

UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE INFOSHEET

JOINT NEONATAL PROJECTS

Updated January 2022

Introduction

All four UK nations encourage neonatal units to implement the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Baby Friendly Initiative neonatal standards. Recommendations by NHS England and NHS Improvement in the [Neonatal Critical Care Transformation Review](#) require Local Maternity Systems (LMSs) and Neonatal Operational Delivery Networks (ODNs) to work together to develop action plans to support neonatal services to seek and acquire UNICEF UK Baby Friendly accreditation.

This information sheet is intended for those considering how best to support neonatal units in the UK to implement the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative neonatal programme. Although not the only option, supporting groups of neonatal units to move forward as a joint project¹ is an enabling and cost-effective choice.

Overview

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative is based on a global accreditation programme of UNICEF and the World Health Organization. It is designed to support breastfeeding and parent-infant relationships by working with public services to improve standards of care. The programme is well-established in maternity and health visiting services throughout the UK and has been working to implement bespoke standards for neonatal units since 2017.

¹A joint project is defined as a group of neonatal units working together to implement the standards across a network or defined group. This is primarily focused on the facilitation of the training package but can also include support from Baby Friendly and assessment costs.

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative neonatal standards cover:

- Supporting parents to have a close and loving relationship with their baby
- Enabling babies to receive breastmilk and to breastfeed when possible
- Valuing parents as partners in their baby's care.

When fully implemented, the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly neonatal standards empower neonatal staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to support breastfeeding and breastmilk use, infant feeding and parent-infant relationships by adhering to set standards. The implementation of effective training programmes, audit, action planning and external assessment help to deliver a transformational cultural shift which aims to bring parents and staff together in partnership to care for the baby.

In November 2021, 60% of neonatal units in the UK were working towards Baby Friendly accreditation. More information can be found in the [Guide to the Baby Friendly standards](#) and the [Guidance for neonatal units](#). See appendix 1 for a flow diagram of the stages towards Baby Friendly accreditation.

“The Baby Friendly neonatal programme represents the gold standard of how I would like neonatal care to evolve over the next decade. It ensures that we look at care beyond the immediate neonatal period to the ongoing effect it will have on the baby and their family.”

- Dr Laura De Rooy, Consultant Neonatologist, Burdett Neonatal Project participant

Joint projects

Since 2017, UNICEF UK has supported the development of several joint projects designed to encourage collaborative working and development among neonatal units. These have included:

The Burdett Project: Six neonatal units across England were supported to achieve Baby Friendly accreditation through a grant from the Burdett Trust for Nursing.

Network-wide joint projects: Several neonatal networks have provided support and funding for units across the network to receive joint training, including some financial support for assessments. These have taken place across the South West, West Midlands, North West and North East.

The National Neonatal Project: Following a donation to UNICEF UK, 18 units across England and Wales are being supported to achieve Baby Friendly accreditation over three years, including training and full financial support for the assessment process.

Scotland and Northern Ireland Project: Units in Scotland and Northern Ireland are supported by their respective governments to achieve Baby Friendly accreditation.

Project framework

Training and support

Joint projects enable nominated Baby Friendly leads from each unit to come together to gain knowledge and skills in:

- Implementing the Baby Friendly neonatal standards
- Training the trainer so that they can cascade knowledge
- Project management
- Audit processes to collect data and monitor progression.

Relevant teaching and audit materials are provided as part of this training. The training package has proven most effective when numbers are limited to around 12 participants. Neonatal units can have a designated contact person within the Baby Friendly team to support with progress and planning and to assist with evaluation. We also offer regular support meetings for Baby Friendly leads and links to the [Neonatal National Infant Feeding Network](#).

Costs

All projects have different models of financial support for the training and assessment element of accreditation. Please contact the Baby Friendly office for more details and to discuss individual options.

The benefits of creating a joint project

It is cost effective to provide joint training in the local area compared with individual members of staff attending open courses, both in terms of price per participant and back fill of staff costs. These courses are currently delivered online. Participants are provided with an online pre-course learning package and are also given access to a bespoke package of training materials to enable the development and facilitation of training within individual units.

