

UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKERS AND NURSERY NURSES



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the new Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative learning outcomes for maternity support workers and nursery nurses. These learning outcomes have been developed to define what it is reasonable to expect from maternity support staff who are taking a significant role in supporting mothers to feed and care for their babies in the early days after birth. They are based on the Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards and relevant staff who achieve these learning outcomes would meet the requirements for Baby Friendly accredited services.

Currently, most maternity support staff receive Baby Friendly training from their employing services as part of the clinical staff training programme required for Baby Friendly accreditation. However, there are now national plans to standardise and



improve training for these staff, as they take an ever increasing role in supporting families.¹ Therefore, these learning outcomes have been developed in order to guide anyone involved in maternity support worker / nursery nurse training, including further education colleges, universities and clinical educational leads.

THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes are grouped into three broad themes that cover the essentials of infant feeding.

THE VALUE OF HUMAN MILK AND BREASTFEEDING

The value of human milk and breastfeeding for the short and long term health outcomes of babies and their mothers is well established.^{2,3,4,5,6} It protects children from a vast range of illnesses including infection, diabetes, asthma, heart disease and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), as well as obesity, a major public health priority.^{7,8,9,10} For mothers, breastfeeding protects against breast and ovarian cancers and heart disease.^{2,11,12,13} In addition, it supports the mother-baby relationship and the mental health of both baby and mother.^{14,15}

SUPPORTING INFANT FEEDING

Whilst the Baby Friendly Initiative has made strong progress in improving care in maternity and community services, there are gaps in

support provision beyond these services, and rates remain lower than in many other high income countries.¹⁶ In the UK, most women want to breastfeed but many face difficulties early on and eight out of ten stop before they want to.¹⁷ It is vital that all relevant health practitioners understand how breastfeeding works and how to support the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding effectively. It is also important that they have the knowledge and skills to offer evidenced-based and practical support when babies are not breastfed.

INFANT FEEDING IN CONTEXT

Infant feeding in the UK is a highly contentious and controversial issue, influenced by commercial, social, cultural and political factors. Understanding the context in which babies are fed supports health practitioners to be empathic and realistic in their communication and support.

THEME 1: THE VALUE OF HUMAN MILK AND BREASTFEEDING

- 1 Be aware of the main constituents of human milk and their function
- 2 Appreciate the importance of human milk and breastfeeding to health and wellbeing outcomes for infants, their mothers and the wider family.

THEME 2: SUPPORTING INFANT FEEDING

- 3 Understand the anatomy and physiology of lactation
- 4 Be able to describe the key practices that facilitate the initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding
- 5 Have the knowledge and skills to support mothers and babies to maximise breastmilk and breastfeeding, to continue to breastfeed for as long as they wish and to introduce solid foods appropriately
- 6 Be able to apply their knowledge of physiology and the principle of reciprocity to support all mothers to keep their babies close and to respond to their cues for feeding and comfort
- 7 Understand the circumstances which can affect lactation and breastfeeding, and be able to support mothers to overcome common challenges and make appropriate referrals when necessary
- 8 Be able to support parents who formula feed to do so responsively and as safely as possible.

THEME 3: INFANT FEEDING IN CONTEXT

- 9 Develop an understanding of the importance of secure mother-infant attachment and the impact this has on health and emotional wellbeing, irrespective of feeding method
- 10 Be able to apply their knowledge of effective communication to initiate sensitive, mother-centred conversations with new mothers and their families
- 11 Appreciate the wider social, cultural and political influences on infant feeding
- 12 Understand the importance of the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA Resolutions (the Code) and how it impacts on practice.

TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

Below are the key topic areas to be included in order to cover each theme and enable the learning outcomes to be met. A mapping exercise can help to assess how far the topics are already covered in training, and to identify and plan for any additions needed.

It is important to ensure that the learning outcomes are covered in sufficient detail to enable learners to effectively implement the Baby Friendly standards in practice. Formal or informal assessment of learning against the learning outcomes is highly recommended in order to ensure that the teaching content and methods have been effective.



THEME 1: THE VALUE OF HUMAN MILK AND BREASTFEEDING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Be aware of the main constituents of human milk and their function
- Appreciate the importance of human milk and breastfeeding to health and wellbeing outcomes for infants, their mothers and the wider family.

TOPICS

- Constituents of human milk – including colostrum and mature breastmilk
- The role of human milk and breastfeeding in improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of infants, their mothers and the wider family and in promoting and protecting public health.

THEME 2: SUPPORTING INFANT FEEDING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the anatomy and physiology of lactation
- Be able to describe the key practices that facilitate the initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding
- Have the knowledge and skills to support mothers and babies to maximise breastmilk and breastfeeding, to continue to breastfeed for as long as they wish and to introduce solid foods appropriately
- Be able to apply their knowledge of physiology and the principle of reciprocity to support all mothers to keep their babies close and to respond to their cues for feeding and comfort
- Understand the circumstances which can affect lactation and breastfeeding, and be able to support mothers to overcome common challenges and make appropriate referrals when necessary
- Be able to support parents who formula feed to do so responsively and as safely as possible.

TOPICS

- Functional anatomy of the breast
- Physiology of lactation and hormonal influences on milk production and mothering and the role of the Feedback Inhibitor of Lactation (FIL)
- Importance of skin-to-skin contact to support breastfeeding and mothering (for all mothers irrespective of feeding type) and how to facilitate this within practice
- How a baby breastfeeds – understanding principles and mechanisms of attachment and positioning for effective feeding
- Responsive breastfeeding and how mothers and babies develop a reciprocal relationship when they remain close (to include feeding and behavioural cues)
- Recognising effective breastfeeding; assessing milk production and milk transfer, assessing a breastfeed in practice including appropriate referral when needed
- Supporting breastfeeding mothers to maximise the amount of breastmilk their baby receives and protecting breastfeeding should supplementation be required
- Overview of breastfeeding challenges for both mother and baby, how to overcome these and when to refer to the key health professional e.g. midwife/health visitor/infant feeding lead
- Expression and storage of breastmilk to include hand and pump expression technique
- Supporting mothers to initiate and maintain lactation when they are separated from their baby
- Responsive bottle feeding, including how to hold a baby during a bottle feed and how to pace the feeds
- Supporting parents who are bottle feeding to minimise the risks, to make up feeds as safely as possible and understand how to sterilise equipment
- For mothers who are formula feeding, know how and where to access independent information on infant formulae
- Continued breastfeeding and the timely and appropriate introduction of other foods into the diet.

THEME 3: INFANT FEEDING IN CONTEXT

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Develop an understanding of the importance of secure mother-infant attachment and the impact this has on health and emotional wellbeing, irrespective of feeding method
- Be able to apply their knowledge of effective communication to initiate sensitive, mother-centred conversations with new mothers and their families
- Appreciate the wider social and cultural influences on infant feeding
- Understand the importance of the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA Resolutions (the Code) and how it impacts on practice.

TOPICS

- Overview of attachment theories and the importance of love and nurture on infant brain development
- Importance of compassionate, sensitive and effective communication. To include theory and practice
- Working with others in a multidisciplinary environment to support infant feeding, including appropriate referral
- Overview of safer sleep messages
- Overview of infant feeding culture in the UK, social patterns and what has influenced changing breastfeeding rates in the UK and worldwide
- The WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent resolutions and how they impact all infant feeding practices and their own sphere of practice
- Where to access evidence-based resources.

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