

INSIDE:

National Breastfeeding
Awareness Week 2008

BFI statement on dummy use

'From bump to breastfeeding'
DVD



Keeping abreast

Breastfeeding CD-ROM timetabled for schools

On 8 April 2008, the HPA launched a unique breastfeeding educational tool for schools. The Breastfeeding awareness for schools CD-ROM resource pack assists teachers in their approach to the sensitive topic of breastfeeding in a way that is both interesting and thought provoking.

In 2006, following a review of breastfeeding education in the school setting, the HPA collaborated with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to develop this resource.¹

Janet Calvert, Regional Breastfeeding Coordinator at the HPA, said: "I am delighted we have launched this resource. The CD-ROM was piloted in a number of schools here and the feedback from both teachers and pupils was extremely positive."²

"We have the lowest breastfeeding rates in the UK and some of the reasons why women do not breastfeed is a lack of knowledge about the importance of breastfeeding for health, as well as poor social acceptability of it.

"This resource provides accurate, up-to-date information that allows pupils to consider their own attitudes and perceptions of society to breastfeeding. Ultimately, it is hoped that the information gained by students will help to positively influence the choices they

make as prospective parents in the future."

While breastfeeding is a natural act, it is also a learned behaviour and providing information through schools is a golden opportunity to promote greater awareness and positive perceptions of the issue.

Commenting on the new resource, Glynis Henderson, Principal Officer, CCEA, said: "Health information provided to pupils must be both enjoyable and thought provoking. This CD-ROM is exactly that. It has been developed with the needs of teachers and pupils in mind. The resource supports various aspects of the

curriculum including Home Economics and Health and Social Care. I am confident it will have an impact in the classroom."

Almost 1,000 packs were produced and distributed to all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. Further copies are available by emailing l.blackstock@hpani.org.uk

References

1. Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPANI). Breastfeeding education in the school setting: a review of the literature. Belfast: HPANI, 2006.
2. Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPANI). Breastfeeding awareness for schools: evaluation of a CD-ROM and teaching materials. Belfast: HPANI, 2008.



⇧ Pictured at the launch of the breastfeeding resource for schools at the HPA are, from left, Shauna Mallon, St Patrick's College, Dungannon, and Naomi Fenton, Cullybackey High School.

National Breastfeeding Awareness Week

Breastfeeding highlighted at famous landmark



A group of mothers involved in the Northwest Breastfeeding Network, a local telephone support network, have been meeting on the first Thursday of each month since 1997. The group decided that a mural would be a great way to highlight breastmilk as "the ultimate superfood" during National Breastfeeding Awareness Week.

The mothers discussed this with one of the local Sure Starts, Edenballeymore, and secured funding to erect a poster at the famous Free Derry Corner, which is used to attract attention to local issues and projects.

A workshop to develop the poster was organised by the mothers and facilitated by a local mother and artist. Not only did the mothers design the poster, they also designed tee-shirts which were worn at all the breastfeeding awareness events during National Breastfeeding Awareness Week.

➤ Included in the picture are mothers from local breastfeeding groups, Siobhan McIntyre, Western Board; Sarah Greavy, artist; Deirdre McDaid Edenballeymore Sure Start; Bernie Webster, Western HSCT; Anne Marie McGurk, Head of Midwifery, Gynae and Neonatal services; Audrey Moore and Deirdre Gill, Western HSCT.

Sun shines on NBAW in Castle Archdale

National Breastfeeding Awareness Week was celebrated in glorious sunshine in Castle Archdale Country Park by 80 mothers, babies and mums-to-be from the breastfeeding support groups in Omagh, Castlederg, Belleek, Boho, Enniskillen, Lisnaskea, Irvinestown and Newtownbutler.

Mothers enjoyed pampering with toenail painting, hand massage and yoga. The babies were massaged to sleep, while the toddlers and older children had a teddy bear's nature hunt and enjoyed music time with Jo-jingles.

The whole event ended with a picnic on the lawn and balloons for the children. Everybody enjoyed the day so much that they have asked if the event will be repeated next year!



NHSCT celebrates NBAW



Dalriada Rural Sure Start held a coffee morning in Bushmills to celebrate NBAW.

