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# Keeping abreast



## Breastfeeding welcome here celebrates its first birthday!

The *Breastfeeding welcome here* scheme is celebrating a successful first year. There are now over 70 businesses and community facilities in the scheme, ranging from coffee shops, restaurants and hotels to community and leisure centres, town halls and libraries, so congratulations to the mothers and health professionals who have been working hard to promote the scheme in their local areas over the last 12 months.

The scheme has also gained support from Investing for Health Officers who have

worked with health promotion and breastfeeding professionals to promote it to the Councils in their areas. As a result, Newry and Mourne District Council, Craigavon Borough Council and Banbridge District Council have signed up a selection of their public premises.

Throughout the year the scheme has continually caught the attention of the media, with coverage from BBC, UTV, local radio stations and newspapers. This coverage has been generated by everyone involved in the scheme and is very important, as keeping breastfeeding at the forefront of the news agenda in Northern Ireland can only help to make it more socially acceptable here.

**Main Photo** – Local cultural centre, An Chultúrlann, is now a member of the *Breastfeeding welcome here* scheme. Pictured are, L to R: baby Ryan McKenna, Fideilme McKenna and Eimear Ní Mhathúna, Director of An Chultúrlann.

The full list of members can be viewed at [www.breastfedbabies.org](http://www.breastfedbabies.org) If you are interested in promoting the scheme in your area, please call Janet Calvert at the HPA on 028 9031 1611.

## Peer support seminar

The HPA and the Breastfeeding Strategy Implementation Group (BSIG) held a half day seminar in Ross Park Hotel, Kells on 10 May 2006 entitled *Developing and sustaining peer support programmes for breastfeeding*.

The day started with Gerry Bleakney, Health Promotion Commissioner at the EHSSB and a member of the BSIG, providing an excellent overview of the evidence and issues around breastfeeding peer support programmes. Then the two key speakers shared their experiences of working with the 'Little Angels' project in Blackburn. Sue Henry and Kirsty Hymers, a young breastfeeding mum who appeared in the Channel 4 programme "Extraordinary Breastfeeding", outlined the significant resources which have been invested in establishing and maintaining a very successful peer support programme in Blackburn. Their passion and commitment to breastfeeding was clearly evident.

Four presentations on very different peer support projects in Northern Ireland followed. Mary McCormick, a midwife with Smile Sure Start, talked about the challenges and rewards of developing and sustaining peer support in North and West Belfast. Then Donna Sloan of the Women's Health Initiative project in Mullaghbawn gave a very clear, thought provoking presentation on how women who have not previously breastfed can be effectively used to provide breastfeeding information and support. Sandra Gordon, Sure Start health visitor and Violet Lennox, peer support mother from Newtownabbey Sure Start outlined how they used the La Leche League of Great Britain peer support programme to train mothers and support their breastfeeding programme in Rathcoole. Finally, Audrey Moore of Altnagelvin hospital and Edel Byrne of Action on Breastfeeding in Castlederg provided useful insight into peer support in the Castlederg and Strabane areas.

This very useful day provided important focus and appreciation of the different models of peer support. The challenge for the future of peer support will be to ensure that local projects are well evaluated so that valuable lessons can be learned.

# National Breastfe

Many activities were held throughout Northern Ireland to celebrate National Breastfeeding Awareness Week (NBAW, 14-20 May 2006). Here's just a taste of what went on!



Antrim Hospital, recently re-accredited as a Baby Friendly Hospital, highlighted the importance of skin-to-skin contact and Kangaroo Mother Care for all mothers and babies using display boards outside the hospital canteen and in the antenatal clinic waiting areas (pictured). The hospital breastfeeding coordinator,

Gillian Anderson, also visited local schools to increase awareness of and discuss attitudes to breastfeeding in Northern Ireland with Year 12 girls.

Breastfeeding mothers across Armagh and Dungannon enjoyed coffee mornings in Dungannon, Coalisland, Clogher, Markethill and Tandragee, and a day of pampering, prizes and lunch. The event 'Pamper Me from Head to Toe' held at Parkanaur College, Dungannon, provided the opportunity for breastfeeding mums to treat themselves with reflexology, beauty treatments, manicures, aromatherapy, massage and make up sessions (pictured).



## » Getting a Healthy Start

The Healthy Start scheme, which replaces the Welfare Food Scheme, will begin to be implemented in Northern Ireland during November 2006.

The new voucher system will provide equal financial support for bottle and breastfeeding families on low incomes, allowing mothers to choose from a wide variety of healthy foods. Each voucher is worth £2.80 and can be exchanged for milk, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables or infant formula milk at participating retail outlets across the UK. Free vitamin supplements

will also be available through Healthy Start. Discounted infant formula is no longer available for purchase in Trust facilities.

