



THE BABY  
FRIENDLY  
INITIATIVE



**UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE**  
**CREATING A BABY FRIENDLY**  
**FOUNDATION**

**A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

**NOVEMBER 2016**

# INTRODUCTION

This document outlines a proposal for taking forward the work of the Baby Friendly Initiative. The programme is now 20 years old and has had a significant impact on policy, practice and attitudes around infant feeding and parent-infant relationship building in UK public services. The proposal has been drafted following consultation with academics, policy makers and Unicef UK's National Designation Committee.

Throughout the document, the re-formed Baby Friendly Initiative is referred to as 'The Baby Friendly Foundation'; however, it should be noted that this has yet to be confirmed as the final name. Further scoping and consultation is required before the exact structure and title of the organisation can be decided.

At the end of the document you will find a proposed timeline for the development and introduction of the Baby Friendly Foundation. To help us progress this work, we would really like to know what you think. Therefore, if you work with babies and their mothers in any capacity we would be grateful if you could read this document and [complete the online survey](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bffoundation) (https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bffoundation) by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

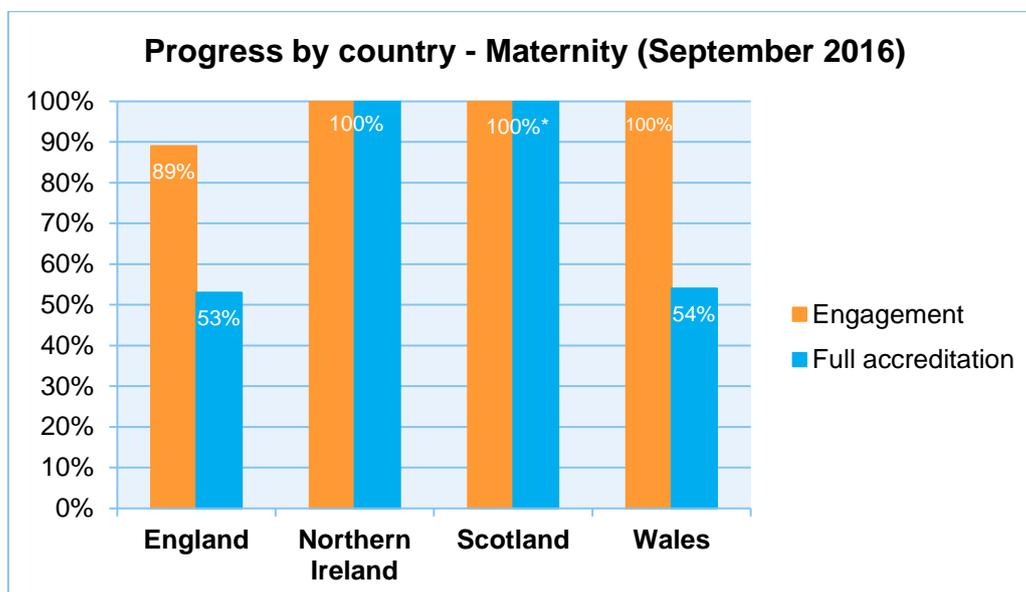
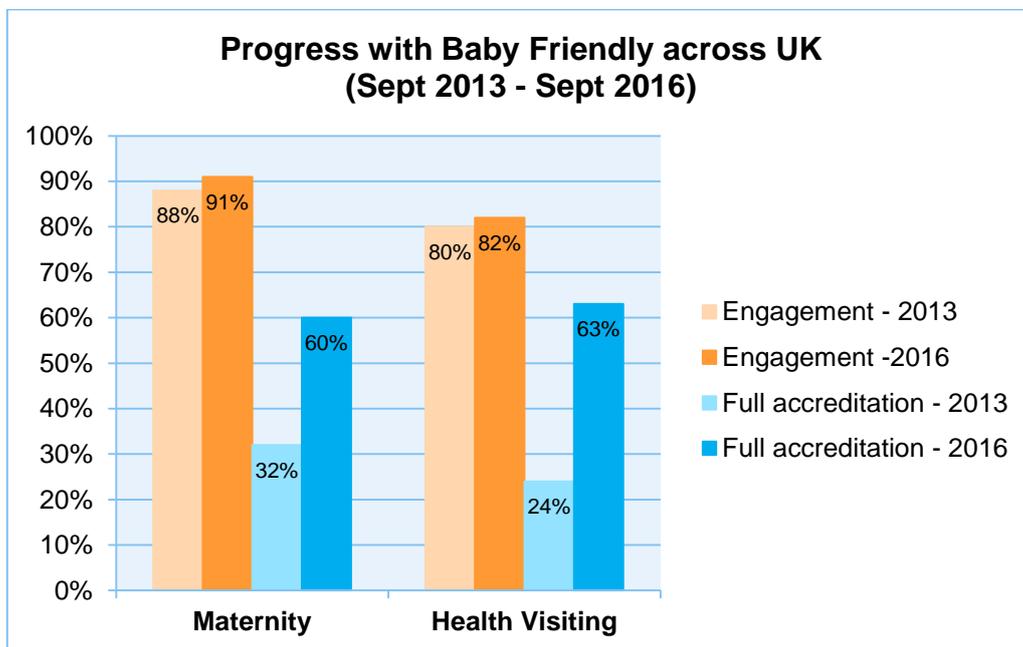
Once we have your feedback, we will amend the proposal and take it to key national groups and one-to-one meetings to develop it further. Our aim is to have a final plan ready to launch at the 2017 Baby Friendly conference.