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) celebrated National Breastfeeding Awareness Week with a varied timetable of activities. The Breastfeeding Advocates from Ballymoney and Coleraine Borough Councils worked together to run a poetry competition for schoolchildren, highlighting the importance of healthy eating from birth.

There were two well-attended coffee mornings run by Coleraine Sure Start and Dalriada Rural Sure Start. The

Breastfeeding Advocates and the Breastfeeding Peer Support workers from Helping U Nurse as Nature Intended (HUNNI) attended a variety of antenatal clinics that week to distribute NHSCT magazines and have informal chats about breastfeeding a new baby.

The Jet Centre in Coleraine also held a morning cinema screening for mums and tots in celebration of breastfeeding and is hoping to sign up to the Breastfeeding Welcome Here scheme later in the year.

NBAW at Orana Sure Start

Orana Sure Start in Newry recently celebrated five years of its very successful breastfeeding support group. Janet Calvert, Regional Breastfeeding Coordinator, was the guest speaker for the event which was held in conjunction with National Breastfeeding Awareness Week.

The parents enjoyed this very informative celebration and are looking forward to continued support from the group. Orana Sure Start has gone from strength to strength, supporting the mothers in all aspect of breastfeeding.



Pictured with mums and babies from Orana Sure Start are Carol Murphy, Senior Nurse Manager, Laura Donnelly, Midwife and Brona O'Reilly, Health Visitor.



National Breastfeeding Awareness Week continued



NBAW at Smile Sure Start

Smile Sure Start celebrated National Breastfeeding Awareness week with a coffee morning for all breastfeeding mums and pregnant women. The event provided the opportunity for mums to talk about breastfeeding and share their own experiences with mums-to-be.

Recognition for Colin Sure Start



In June of this year Colin Sure Start were presented with a UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative Community award in recognition of their commitment to implementing recognised best practice in support of breastfeeding families. Colin is one of only 10 Sure Starts in the UK and one of only two in Northern Ireland to achieve this prestigious award.

Congratulations go to Mr Jo Vallely and the team at Colin Sure Start. At the award ceremony mothers and babies from the area enjoyed the celebration and one of the mothers spoke with enthusiasm about breastfeeding and explained how she had been supported to stay with her decision to breastfeed.



Uplifting support group

Uplift is a voluntary group of National Childbirth Trust (NCT) trained and trainee breastfeeding counsellors in the Dungannon and Armagh area.

During National Breastfeeding Awareness Week, Uplift launched a freephone breastfeeding support line (0800 085 7496) and an information leaflet for breastfeeding mums. The helpline provides a confidential counselling service, information and support on breastfeeding issues and signposting to breastfeeding support groups.

Uplift reports that the helpline is proving very successful, receiving calls from mums, dads, midwives and health visitors. Uplift counsellors also attend the maternity wards at Craigavon Area Hospital to provide support to new mums on breastfeeding.

Contact Uplift on 0800 085 7496, Monday – Friday 10am to 4pm, or by email at uplift@hotmail.co.uk

Return to work: supporting breastfeeding mums



Launching the *Breastfeeding and returning to work* resource are Claire Fisher, teacher at Kells and Connor Primary School, with baby Erin and her employer, School Principal Roy McClelland.

Mums in Northern Ireland are significantly more likely to return to full-time work after maternity leave, compared to other parts of the UK. This can influence their decision as to whether or not they will continue breastfeeding their baby.

During National Breastfeeding Awareness Week 2008, the HPA urged employers in Northern Ireland to support mothers who want to continue breastfeeding when they return to work. To highlight the issue, the HPA launched the leaflet, *Breastfeeding and returning to work*.

This contains information on the benefits of continuing to breastfeed, explains the rights breastfeeding mothers have to support from their employer, and outlines what facilities and equipment mothers will need to express milk at work. It also highlights the benefits for employers from supporting these mothers, including a reduced need to take on and

train new staff, less time off to care for sick children and increased morale and loyalty – making the business more attractive to future employees.

At the launch, Roy McClelland, Principal of Kells and Connor Primary School, said: “As a father I feel it is important to enable women to keep breastfeeding. As an employer this has actually been very easy to do and is just about being flexible and valuing your staff. This has not interfered with our work requirements in any way and in fact has been beneficial both for the employer and employee.” The HPA has also produced a leaflet to support employers, *Promoting breastfeeding for mothers returning to work: a guide for employers*.

