

UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

STATEMENT ON THE INFANT NUTRITION INDUSTRY (INI) CODE OF PRACTICE

November 2018



Unicef UK has received a number of queries about the recently launched Infant Nutrition Industry Code of Practice (INI code), published by the British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA). The document claims to summarise UK and EU law relating to the marketing of breastmilk substitutes (BMS), and to explain how the industry believes that compliance to legislation should be interpreted. We are concerned that the document has the potential to both confuse and undermine those working towards implementation of the World Health Organization International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the WHO Code).

By using the word “Code” in the title, and branding the document with similar colours and style to the WHO Code, the INI code implies a similar intent to the WHO Code. However, the INI code is in fact much weaker than the WHO Code, and provides loopholes that allow for:

- Increased promotion of BMS to parents
- Direct contact between companies and parents, including the provision of gifts
- Creation of conflicts of interest with health professionals related to gifts, education, grants and hospitality
- Weaker requirements related to the ‘scientific and factual’ nature of information provided by companies to health professionals
- Weaker requirements related to the labelling of products.

Given these weaknesses, it is worrying that the similar title and branding of the INI code could, at best, imply a link with the WHO Code, and, at worst, be mistaken for a WHO-endorsed document. We recommend that health professionals continue to refer to the WHO Code, subsequent resolutions, and the [Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative Guide to Working Within The Code](#) when considering how to support all families with infant feeding and to protect them from commercial interests.

Further reading

- First Steps Nutrition Trust, Full Statement on The Infant Nutrition Industry (INI) Code of Practice: <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/statements-press-releases>
- WHO Code and subsequent resolutions: <http://www.who.int/nutrition/netcode/resolutions/en/>
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative, Working within the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes: A guide for health workers: unicef.uk/codeguide