the feedback on our collections process and speed of response was very good, however, we recognised some improvements, especially around communication during this time could be made. To help to make improvements, we now:

- Advise donors that we will aim to collect their milk within 2 weeks of their request.
- Record much more detailed information in the donor's notes when a collection has been requested, in particular how much milk they have to collect.
- Using the Blood Bike service to collect milk from donors who are out of our regular collection zones, or who need a more urgent collection.

Improving blood screening of donors

“Nurses found it difficult to work out what blood bottles were needed”

“Specific coloured bottles would be helpful as different trusts use different bottles”

“The nurses were unsure what to do and how to use the pack”

When a donor is ready to make their first donation of milk, NWHMB provides them with a letter to take to their GP / Practice Nurse to request 2 blood samples which are then posted to the Milk Bank in a pre-paid Royal Mail Safebox. This was an area which prompted a lot of feedback, as many donors seem to experience difficulties when getting their blood samples taken. This could be due to lack of awareness in general about milk banks and what being a milk donor entails. In addition to investigating how we can raise the profile and awareness of milk banking, in the short term, to try and alleviate some of the problems for our donors, we decided to:

- Update our communication with GP surgeries regarding taking blood samples for donors.
- Make clearer emphasis of the fact that they will not incur any charges in taking blood samples.
- Provide a letter of explanation for the donor as well as the GP surgery outlining what is required.
- Re-iterate that we are a not for profit NHS service.
- Outline our requirements more clearly in bold lettering.

Donor Satisfaction

“I consider this to have been a very rewarding experience”

“I hope that many mothers decide to donate some of their milk and the scheme will continue”

“It's time consuming but very rewarding”

“More awareness of becoming a milk donor would be welcomed, more marketing materials and general PR and information about donating milk”

“My only wish was that we could know a little more about where or who our milk was being donated to”

“Overall, it has been a very easy process to donate milk and I've been very satisfied with all the communication throughout”

IN TOTAL, 98% OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WERE EITHER “VERY LIKELY” OR “LIKELY” TO RECOMMEND BEING A MILK DONOR TO OTHER BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS.