

## Infant feeding short briefing

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## 1. What do we know about who breastfeeds and the benefits of breastfeeding?

- Breastfed babies are at lower risk of gastroenteritis, respiratory infections, sudden unexpected death in infancy, obesity, type 1 and 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol and allergies.
- Mothers who breastfeed have lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer and hip fractures in later life.
- Groups most likely to initiate and continue breastfeeding are mothers aged 30 and over, those from ethnic minority groups, those who left education aged over 18, those in managerial and professional occupations, and those living in the least deprived areas.
- Those least likely to breastfeed are mothers under 20, white mothers, those from routine and manual occupations, those who had never worked, those aged 16 and under when they left full time education and those living in the most deprived areas.
- Three quarters of British mothers who stop breastfeeding in the first six months, and 90% of those who stopped within the first two weeks would have liked to continue for longer.
- Insight work carried out with Kent mothers have found that some women perceive breastfeeding as not normal or embarrassing, they may have never seen anyone breastfeed. It has also been found that family members have an important influence on feeding decisions, generations of women in families have not breastfed and these are women's most trusted reference points for advice. Women also worry about whether the baby is getting enough milk.

## 2. What works to increase breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates?

- A co-ordinated programme of interventions across different settings including:
  - Activities to raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding, training for health professionals, peer support programmes, joint working between health professionals and peer supporters, education and information for pregnant women on how to breastfeed followed by proactive support during the postnatal period.
  - A structured programme that encourages breastfeeding, using Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) as a minimum standard in maternity and community settings.
  - Ensure organisations have a written, audited and well publicised infant feeding policy that includes staff training and support for staff who may be breastfeeding.

- Ensure all those who work in maternity and children's services, including receptionists, volunteers and ancillary staff, are made fully aware of the importance of breastfeeding and help to promote a supportive environment.

### 3. Questions you might need to ask

- Is information available to women antenatally?
- What training have staff had related to breastfeeding? Do they feel empowered to talk to women?
- Is there a peer support programme available locally? Is this meeting the needs of local women? Are they welcoming to all? Are they working in a joined up way?
- Are services timely?
- Do local organisations working with pregnant women and mothers have an appropriate breastfeeding policy in place? Are all staff aware of it and is it followed?
- Are appropriate signs indicating that breastfeeding is welcome displayed in all public areas and staff aware of their responsibilities?
- Do you know where to access sources of support available to women, including local infant feeding services and additional support to help deal with complex challenges?
- Are all partner premises free of infant formula advertising in line with the International Code of Marketing Breastfeeding Supplements?
- Do organisations have champions who can demonstrate evidence of appropriate knowledge and skill?
- Has the LCPG contributed to national and local campaigns to support breastfeeding?
- Are local services considering the needs of those groups who are least likely to breastfeed and tailoring services as appropriate to meet their needs?
- Do you know what insight work on breastfeeding has been carried out in your local area (if any) and how has it been used?

### 4. Who to involve

- Midwifery
- Health Visiting
- Children's Centres
- Local voluntary sector organisations supporting Breastfeeding, e.g. La Leche League and NCT
- Young Parent's groups
- Community organisations supporting the early years
- Local Employers
- General Practice

## | 5. Resources

[http://www.kpho.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/46587/Maternity-July-2015-FINAL.pdf](http://www.kpho.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/46587/Maternity-July-2015-FINAL.pdf)

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph11>

<http://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB08694/Infant-Feeding-Survey-2010-Consolidated-Report.pdf>

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/>