The scheme will provide opportunities for health professionals to pass on important messages about nutrition and other health advice which may help improve the rates of breastfeeding among low income groups. For more information about Healthy Start, visit the website at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) or contact the Investing for Health Team on 028 9052 0526.



Pictured: Pictured at the seminar are, L to R: Gerry Bleakney, Health Promotion Commissioner, Kirsty Hymers and Sue Henry, from the Little Angels project, and Newtownabbey Sure Start peer support mum Violet Lennox with her daughter Margaret.

# Feeding Awareness Week 2006



The Maternity Unit at the Erne Hospital, Enniskillen received its UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Certificate of Commitment during NBAW.



In Down Lisburn Trust, NBAW was highlighted at the weekly meetings of the six breastfeeding support groups.



The ABC Breastfeeding group in Castlederg held a coffee morning to celebrate both NBAW and the group's first anniversary. The coffee morning was very well attended by mums and mums-to-be with lots of prizes in the draws donated by local businesses.



Homefirst Trust was also very busy raising awareness about breastfeeding through presentations at health clinics across the trust and at well attended coffee mornings in Cookstown and Ballymena. In Newtownabbey, a presentation on breastfeeding was held at the Abbeycentre (pictured).

## Protecting breastfeeding and the UK law

The WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes aims to provide safe and adequate nutrition for infants, through the protection and promotion of breastfeeding, and by ensuring appropriate use and marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

The Code was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981 as a "minimum requirement" to protect infant health and all member states were urged to support the implementation of all provisions of the Code and translate these into national legislation, regulations or other suitable measures. Since then, over 70 countries have implemented the Code and subsequent resolutions, either fully or partially, in legislation.

Currently in the UK not all provisions of the international code are enforced by law, and baby milk companies continue to undermine both the voluntary international code and UK law. A full copy of the UK law can be viewed on [www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/)

breastfeeding in the "Useful reading" section.

Examples of how companies currently violate UK law are: by advertising products other than infant formula (for example follow-on formula); producing leaflets on other matters; encouraging mothers to instigate contact through care lines; and targeting health professionals. Recently concerns have been raised that some supermarkets have been breaking the UK law by having point of sale promotions and advertising reduced cost infant formula in newspapers.

Local councils here are responsible for enforcing the law in relation to breastmilk substitutes and baby food. Any suspected violations of the LAW only, not the voluntary code, should be reported to the appropriate Principal Environmental Health Officer (PEHO).

Further information about the lobby seeking to strengthen UK legislation on this issue can be found on [www.babyfeedinglawgroup.org.uk](http://www.babyfeedinglawgroup.org.uk)

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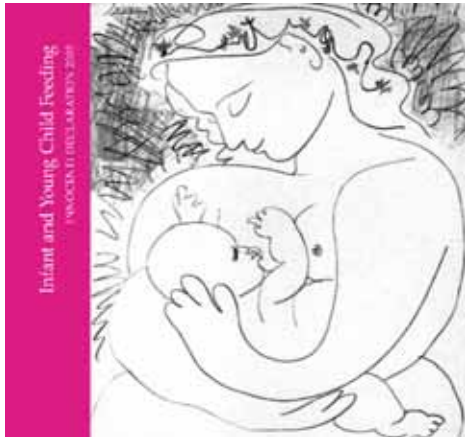
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# 1990-2005: celebrating the Innocenti Declaration



Fifteen years ago the *Innocenti Declaration on the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding* clearly outlined an international agenda of ambitious targets for action. Over this period, great strides have been made in achieving these targets, reflected in the 15% increase in exclusive breastfeeding worldwide. This rise in breastfeeding has proved crucial in saving the lives of thousands of infants.

Despite a global increase in breastfeeding, the targets of the Innocenti Declaration have still not been fully met and further

progress is needed. The vision for the future is to create:

*"an environment that enables mothers, families and other caregivers to make informed choices about optimal feeding for infants and young children and to receive adequate support to implement them in order to achieve the highest attainable standard of health and development."*

The document *Celebrating Innocenti 1990-2005* can be viewed on [www.unicef-icdc.org](http://www.unicef-icdc.org)

## Baby Friendly news

Recent UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) certificate of commitment awards in Northern Ireland include the Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Armagh and Dungannon Health and Social Services Trust, Craigavon Area Hospital and Lower Ards Peninsula Sure Start. Northern Ireland now has five full awards and 13 certificates of commitment, so congratulations to all involved.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) now recommends that the Baby Friendly Initiative should be adopted throughout the healthcare system. In new clinical guidelines on postnatal care published by NICE in July, the

implementation of the BFI best practice standards in hospital and primary care settings is a key recommendation. The postnatal care guidelines can be seen on [www.nice.org.uk/CG037](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG037)

The HPA and UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative have recently strengthened their commitment to raising standards of breastfeeding support within the health service in Northern Ireland.

