

Infant Feeding Policy

For all staff supporting pregnant women, new mothers, infants and their families who receive care from Lothian NHS Board.

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Version Control

Date	Author	Version/Page	Reason for change
June 2018	Health Promotion	v1.0	Approved by the Policy Approval Group
June 2024	Project Manager, Maternal and Infant Nutrition	v1.1-2	Policy reviewed and updated to include the national roll out of the WHO Code of Conduct
Sept 2024	Project Manager, Maternal and Infant Nutrition	v2.0	Approved by the Policy Approval Group

Executive Summary

This policy supports families to build close and loving relationships with their baby and respond to their baby's needs however they decide to feed their baby. It applies to all staff across acute and community settings and the care and advice they provide in patients homes, in our premises and that of partner organisations.

This policy reflects NHS Lothian's commitment to the UNICEF Baby Friendly standards of care and the International Code of Marketing Breast milk substitutes. It incorporates current evidence, guidelines and feedback from staff and families. All staff must be able to support pregnant women, new mothers, infants and their families through clear processes and training to deliver these standards. This policy accompanies the detailed procedural [Infant Feeding Guideline](#) (version 2) and the [Neonatal Infant Feeding Guideline](#) (version 2) which provide specific direction to staff and services.

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1.0 Purpose

This policy is for all staff in NHS Lothian who provide care for pregnant women, infants, and their families. It is in place to ensure that staff understand their role and responsibilities and how to support families to feed and care for their infant to support optimum health and well-being.

This policy supports the following outcomes within the Lothian Strategic Development Framework for Children and Young People:

- A reduction in the drop off of breastfeeding rates from initiation to 10 days, 6-8 weeks and beyond (as defined by Scotland's Healthier Future delivery plan)
- Parents who feed their baby artificial milk are supported and guided to do so responsively and as safely as possible, in line with Public Health Scotland guidance
- More babies are introduced to solid food after 6 months or more, in line with Public Health Scotland guidance
- Parents have improved experiences of the care NHS Lothian staff provide

2.0 Policy statement

NHS Lothian is committed to:

- Providing the highest standard of care to support expectant and new mothers and their partners to feed their baby and build strong and loving parent-infant relationships.
- Ensuring that all care is mother and family centred, non-judgemental and that mothers' decisions are supported and respected.
- Supporting full implementation of the UNICEF Baby Friendly care standards across all services.
- Ensuring all staff receive UNICEF Baby Friendly approved breastfeeding and relationship building education and training as appropriate to their role within six months of commencing employment, in line with UNICEF Baby Friendly requirements, and are engaged in an ongoing programme of training to develop infant feeding knowledge and skills as appropriate to their role.
- Ensuring all documentation supports the implementation of the UNICEF Baby Friendly care standards.
- Ensuring the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes is implemented throughout NHS Lothian.
- Working together across disciplines and organisations to improve mothers'/parents' experiences of care.
- Supporting families with infants that are experiencing food insecurity using the principle of cash first to preserve their human rights and dignity and to

uphold the WHO code. We will also work with our partner agencies to encourage them to do the same.

- Ensuring parents' experiences of care will be listened to through various mechanisms e.g. the Baby Friendly Initiative audit tool, and parents' experience surveys.
- Providing care and support at an appropriate level for the early intervention of infant feeding issues with a tiered service to meet more complex needs.

3.0 Scope

This policy is mandatory and applies to all employees of NHS Lothian in all locations. All staff that provide care for pregnant women, infants and their families should have a policy orientation to understand their role and responsibilities to support optimum infant nutrition and strong parent-infant attachment. This policy should be read in conjunction with the NHS Lothian Infant Feeding Guideline and/or the Neonatal Infant Feeding Guideline and any other relevant supporting clinical guidelines and documents.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes (WHO code)

This was developed in 1981 by the general assembly of the World Health Organisation, in close consultation with member states and other concerned parties. This Code, and subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions, recommends restrictions on the marketing of breast milk substitutes, such as infant formula, to ensure that mothers are not discouraged from breastfeeding and that information provided about substitutes is free from commercial influence to ensure it is used safely if needed. The Code also covers feeding bottles and teats (World Health Organisation 1981 & 2003). Specific responsibilities are set out in Code of Conduct for Staff relating to products covered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) [International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes](#), 2017.

4.2 UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI)

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative enables public services to better support families with feeding and developing close and loving relationships so that all babies get the best possible start in life. Services which implement the evidence-based Baby Friendly care standards receive the prestigious Baby Friendly award, a nationally recognised mark of quality care.