Both leaflets may be obtained by contacting central health promotion resource services and are available to download at <http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk>

GAIN convenes mastitis working group

The Guidelines and Audit Implementation Network (GAIN), the new clinical and social care audit and guidelines body for Northern Ireland, has convened a multidisciplinary working group tasked with developing regional guidelines on the prevention, management and treatment of mastitis.

Janet Calvert, Regional Breastfeeding Coordinator, is chairperson of this group and work is well underway to ensure the guidelines are user-friendly for all involved in supporting breastfeeding mothers.

The primary aim of regional guidelines for mastitis is to ensure women have access to information and that health professionals are able to provide effective care and treatment based on the best available evidence. It is hoped that the guidelines will be disseminated for implementation in the next year.

Further information about the work of GAIN can be viewed at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Baby Friendly Initiative statement on dummy use

The Baby Friendly Initiative has issued a statement on the use of dummies, in response to queries from health professionals about information leaflets which suggest that parents settle their baby to sleep with a dummy to reduce the risk of sudden infant death.

The Baby Friendly Initiative exists to support health care facilities to implement best practice standards for breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is an important public health issue and its impact on the health of mothers and babies has been well documented.

A recent review of the impact of breastfeeding in the developed world has also confirmed that breastfeeding is associated with a reduction in the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome.¹ It is therefore crucial that health professionals ensure that mothers are provided with information and support which will enable them to initiate and continue to breastfeed for as long as possible.

Dummy use has been negatively associated with both duration and exclusivity of breastfeeding and therefore the standards for Step 9 of the BFI's *Ten steps to successful breastfeeding* and Point 4 of the *Seven point plan for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in community health care settings* state that all breastfeeding mothers should be discouraged from using teats and dummies during the establishment of breastfeeding.²

Research has shown that the mechanism used to suck on a dummy differs from how a baby feeds on the breast. Sucking on a dummy can therefore interfere with a baby's ability to breastfeed effectively during the crucial early weeks when breastfeeding is being established.^{3,4,5} Dummy use can also interfere with demand feeding if mothers misinterpret feeding cues and use a dummy to settle or pacify their baby rather than offering a breastfeed.^{6,7}

Frequent, baby-led feeding is essential to establish and maintain a good milk supply and anything which interferes with this will result in less than optimal lactation. As insufficient milk is the most common reason cited by women for stopping breastfeeding earlier than they would have wanted, it is essential that information provided for mothers will enable them to continue to breastfeed for as long as they choose.⁸

The Baby Friendly Initiative recognises the dilemma which

health professionals may face when discussing this issue with mothers given the apparently contradictory nature of the evidence. We would, however, maintain our usual position that mothers require effective information in order that they can make a fully informed choice with regard to dummy use.

In addition to the preceding information, the following points may be useful when discussing this issue with mothers:

1. The Foundation for the Study of Infant Death guidance states that dummies should not be used by breastfeeding babies for the first four weeks in order to allow for breastfeeding to become established. Experience has shown that a small minority of babies may require longer to establish breastfeeding, and health professionals should therefore monitor this on an individual basis.
2. Babies who are successfully breastfeeding at four weeks of age may refuse to accept a dummy and mothers should be reassured that this is common. It is important not to force a baby to take a dummy but to reiterate the importance of continued breastfeeding as a means of protecting the health and wellbeing of the baby.
3. Mothers who have made a decision to use a dummy after breastfeeding has been established should be advised to use the dummy only when settling the baby to sleep. Teaching mothers to recognise feeding cues and discussing the importance of not replacing breastfeeds with dummy use will help ensure maintenance of a good milk supply.