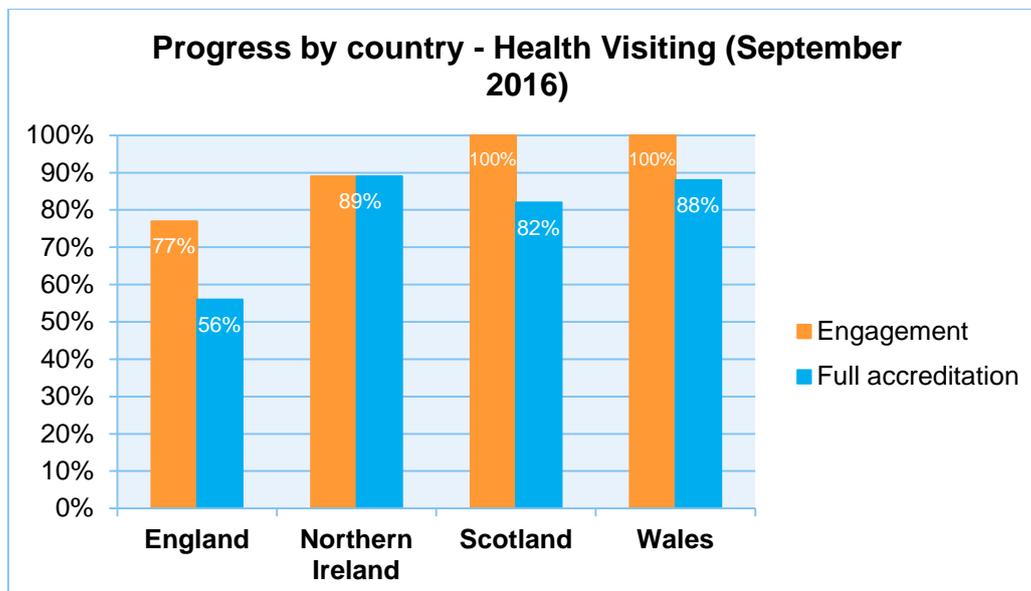
# BACKGROUND

The Baby Friendly Initiative is a global programme of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Unicef which aims to improve practice for infant feeding and early parent-infant relationship building in health care settings. The programme was established in the 1990s and has been running in the UK for over 20 years. It is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), as well as in numerous other national policies and guidelines in all four countries of the UK.

Engagement with the Baby Friendly process has changed significantly over the past three years. The number of maternity and health visiting services that have moved from a Stage 1 or 2 accreditation to full accreditation has doubled and in Scotland and Northern Ireland the number of services reaching full accreditation is now nearing 100%.



\*Three units pending re-assessment



The programme has also recently been expanded to include universities, neonatal units and children’s centres and engagement with these programmes has been increasing during 2016 with the first accreditations made.

Over the course of the Baby Friendly programme, Unicef UK has taken a significant leadership role in protecting, supporting and promoting excellence in infant feeding practice and in wider child rights issues for babies such as relationship building and early development. We have long been supported by leading experts in this field, who give their time to ensure that the programme is intellectually rigorous, credible and realistic. We work with governments to provide advice and support with policy and guidelines and act as a convenor for those working to improve infant feeding, including running the National Infant Feeding Network (NIFN - a network of 700 infant feeding specialists working in public services) and enabling the leading mother support groups to meet, communicate and have a voice.