A service level agreement has been developed which enables the Regional Breastfeeding Coordinator, as part of her role within the HPA, to provide support for Trusts in Northern Ireland who are seeking to achieve or maintain BFI accreditation. This is the first collaboration of its kind in the UK.

Pictured: Mr William McKee, Chief Executive of the Royal Group of Hospitals receives the certificate of commitment from Regional Breastfeeding Coordinator, Janet Calvert.



« Pictured: Management, staff and mums from Lower Ards Peninsula Sure Start celebrate achieving their certificate of commitment.

# Research in brief



## Early initiation of breastfeeding reduces the risk of neonatal death

New research carried out in Ghana shows the importance of starting to breastfeed immediately after birth. Data on 10,947 breastfed babies was analysed (excluding those who died within one day of birth) and the risk of neonatal death was found to increase with increased delay in initiation of

breastfeeding from one hour after the birth to the seventh day. Late initiation (after day one) of breastfeeding was associated with a 2.4-fold increase in neonatal death.

The study also examined the risk of mortality associated with different types of breastfeeding and found it to be higher in infants who were not exclusively breastfed. The risk of death was four times higher in "partially breastfed" infants who were given milk-based fluids or solids in addition to breast milk.

The authors estimate that 16% of neonatal deaths could be avoided if all infants were breastfed from day one, and 22% with breastfeeding within the first hour after birth. They suggest that programmes to promote breastfeeding in developing nations should emphasise early initiation, as well as exclusive breastfeeding.

Edmond KM et al. *Delayed breastfeeding initiation increases risk of neonatal mortality*. Pediatrics 2006;117:380-386.

## Infant Feeding Survey

Early results from the 2005 Infant Feeding Survey, based on responses from 12,290 mothers in the UK, show an increase in breastfeeding rates over the last 10 years. Rates in Northern Ireland have steadily increased from 45% in 1995, to 54% in 2000 and 63% in 2005.

Women here are still less likely to breastfeed than those in England and Wales (77% in 2005) or Scotland (70%), but it is encouraging to note that between 2000 and 2005 the increase in breastfeeding rates was greater for Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK.

Historically, first time mothers are more likely to breastfeed than mothers of second or later babies, although the gap is closing. Between 2000 and 2005, breastfeeding rates in the UK increased more among mothers of second or later babies compared to first time babies.

Within Northern Ireland, increases in breastfeeding rates were broadly similar across all socioeconomic groups. UK-wide, breastfeeding rates have increased among mothers of all educational levels; however in Northern Ireland an increase was only seen among mothers who had remained in education beyond the age of 18 (78% in 2005 compared to 71% in 2000).

The initial results are available at [www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/breastfeed2005/ifsreport/file](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/breastfeed2005/ifsreport/file) and the full report will be published in spring 2007.

## Breastfeeding may reduce risk of type 2 diabetes

A study from the USA has shown that breastfeeding may reduce a mother's risk of type 2 diabetes and that risk decreases with increasing duration of breastfeeding.

Researchers used data from two cohorts, 83,585 women in the Nurses' Health Study (NHS) and 73,418 women in the Nurses' Health Study II (NHS II) who had given birth to one or more children.

Women who had ever breastfed had a reduced risk for type 2 diabetes compared to those who had never breastfed. In both cohorts after adjustment for factors including

number of children, BMI at age 18 years, diet, physical activity, family history of diabetes and smoking status, each additional year of lactation was associated with a reduced risk for type 2 diabetes.

In those women who had given birth in the last 15 years, each additional year of lactation reduced the risk of diabetes by 15% among NHS participants and by 14% among NHS II participants.

The authors conclude that lactation may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes in young and middle-aged women, possibly by improving glucose homeostasis.

Stuebe AM et al. *Duration of lactation and incidence of type 2 diabetes*. JAMA 2005;294:2601-2610.

## Diabetes and breastfeeding

The report *Pregnancy in women with type 1 and type 2 diabetes in 2002-2003*, published by The Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) in October 2005, outlines the results of a study conducted as part of the national enquiry programme aimed at improving the quality of maternity care and pregnancy outcomes for women with type 1 or type 2 diabetes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Information was collected on 3,808 pregnancies of women diagnosed with pre-existing type 1 or type 2 diabetes. This report focuses on standards of care for these women and their babies, from preconception to the postnatal period. The study showed some interesting results in relation to breastfeeding, eg only 53% of

women with diabetes intended to breastfeed compared to an initial breastfeeding rate of 69% in the general population. Some babies in the study (9%) were given supplemental feed or glucose because of local routine practice only, possibly compromising the establishment of breastfeeding, and it is suggested that interventions should be guided by blood glucose level and clinical assessment.