References

1. Ip S et al. Breastfeeding and maternal health outcomes in developed countries. AHRQ Publication. 2007, No. 07-E007.
2. Joanna Briggs Institute. Early childhood pacifier use in relation to breastfeeding, SIDS, infection and dental malocclusion. *Nursing Standard*, 2006, 20(38):52-55.
3. Righard L, Alade MO. Breastfeeding and the use of pacifiers. *Birth*, 1997, 2:116-120.
4. Woolridge M. The 'anatomy' of infant sucking, *Midwifery*, 1986(a) 2(4):164-171.
5. Nowak AJ, Smith WL, Erenberg A. Imaging evaluation of artificial nipples during bottle feeding. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 1994, 148:40-42.
6. Victora CG et al. Pacifier use and short breastfeeding duration: cause, consequence or coincidence? *Pediatrics*, 1997, 99(3):445-453.
7. Barros FC et al. Use of pacifiers is associated with decreased breastfeeding duration. *Pediatrics*, 1995(a) 95(4):497-499.
8. Bolling K et al. Infant feeding survey 2005. The Information Centre, 2007. NHS.

Oklahoma visitor

In May this year, Margaret Back RN IBCLC, who works in INTEGRIS Hospital and is Co-Chair of the State Coalition of Breastfeeding Advocates for the state of Oklahoma, contacted the HPA in advance of a visit to Northern Ireland.

Margaret spent some time with the Regional Breastfeeding Coordinator hearing about breastfeeding in Northern Ireland and she was particularly interested in visiting a Baby Friendly Hospital to hear how it had achieved its success.

At the Ulster Hospital, Margaret spoke to Betty Cameron, Breastfeeding Coordinator, and to Sister Helen Wallace, Coordinator of the 'home from home' midwife-led unit. Margaret was really impressed with the unit and was particularly delighted to have the opportunity to meet a new mother and baby who were enjoying skin-to-skin contact and a first breastfeed.



➤ Margaret Back with Betty Cameron, Breastfeeding Coordinator, Ulster Hospital.

NICE maternal and child nutrition guidelines

In March 2008 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) published new guidance on maternal and child nutrition. This comprehensive document provides important recommendations on improving the nutrition of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and children under five in low income households.

Recommendations relating to breastfeeding advise commissioners and managers to:

- adopt a multifaceted approach across different settings to increase breastfeeding rates, including health professional training, peer support programmes and education of pregnant women, followed by proactive support in the postnatal period;
- implement a structured programme, using the Baby Friendly Initiative as a minimum standard, to encourage breastfeeding, and subject this programme to external evaluation;
- ensure there is a written, audited and well-communicated breastfeeding policy and identify a health professional responsible for the implementation of the breastfeeding policy.

Recommendations for pregnant women, mothers and babies under six months include:

- Women should be given information on the benefits of taking vitamin D supplements during pregnancy and while breastfeeding at the first antenatal booking visit.
- Mothers should be encouraged to breastfeed during antenatal consultations, with those least likely to breastfeed and those with a family history of allergy particularly targeted.
- Antenatal education in the last trimester of pregnancy should include an informal group session focused on how to help mother and baby achieve effective positioning and attachment.
- Before discharge from hospital, breastfeeding mothers should be able to demonstrate effective positioning and attachment and be able to identify signs that baby is feeding well.
- All breastfeeding mothers should receive contact details for local voluntary breastfeeding support to compliment NHS support.

- Peer supporters should contact new mothers within 48 hours of discharge from hospital and offer ongoing support according to the mother's needs.
- Where there is a family history of allergy, mothers should be encouraged to feed their baby only on breastmilk for the first six months.
- Breastfeeding mothers should be advised that a healthy diet is important and that they do not need to modify their diet to breastfeed.
- Breastfeeding mothers should be advised that losing weight by eating healthily and taking regular exercise will not affect the quality or quantity of their milk.
- Mothers should be provided with ongoing, proactive breastfeeding support at home and advice should be recorded in the mother's hand-held records. Support should be provided to enable mothers to continue breastfeeding for as long as they choose.
- Babies should be weighed naked at birth, day five and day 10. Thereafter, healthy babies should be weighed (naked) no more than fortnightly and then at two, three and four months on well-calibrated digital scales.
- Breastfeeding mothers should receive information and advice on how to hand express milk and how to store milk (five days in the fridge at 4C or lower, two weeks in the freezer compartment of a fridge and six months in a domestic freezer at -18C or lower).
- When prescribing medication for a breastfeeding mother, guidance should be sought from the UK Drugs in Lactation Advisory Service or the Drugs and Lactation Database (LactMed).

The full guidelines can be downloaded from www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH11/Guidance

A quick reference guide is also available on www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH11/QuickRefGuide/pdf/English

Research in brief

Swede news for breastfeeders

A new study from Sweden suggests that women who breastfeed may reduce their risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis (RA) by half.