Unicef UK is often looked to as the intellectual lead on issues that affect infant feeding, convening experts to produce evidence-based statements when new research or controversies arise. We act as the chief source of new information for

many supporters with a comprehensive website, research database and regular news and research e-alerts. We provide a major educational opportunity for health professionals, setting standards for health professional pre- and post- registration training and running numerous short courses, including Train the Trainer courses and the largest annual conference of its type in Europe.

While the UK has seen large increases in the initiation of breastfeeding since the introduction of Baby Friendly, low continuation rates persist. Therefore, we are increasingly moving our advocacy towards campaigning to highlight the need for national leadership and co-ordination, as well as the possible effect of significant cuts to services, which threaten the health of babies and their mothers.

# RATIONALE



The Baby Friendly Initiative is a large scale change programme; its objective is to improve the care offered via public services to babies, their mothers and families. With almost all maternity and health visiting services in the UK involved in the programme, and over half fully accredited, the time has come to consider what happens after the programme has fulfilled its original purpose. Two major questions arise from this consideration.

The first is how to make the changes to public services sustainable over the long term. Work is already underway to introduce new [Achieving Sustainability standards](#) and a Gold Award for services that implement these. Consideration now needs to be given to what happens after services have gained this award, including the ongoing revalidation and monitoring process for Gold services in the long term.

The second is what will happen to all the other work currently undertaken by the Baby Friendly Initiative in addition to running the accreditation programme. This information-provision, research and advocacy work is crucial in the UK, which has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world.

Despite a compelling evidence base, breastfeeding is seen by many in the UK as largely unnecessary because formula milk is viewed as a close second best. It is also a highly emotive subject because

so many families have not breastfed, or have experienced the trauma of trying very hard to breastfeed and not succeeding. Responsive parenting and building close and loving relationships with babies can also be sensitive issues, as this is not how many people in the UK were parented or parent their own children.

In addition, the UK has one of the most successful bottle feeding industries in the world, with sophisticated marketing and public relations constantly targeting parents, health workers, policy makers and the general public in order to maintain an industry projected to be worth £900 million by 2019. All of these factors make the additional work of the Baby Friendly Initiative to champion child rights for babies both crucially important and uniquely vulnerable if the current mandate, structure and resources were to come to an end.

The plan is to build on and protect the successes of the Baby Friendly Initiative, including its robust mandate and credibility, administrative and communication structures and social capital including the affection and trust in which the programme is held. The organisation would have responsibility for sustaining the Baby Friendly standards in public services over the longer term, but also have a broader remit than the current programme to take a collaborative approach with other organisations to further child rights for all babies in the UK.

# A BABY FRIENDLY FOUNDATION

## AIM

The aim would be to create a highly prestigious, credible organisation to provide leadership, collaboration and focus to the cause of implementing child rights for babies with regards to nutrition, relationship building and early development. There would be a special focus on infant feeding as an area of particular need and vulnerability within the context of the UK culture.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Foundation would be to further child rights for babies by:

- Supporting those who are sustaining

the Baby Friendly standards in public services

- Influencing national policy and guidance
- Sustaining and developing the networks of individuals and organisations working in this field
- Convening organisations and individuals to collaborate on specific issues
- Guiding the development of the knowledge and evidence base
- Advocating and campaigning on issues related to infant feeding and very early child development
- Communicating with supporters to keep them informed of the latest news and research.



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## STRUCTURE

It is envisaged that the Baby Friendly Foundation would be a membership organisation; its founding 'Gold' members would be the Gold Baby Friendly accredited services. The Baby Friendly leads/Heads of Service/Guardians (as appropriate) would be eligible to become 'Clinical Fellows of the Baby Friendly Foundation'. 'Honorary Fellows of the Foundation' would also be appointed and include key academics, clinicians and policy makers with the background and interest to support the Foundation. Organisations with mutual aims would become 'Affiliated' members of the Foundation and interested individuals 'Members'.

The Foundation would have a President and Steering Committee that would be answerable to the Unicef UK Board and would oversee and direct the work of the Foundation. The current Baby Friendly Initiative professional and administrative staff would merge into the Foundation over time and provide the day-to-day running of services.