4.3 Important note on individualised care and definitions of parents

This document uses the words mother or mum to describe the parent who is breastfeeding. We acknowledge that there are parents who are breastfeeding who may have a gender identity other than female and may use terms other than 'mother' to describe themselves. We also know that some parents may prefer 'chest feeding' to 'breastfeeding'. We are clear that all parents should be treated with dignity and respect when accessing support. When

we are asked to use pronouns, terms, and descriptors other than those in this document we will use the preferred words as part of individualised care.

5.0 Implementation roles and responsibilities

5.1 NHS Lothian

NHS Lothian, through the Maternal and Infant Nutrition service in Public Health, will provide mandatory training which is suitable for the roles and responsibilities of each staff group. They will ensure that training meets the UNICEF Baby Friendly care standards, that it is updated regularly, and that the outcomes are frequently audited.

5.2 Line managers

Line managers will ensure that new staff in roles which provide care for pregnant women, infants and their families have read and understood this policy and guidelines on commencement of employment. Line managers will ensure staff complete training and supervised clinical practice within 6 months of taking up post and then attend ongoing updates. They will also be responsible for managing any practice issues and areas for improvement in practice.

5.3 All new staff

All new staff in roles which provide care for pregnant women, infants and their families are expected to familiarise themselves with this policy and associated guidelines on commencement of employment. They should attend and complete all elements of the training within six months of commencement of employment to enable them to implement this policy as appropriate to their role. They will then ensure that they attend ongoing updates and other learning and education opportunities in line with the WHO Code of compliance.

6.0 Associated materials

Detailed guidelines in relation to supporting families with infant feeding in NHS Lothian settings and the specific requirements for staff and services are available within the NHS Lothian [Infant Feeding Guideline](#).

Code of Conduct for Staff relating to products covered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) [International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes](#), 2017.

It is recognised that babies within Neonatal and Special Care services will require different and/or additional care and this is outlined within the NHS Lothian [Neonatal Infant Feeding Guideline](#). Additionally, an infant feeding guideline for paediatric services is in development.

7.0 Evidence base

The rationale for implementing the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative to support all families with their infant feeding decisions and practices is clear.

Evidence supports and recognises the benefits of breastfeeding as it makes a significant contribution to good physical and emotional health outcomes for mother, baby and society. Evidence also shows that strong and loving relationships between infants and their parents have a profound impact on the future health and wellbeing of the child including optimising infant brain development.

The 2023 Lancet Series on Breastfeeding: <https://www.thelancet.com/series/Breastfeeding-2023>

Working within the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes: A Guide for Health Workers (2019): <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/international-code-marketing-breastmilk-substitutes-resources/guide-to-working-within-the-code/>

UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Theory of Change:
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/04/Baby-Friendly-Initiative-Theory-of-Change.pdf>

A Healthier Future: Scotland's diet and healthy weight delivery plan (2018):
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/healthier-future-scotlands-diet-healthy-weight-delivery-plan/>

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative. 2017. Guide to the Baby Friendly standards:
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/about/standards/>

The 2016 Lancet Series on Breastfeeding: <https://www.thelancet.com/series/breastfeeding>

Baker, J. L., Gamborg, M., Heitmann, B. L., Lissner, L., Sorensen, T. I. A., and Rasmussen, K. M., 2008. Breastfeeding reduces postpartum weight retention. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 88 (6), 1543-1551.

Quigley, M. A., Kelly, Y. J., and Sacker, A., 2007. Breastfeeding and hospitalization for diarrhoea and respiratory infection in the United Kingdom millennium cohort study. *Pediatrics*, 119 (4), e837-842.

International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes:
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/156596>

8.0 Stakeholder consultation

A steering group was set up to develop this policy and associated guidelines and incorporated representation from all stakeholders in NHS Lothian. Service groups and representatives of key stakeholder groups were again consulted for the 2024 update including: Infant Feeding Advisors, Consultants, a Clinical Reader, Midwives, Neonatal Nurses, Health Visitors, Family Nurses, and Public Health. The Maternity Voices Partnership with service users and third sector representatives were engaged and an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been carried out with amendments made.

9.0 Monitoring and review

The policy will be reviewed and revised every 3 years or as a result of changes in evidence base and/or legislation. The implementation of the policy will be carried out in line with the actions identified below in the table.

Element to be monitored	How	Frequency	Reporting
Care Standards across Neonatal, Maternity, Health Visiting and Family Nursing Services	UNICEF staff and mother audits Parent experience feedback	In line with UNICEF requirements for services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ward staff – Community teams – Local steering groups – Clinical manager groups – UNICEF
Outcomes as specified in purpose of policy	TRAK System and Public Health Scotland	Quarterly and annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All staff – Clinical manager groups – Local planning groups