Researchers from Malmo University Hospital compared data from 136 women with RA to 544 without the condition. Women who had breastfed for 13 months or longer were half (OR: 0.46; 95% CI 0.24-0.91) as likely to develop rheumatoid arthritis as those who had never breastfed, while those who breastfed for between one and 12 months had a 25% decreased risk (OR: 0.74; 95% CI 0.45-1.20).

No protective effect was noted from simply having children and not breastfeeding, or from taking oral contraceptives.

The authors conclude that in this study, long-term breastfeeding, but not use of oral contraceptives, was associated with a significant reduction of the risk of RA.

Pikwer M, Bergstrom U, Nilsson J A, Jacobsson L, Berglund G, Turesson C. Breastfeeding, but not oral contraceptives, is associated with a reduced risk of rheumatoid arthritis. Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases 2008.

Breastfeeding linked to lower blood cholesterol

Research studies have suggested that infant feeding may result in long-term changes in cholesterol metabolism.

This systematic review of published observational studies aimed to examine whether breastfeeding is associated with lower blood cholesterol concentrations in adulthood (aged >16 years). Pooled data from 17 studies (17,498 subjects: 12,890 breastfed, 4,608 formula-fed) was used to calculate mean differences in total cholesterol concentrations (breastfed minus formula-fed).

The results showed that the mean total blood cholesterol was lower ($P = 0.037$) among those ever breastfed than among those fed formula milk (mean difference: -0.04 mmol/L; 95% CI: $-0.08, 0.00$ mmol/L).

The difference in cholesterol between infant feeding groups was larger ($P = 0.005$) and more consistent in seven studies that analysed 'exclusive' feeding patterns (-0.15 mmol/L; $-0.23, -0.06$ mmol/L) than in 10 studies that analysed non-exclusive feeding patterns (-0.01 mmol/L; $-0.06, 0.03$ mmol/L).

Adjustment for potential confounders, including socioeconomic position, body mass index, and smoking

status in adult life had minimal effect on these estimates.

The authors conclude that initial breastfeeding (particularly when exclusive) may be associated with lower blood cholesterol concentrations in later life.

Owen CG, Whincup PH, Kaye SJ, Martin RM, Davey Smith G, Cook DG, et al. Does initial breastfeeding lead to lower blood cholesterol in adult life? A quantitative review of the evidence. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2008; 88(2): p305-14.





PROBIT breastfeeding intervention study

The Promotion of Breastfeeding Intervention Trial (PROBIT) is a cluster-randomised trial of a breastfeeding promotion intervention based on the Baby Friendly Initiative.

The study aimed to assess the long-term effects of breastfeeding on child behaviour and maternal adjustment. A total of 17,046 healthy, breastfeeding mother-infant pairs were enrolled from 31 Belarusian maternity hospitals and affiliated polyclinics; 13,889 (81.5%) were followed up at 6.5 years.

Mothers and teachers completed a questionnaire on strengths and difficulties along with additional questions on behavioural problems. Mothers also answered questions about their relationships with their partner and child and their breastfeeding of subsequent children.

The intervention led to a large increase in exclusive breastfeeding at three months (43.3% vs 6.4%) and a significantly higher prevalence of any breastfeeding at all ages up to and including 12 months. The study found no significant effects on ratings for total difficulties, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, or prosocial behaviour.

The study did not find any evidence of treatment effects on marriage or on the mother's satisfaction with her relationships with her partner or child. However, the experimental intervention significantly increased the duration of any breastfeeding, and mothers in the experimental group were nearly twice as likely to breastfeed exclusively the next-born child for at least three months.

Kramer MS, Fombonne E, Igumnov S, Vanilovich I, Matush L, Mironova E, et al. Effects of prolonged and exclusive breastfeeding on child behavior and maternal adjustment: evidence from a large, randomized trial. Pediatrics 2008; 121(3): p435-4.

Breastfeeding review in BMJ

A review of breastfeeding in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) is a useful resource for clinicians who know that breastfeeding is crucial to infant health, but may be less aware of the potential longer term health benefits for mothers and babies in developed countries, such as obesity, blood pressure, cholesterol, and cancer.