Feedback and evaluation

Feedback has suggested that the mutual support and learning that results from being part of a group is highly valuable and motivating, and that it is possible to coordinate consistent evaluation of effectiveness across all units involved. There is also emerging evidence to suggest that UK neonatal units involved in joint projects are progressing faster towards Baby Friendly accreditation compared to those not part of joint projects.

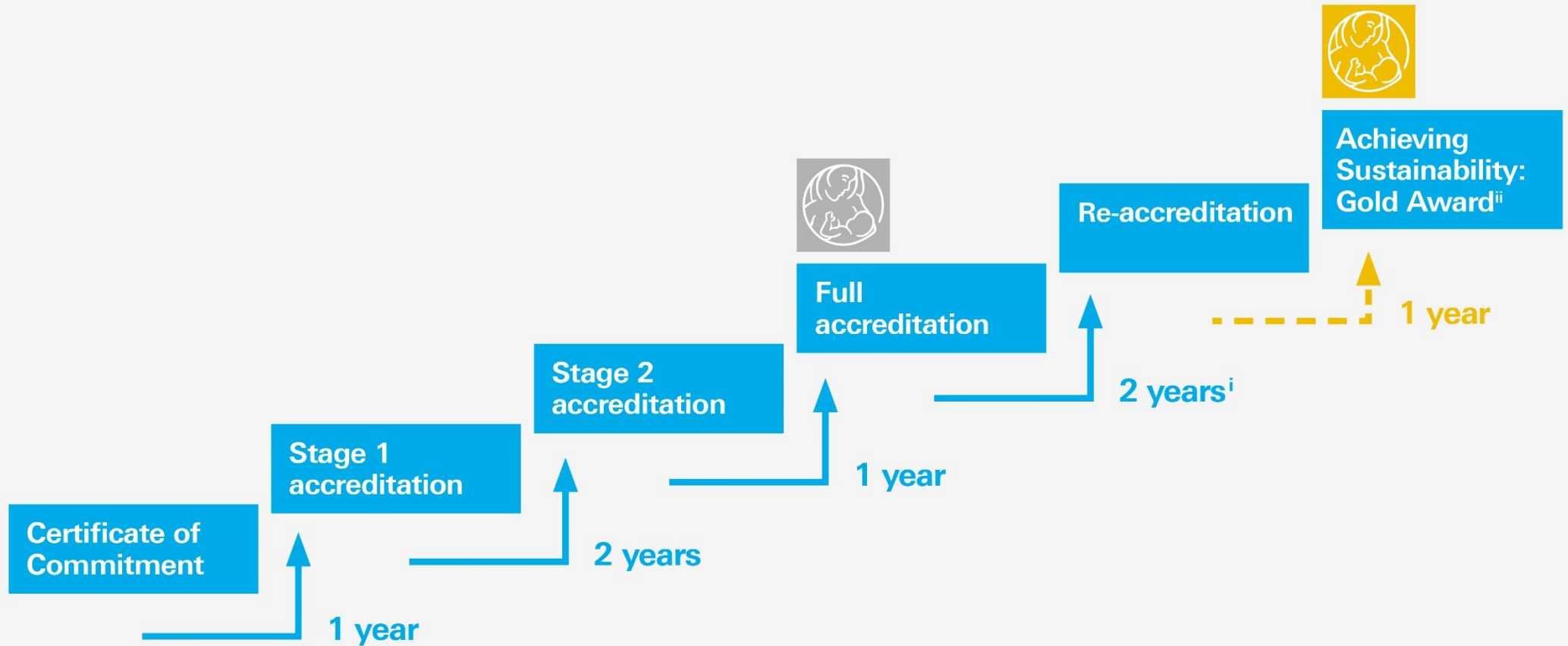
“It’s given us a great deal of structure and vision of what we need to do at each stage of the Baby Friendly journey.”

- Helen James, Matron, Singleton Hospital Neonatal Unit

Find out more about joint projects

Contact Baby Friendly at bfi@unicef.org.uk to explore options and to arrange an initial meeting via Microsoft Teams to discuss the offer and draft a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

ACCREDITATION PROCESS



i Initial re-assessment within two years. Continued re-assessments every three to five years or at a timing decided by the Designation Committee, if not going for the Gold Award.

ii Services can discuss their readiness to go for the Gold Award with the Baby Friendly team.