## ACTIVITY

It is envisaged that the following activities would be part of the Foundation's work:

### **Coordinate the re-validation of Gold Baby Friendly accredited services.**

Assessors would be employed to assess the Gold Baby Friendly service's annual portfolio submissions of data and analysis. They would also carry out the re-validation meetings with the managers, Guardians and Baby Friendly service leads every three years. Short notice 'spot check' monitoring visits would also be carried out by the assessors, either randomly or on services where concerns have been raised.

**Coordinate the NIFN**, with the aim that many NIFN members would also become Members and Fellows of the Foundation and over time take on a significant role in maintaining the Foundation, including

supporting the maintenance of the Baby Friendly standards in public services through offering peer support and education to members.

**Influence the development of policy and practice.** The Foundation would continue to monitor regional and national policies which could impact infant feeding. It would use its expertise to influence and advise policy makers and leaders in the interests of all babies, their mothers and families.

**Support the education of health professionals** and others with an interest in the rights of babies. The current Baby Friendly programme supports and provides evidence-based education for health professionals working with babies, their mothers and families. This work would continue via the Foundation with short courses on relevant topics offered, including via on-line training, in order to ensure that the knowledge base remains up-to-date and relevant. Members and Fellows would support the development of training and supporters would be entitled to access this training.

A noticeable gap in the educational opportunities currently available to those working in this field is a Masters level qualification in infant feeding. The Foundation would partner with a university to provide this much needed academic recognition. Not only would such a qualification provide individuals with the justification and recognition of their specialism, it would also raise infant feeding to the same level as most other comparable specialisms. Other academic courses would also be developed in partnership with relevant university departments.

**Build the evidence base.** Although there is a great deal of research carried out into infant feeding, much of this is small scale or influenced by commercial interests and not all is the most relevant for building the case for the importance of this issue or

for influencing improvements in practice. The Foundation would act as a catalyst to influence and support relevant and needed research in this field.

### **Be a central information point.**

Building on the role already undertaken by the Baby Friendly Initiative, the Foundation would co-ordinate and disseminate statements on important issues affecting babies with support from the Fellows, Members and Affiliated Organisations, and be a repository of best practice examples. Research, news and updates would be produced and shared via social media, the website and emailing services.

## **RESOURCING**

At present, the cost of a Baby Friendly re-assessment covers direct re-assessment costs as well as costs associated with administration, ongoing support and the running of the Designation Committee. This cost currently has to be found as a one-off payment, along with costs associated with the education of staff by Unicef UK and materials provided to support the accreditation process.

Once services become accredited as Gold, it is envisaged that these costs will

be replaced by an annual licence fee paid to the Foundation to cover re-validation costs and other expenses associated with supporting and updating the service. In contrast to a one-off re-assessment fee, a regular licence fee will help spread the costs of going Baby Friendly and will aid financial planning. The total licence fee will also be lower than the current fees charged. A [previous consultation](#) elicited very strong support from services for a licence fee to replace one-off re-assessment costs.

In addition, individuals and organisations would pay modest membership fees to support the Foundation and cover the costs of providing news and updates. Discounts on conferences and other educational opportunities would also be offered as part of the membership fee.

Conferences, courses and resources that further the aims of the Foundation would also provide income.

Grants and sponsorship would also be sought, particularly for specific projects or to support the creation of the Foundation.



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# TIMELINE

## EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

- November 2016:
  - Present proposals and open external consultation at conference
  - Supporters start to feedback on consultation via online survey by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017.
- Spring 2017: NIFN regional groups to be asked to feedback from Spring 2017 meetings
- January – June 2017: Scoping exercise including research/meetings with other membership organisations, focus groups with experienced academics and meetings with relevant organisations, policy makers/NHS managers
- June 2017: Workshop with all relevant organisations (mother support groups, Royal Colleges etc.)
- June - August 2017: Collate consultation results and write final proposal, including proposed timeframe
- November 2017: Presentation on creation of the Baby Friendly Foundation at conference.

## ASSESSMENTS

- Achieving Sustainability assessment for a Gold Award available to accredited services from July 2017
- Licence fee and re-validation model available to Gold accredited services from April 2018
- Facilities working towards Stages 1, 2 and 3 will carry on as now.

Thank you for taking the time to read this consultation. Please give us your feedback by [completing the online survey](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bffoundation) (https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bffoundation).



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