



Online La Leche League Meetings

by La Leche League Leader Kristina Maconaghie

We are very excited to be able to offer online meetings now. It is something that the Social Media Team had been thinking about for a while and seemed like an obvious extension of our local Facebook activities.

WE ARE HOPING that our online meetings will be both another way to touch base with mums who come to our meetings and a recruitment tool for our in-person services. This is a very safe way for mums to see what sorts of things go on and get to know us a little bit with no commitment. For rural and geographically isolated mums an online meeting may be their only opportunity to attend a meeting at all.

In preparation I attended two online LLL meetings in the US and had been watching other organisations' versions such as the BreastfeedingNZ LiveChat (using a Facebook App) and Plunket Chat (using their main Facebook Page). To keep things simple while we were sounding out the technical side of things we decided to use prepared meetings from the Leader Handbook to start off. We also checked the local Leader and Leader Applicant availability. One of my co-Leaders works during our regular in-person meeting time now so this was a good chance for her to be involved in a meeting again. I found that my role in administering the meeting - that is posting up discussion questions, etc and adding people to the group - kept me so busy that I wasn't able to comment or respond to questions very much. This was definitely a group effort.

One of the things my co-Leader, Rosemary, remarked to

me about the meeting was that it seemed like everything was happening at once. And this is perhaps a key difference between an in-person meeting and an on-line meeting. People had joined up beforehand, but there were others requesting to join during the meeting and there were still people introducing themselves at the end. Several people could be writing responses to questions at the same time rather than one at a time. We posted our closing statement after an hour and a half.

Another difference, of course, is that the participants don't get to see breastfeeding in action. This is one of the main limitations that I see in online meetings since it is such an important subliminal teaching tool. We do have youtube videos available, and links to other resources which could be useful in a different way - for example, you would be unlikely to see hand expression or hands on pumping demonstrated at our meetings. Yet we could instantly link a mother in with these at an online meeting.

It felt like there were plenty of mums asking and answering questions. Just as at an in-person meeting, there was great mum-to-mum support going on in a variety of ways. Definitely successful enough to keep going and see what happens. ♥