Focusing mainly on developed countries, the review summarises the beneficial effects of breastfeeding on the health of children and mothers. It also highlights the importance of correct positioning and attachment at the breast and provides practical guidance for managing problems associated with breastfeeding.

The review outlines interventions in the hospital setting that are effective in increasing breastfeeding rates – including early skin-to-skin contact and implementing, as a minimum, the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative.

The article also draws attention to the issue of prescribing for breastfeeding mothers, provides guidance and resources for practitioners and highlights the new developments in infant growth charts and current controversies on HIV and donor breast milk.

Hoddinott P, Tappin D, Wright C. Breastfeeding. British Medical Journal 2008; 336(7649): p881-7.

DVD charts 'from bump to breastfeeding'

A DVD that captures the stories and experiences of breastfeeding mothers will be launched throughout the UK on 3 November 2008. The Northern Ireland launch will take place at the Stormont Hotel, Belfast. Invites to the launch will be sent in due course.

'From bump to breastfeeding' follows nine women and their families on their breastfeeding journey. It explores their

expectations and concerns as they prepare to have their baby, their experiences of learning how to breastfeed, and the places they go for support.

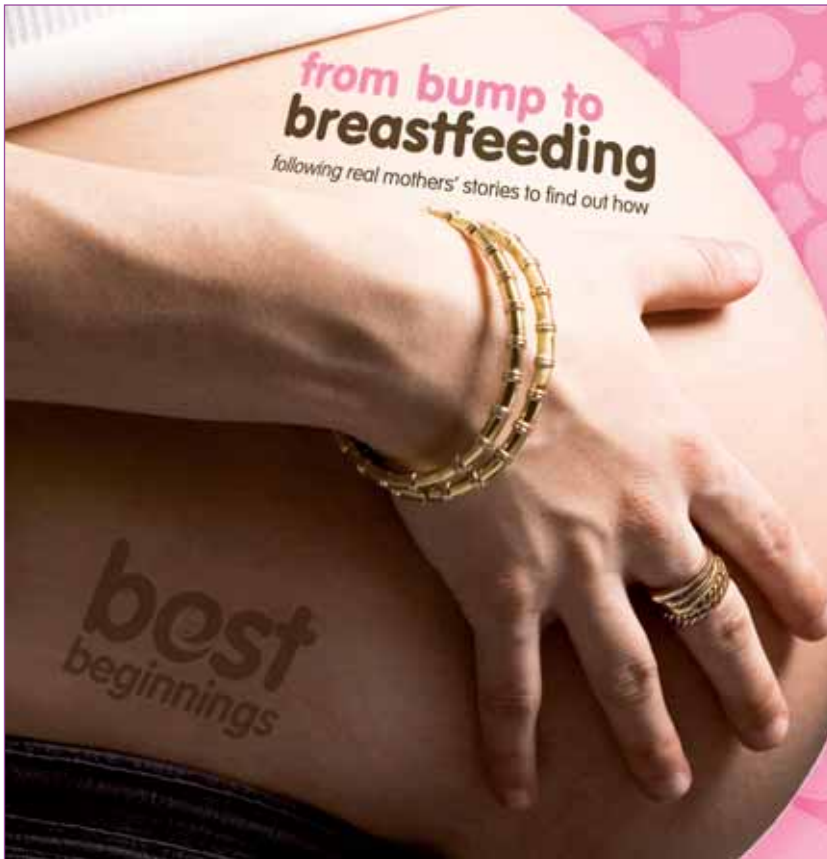
The resource provides positive breastfeeding information to mothers who are unsure about the decision to breastfeed and encourages those who do breastfeed to continue for longer. The DVD features local mother Linda Thompson, who now lives in Scotland but will be back in Northern Ireland to speak at the launch.

Around 100 guests, including pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, peer supporters, breastfeeding coordinators, parentcraft coordinators and midwives, are invited to the event.

The resource will be distributed through maternity units to all pregnant women. The HPA have also developed and distributed a poster to promote the DVD in maternity units.

The DVD has been produced by UK charity Best Beginnings in partnership with the Department of Health, NHS Health Scotland, Welsh Assembly Government, the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPA), RCM, CPHVA and UNICEF.

