

NEONATAL NATIONAL INFANT FEEDING NETWORK (NeoNIFN)

©Unicef UK/Mead

Introduction

Thanks to a grant from the Department of Health, Unicef UK is setting up a neonatal branch of the National Infant Feeding Network (NIFN), specifically to support neonatal units to improve practice and standards of care for sick and preterm babies and their families.

Background

The [National Infant Feeding Network \(NIFN\)](#) is a network of 700 health professionals who lead on issues related to infant feeding and parent-infant relationships in public service settings. It was established with support from the Department of Health and is now run by Unicef UK.

The network, divided into nine regions each with an elected lead, provides local support and information to health professionals, helping them to share best practice and tackle mutual challenges. The groups meet three to four times a year and communicate regularly via email, and a leadership group meets three times a year in London. These infant feeding specialists are responsible for the training and practice of 70,000 health professionals who in turn care for 620,000 babies, their mothers and families a year.

The network has expanded to incorporate a branch for university midwifery and health visiting lecturers, and is now developing to support neonatal specialists.

NIFN provides a much-needed support base for health professionals working to improve infant feeding practice within public services. The purpose of NIFN is to facilitate:

- **Information-sharing:** share good practice and learning, across the region and nationally.
- **Support:** help health professionals who lead on infant feeding to overcome challenges.
- **Education:** present and discuss relevant research and clinical practice ideas within facilities and across the network.
- **Representation:** opportunities for members to share their own experience and views and to influence the Regional Lead's work within the Leadership Group.

Plans

We are now developing a database of key contacts in each neonatal unit in England to begin establishing the network and facilitate information-sharing. We will then hold initial meetings for these key contacts, giving them an introduction to the network and to plan next steps.

What is needed from you

Please identify a key contact from your neonatal unit to join the network. This should be a professional with interest in / responsibility for improving infant feeding practice in the unit. There will be no obligation to attend regular meetings; rather the contacts will be kept informed of latest developments and opportunities to attend events if they wish. Please send their name and contact details to bfi@unicef.org.uk with the subject header 'Neonatal NIFN' and state their name, unit name and email address and we will follow up with further information. Sending these details will indicate that the key contact is happy to receive communications regarding the network from Unicef UK; please ensure that the contact is aware of this. Data will be held securely and will not be shared beyond the network leads.

If you have any questions about Neonatal NIFN, please contact Helen Smith (helens@unicef.org.uk) or Karen Read (karenr@unicef.org.uk).