This important study recognises that breast milk is particularly important for babies at risk and should therefore be the food of choice for babies of mothers with diabetes who are at risk of hypoglycaemia. Local services should support practices and education that encourage women to consider breastfeeding, for all groups of babies, but especially those vulnerable to neonatal complications or risk of diabetes in later life.

The full report can be seen on [www.cemach.org.uk](http://www.cemach.org.uk)

## Conferences and courses

### All Island Breastfeeding Conference

Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin  
6 October 2006  
Contact Naomi Boland on 00353 12744295  
or email Naomi.boland1@maild.hse.ie

### UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative conference

Cardiff International Arena, Cardiff  
28 and 29 November 2006  
To book a place visit [www.babyfriendly.org.uk](http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk)  
or telephone 0870 6063377

### La Leche League of Ireland conference

11 and 12 March 2007  
Westport Woods Hotel, Westport, Co Mayo  
Contact Carol Feller on 00353 214776197  
or email carolfeller@gmail.com

### Successful breastfeeding: the evidence and the practice

12, 19, 26 January 2007, Belfast  
3, 10, 17 May 2007, Craigavon  
Contact Liz McGourty on 028 9056 1353

### UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative courses and workshops

- Breastfeeding management course  
6, 7, 8 December 2006, London
- Auditing practices to support breastfeeding  
4 October 2006, London
- Delivering in-house education  
5 October 2006, London

To book places visit [www.babyfriendly.org](http://www.babyfriendly.org)  
or telephone 020 7312 7652

# Assessing weight gain in exclusively breastfed babies

Monitoring and recording the weight of an infant on a percentile chart is an important part of our child health surveillance programme. The contact with parents allows opportunities to provide information and support, and some mothers find it reassuring and a boost to their confidence in their ability to breastfeed.

However, weighing can also cause anxiety to both parents and health professionals. A lack of appreciation that breastfed babies usually have accelerated growth in the first few months, followed by a dip below the chart percentile at around three or four months, can cause anxiety. This dip is now thought to be physiological rather than a cause for concern.<sup>1</sup>

Recent debate among practitioners has been about whether or not the percentile charts currently used in the Parent Held Child Health Record, known as the UK90 charts, are suitable for exclusively breastfed babies. Some professionals and parents have been led to believe that the UK90 charts are solely based on bottlefed babies. This is actually not the case; rather, these charts are based on a data set of babies from England of which 120 babies were breastfed, 69 mixed fed and 63 formula fed.

Breast from birth charts have been produced by the Child Growth Foundation, based on the 120 breastfed babies of the UK90 data set.<sup>2</sup> However, the weights were recorded between 1984 -1988 and while these babies were breastfed for at least 24 weeks, most would have started solids by 15 weeks of age. Interestingly, the reason why many would prefer to use a breast from birth chart is the mistaken belief that a lower weight gain would be expected in the early months. In fact the reverse is the case - a breastfed baby should show a more accelerated weight gain in the first few months than a bottlefed baby.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently produced growth reference charts for breastfed babies, which further confirm that the growth patterns of breastfed and bottlefed babies are different. The new charts may mean that more children are classified as overweight and fewer as slightly underweight. It is not yet known if

the new WHO growth charts will be adopted in the UK.



Where there is a need to increase a breastfed baby's milk intake, there are a number of effective measures available before artificial supplements need to be considered, such as:

- taking a breastfeeding history;
- optimising positioning and attachment;
- helping the mother recognise effective breastfeeding;
- encouraging more frequent breastfeeding;
- continuing with night feeds;
- avoiding the use of a dummy;
- supplementation of breastfeeds with expressed breastmilk.

The question arises: are we ready for breast from birth charts in Northern Ireland when so few of our babies are breastfed beyond the first few weeks? Would the use of breast from birth charts improve support for breastfeeding mothers or could it increase the likelihood of supplementation? There is no doubt that the new WHO charts provide the most up-to-date guidance on normal expected growth in breastfed babies – the recognised gold standard in childhood nutrition – but when we adopt them we also need to ensure that best practice is in place and that health professionals are confident in the support they provide to breastfeeding families.

1. Sachs M, Dykes F, Carter B. *Weight monitoring of breastfed babies in the United Kingdom – interpreting, explaining and intervening*. Maternal and Child Nutrition 2005;1: 63-67.

2. Fry, T. *The new 'Breast from Birth' growth charts*. Journal of Family Health Care 2003;13: 124-125.



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

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