The DVD was made with support from all the relevant royal colleges and voluntary organisations and is the first of its kind demonstrating the support for breastfeeding nationwide.



Stage One Baby Friendly Awards

Several hospital and community facilities throughout Northern Ireland have been successful in the new Stage One assessment process in the past year. This is an important aspect of achieving UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation.

It involves making a detailed submission of documentation to an external assessor who then examines the evidence submitted. This is to ensure the evidence will support implementation of recognised best practice on the care and support of breastfeeding mothers and babies.

Documentation required for Stage One assessment includes a breastfeeding policy and parents' guide to the policy,

a detailed training curriculum and copies of all educational materials provided for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. Also required are checklists and handover of care forms used to support information-giving, as well as confirmation of compliance with the WHO International Code of Marketing.

The submission documents are signed by the head of service which ensures commitment at senior level to becoming Baby Friendly. This whole process helps to ensure that the groundwork is in place to enable the facility to move forward in an effective way and progress to Stage Two and Stage Three assessments.

Recent Stage One Awards in Northern Ireland include:

- Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast
- Royal-Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Belfast
- Erne Hospital, Enniskillen
- Gold and Dalriada Rural Sure Starts
- Community Services of Armagh Dungannon Area of SHSCT
- Community Services of Causeway Area of NHSCT

Full details about the staged approach to becoming a UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative accredited facility can be found on www.babyfriendly.org.uk

My role as Breastfeeding Coordinator, Royal-Jubilee Maternity Services



by Helen
McIlroy

I have worked in the Royal Maternity Hospital since I qualified as a midwife almost 30 years ago and have seen many changes in the health service in that time, not least in the care given to women and their babies with regard to breastfeeding.

In my early days as a midwife, few women breastfed and there was very little teaching for health professionals on either the theory or practice of breastfeeding. I began to develop my skills and knowledge in supporting women to breastfeed their babies, mostly by learning from the women themselves. I also had the good fortune to work with one very able midwife who shared her extensive knowledge and experience in breastfeeding issues with me.

Working in postnatal, I became skilled at 'latching babies on' for mothers but did not have the words to be able to tell them how to do it for themselves. The first time I heard 'positioning and attachment' put into words was when Chloe Fisher spoke at a conference in Belfast with a doll in her hands and explained how to position the baby and how to recognise effective feeding. I thought 'that is what I do' but had never been able to put into words.

Matters improved throughout the 1990s with the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) 'Ten steps to successful breastfeeding', setting out evidence-based standards for maternity units on the management of breastfeeding. The BFI three day breastfeeding management course helped me to develop my skills in teaching mothers how to help their babies achieve an effective latch and breastfeed comfortably.

In 2000 I passed the examination to become an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant and achieved a BSc Honours in Health Studies in 2003. At present I am completing my Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

A major change for maternity services occurred in 2000 with the amalgamation of the two largest maternity units in Belfast, the Royal Maternity and the Jubilee Maternity hospitals becoming the Royal-Jubilee Maternity Service (RJMS).

RJMS provides both a local and regional service for mothers and babies and includes the regional neonatal intensive care unit. The Review of Public Administration brought about another huge change as RJMS, previously part of the Royal Hospitals Trust, became part of the much larger Belfast Trust.

In 2007, RJMS saw 5,382 mothers give birth to 5,478 babies. In the same year more than half of the women (55%) started breastfeeding, with 10% stopping by the time they went home from hospital. The initiation rate has increased steadily over the past 15 years from less than 30% initiation. Disappointingly, the percentage of women who stop breastfeeding before discharge from hospital has stayed roughly the same.

Over the years I have worked in antenatal, delivery and postnatal but my main area of interest has been postnatal. I have always enjoyed helping women get to know their babies, and breastfeeding has seemed to me to be the most effective way of helping mothers build that special relationship with their infant. I have also gained experience in management, spending a year as acting nursing officer in 1988 and later acting H grade during the period of the amalgamation.

My current role is Breastfeeding Coordinator in RJMS with a remit to increase breastfeeding rates and to coordinate the project to achieve BFI accreditation. This has involved developing and delivering training programmes in breastfeeding management for all staff who care for mothers and babies in RJMS.

For midwives and staff nurses in the neonatal unit, there is a two day course which most nursing auxiliaries have also undertaken. For medical staff, there is a one hour session and there are awareness sessions for ancillary and clerical staff. Having achieved Stage One of BFI, we are preparing to undertake Stage Two, the assessment of staff knowledge and skills, in February 2009 with our colleagues in the Mater maternity unit, also part of the Belfast Trust.

Because of the size of the unit and the number of staff involved, achieving BFI accreditation is a daunting task. Having the support of the Breastfeeding Coordinator in the Mater maternity unit, particularly in the joint teaching of midwives and in carrying out audits, is of great help and very much appreciated.

One thing I have learned is that a satisfying breastfeeding experience for a mother and baby does not depend on the colour of the woman's hair ('you will get sore nipples because you have fair/red hair') or the baby's birth weight ('won't be able to breastfeed, baby too small'; 'won't have enough milk, baby too big') or if there is an 'r' in the month.

To enable a woman to breastfeed her baby for as long as she chooses, the midwife or lactation consultant, volunteer breastfeeding counsellor or whoever is assisting the mother and baby needs to be able to give clear factual information to the woman and her partner about the practices that support breastfeeding (skin-to-skin contact, positioning and attachment, demand feeding, rooming-in, no supplements) in a timely and kindly manner.

I look forward to the time when the standards of the Baby Friendly Initiative are just that - the standard (or usual) practice of all those who support breastfeeding families.

Conferences and courses

Midwifery Today Conference: The Epic Journey of Midwifery and Birth

22–26 October 2008
Bad Wildbad, Germany
www.midwiferytoday.com
Tel: 049 1 541 344 7438
Email: conference@midwiferytoday.com

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative Annual Conference 2008

26–27 November 2008
Glasgow Exhibition Centre
www.babyfriendly.org.uk
Tel: 0844 801 2414

Successful Breastfeeding: The Evidence and the Practice

10–11 December 2008 Beeches Management Centre, Craigavon
25–26 February 2009 Knockbracken Health Care Park, Belfast
23–24 September 2009 Beeches Management Centre, Craigavon
Contact Liz McGourty or Fiona Bradley on Tel: 028 9056 1353 or
Email: enquiries@cladybmc.n-i.nhs.uk

La Leche League Conference

7–8 March 2009
Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co Kildare
Contact Deirdre McDonnell on deemcdee@esatclear.ie
or Tel: 00 353 1 4947316.

Lactation Consultants of Great Britain

Conference, Master Classes and AGM
3–4 April 2009
St Swithun's School, Alresford Road,
Winchester, Hampshire
www.lcgb.org/study.htm
Tel: 01794 514739

Breastfeeding Update

9 April 2009
Knockbracken Health Care Park, Belfast
Contact Liz McGourty or Fiona Bradley on Tel: 028 9056 1353 or
Email: enquiries@cladybmc.n-i.nhs.uk

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative breastfeeding management course (3 days)

30 April–2 May 2009
Venue TBC
Contact Lesley Blackstock at the HPA on Tel: 028 9031 1611 or
Email: l.blackstock@hpani.org.uk

National Childbirth Trust Annual Conference 2009

27–28 June 2009
Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

Nutrition and Nurture in Infancy and Childhood: Bio-Cultural Perspectives

8–10 September 2009
University of Central Lancashire
Grange over Sands, Cumbria



Keeping abreast is published by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland on behalf of the Breastfeeding Strategy Implementation Group.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the HPA.

Editorial office

Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HS.
Telephone: 028 9031 1611 (Voice/Minicom)
Fax: 028 9031 1711
www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk

Revised European blueprint for action

In June 2004, *Protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in Europe: a blueprint for action* was launched in Dublin Castle. This document was produced by a team of breastfeeding experts from throughout Europe as a model to guide and support national and local breastfeeding policy and planning.

Since 2004, several projects have been undertaken to test the usefulness of the blueprint. A meeting was convened in Trieste, Italy, earlier this year to report back and agree on a revised blueprint, which has now been published.

The revised blueprint is quite similar to the 2004 version, but a new layout means it can now be used as an effective planning tool for both policy makers and professionals involved in the development of action plans. It also contains survey results from all participating countries and provides an updated overview of the current situation.

The 2008 revised blueprint can be viewed at
www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk