**UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE**

**BABY FRIENDLY ASSESSMENTS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK**

30 March 2020

**Introduction**

This document is intended to support Infant Feeding Leads/teams and senior staff to plan work related to Baby Friendly accreditation during the Covid-19 outbreak. The outbreak is already having significant effects on services’ abilities to provide normal standards of care. In addition, training for staff is on hold and infant feeding team hours are being reduced in many areas to support front line services.

Universities are also facing challenges with face-to-face education suspended and, in some cases, students co-opted into the workforce.

The Unicef UK Baby Friendly team is unable to travel until the end of June 2020, which will be reviewed as the progress of the outbreak becomes clearer. Assessments are generally not being carried out, although we aim to maintain assessments which can be done remotely where appropriate and which can be accommodated by the services. As time progresses, it is increasingly likely that mothers and babies will have received a standard of care which is different from that which would be normally expected (for example, telephone contacts rather than face-to-face, no groups etc.). Therefore, it may be unfair to carry out assessments at this time. It is also possible that mothers may not wish to be interviewed during this time.

Once the current situation eases, we are expecting that services will need some time to adjust before undergoing Baby Friendly assessments.

The above will be reviewed in June and a further statement will be developed and circulated if needed.

**Assessments**

Assessments which had been scheduled to take place during the coming months will be postponed. Services will be contacted individually and we will work with you to determine whether your assessment should be rescheduled for later in the year or if it needs to be postponed with an understanding that we will reschedule once the situation in your service settles.

- **Stage 1 assessments** can be carried out if requested, however they may be postponed if this is what the service prefers.
- **Stage 2 and 3 assessments** can be rescheduled to suit the service/university. Previously agreed timelines – e.g. the aim for services to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2 within two years – will be waived and services supported to progress to assessment at an individually agreed time once audit results demonstrate readiness.
- **Re-assessments** would normally be scheduled two or three years after the last assessment. We will now extend the deadline and allow a further 12 months for the reassessment to take place. Once this later date is reached, the website will be amended to highlight that the accreditation has lapsed with an explanation note saying that this is due to Covid-19. Once the re-assessment can be rescheduled, this will take place using the normal re-assessment format at standard cost.

- **Follow-up assessments** are usually requested by the Designation Committee to take place within 6-9 months. The deadline will be waived and we will work with you individually to make a plan.

- **Action plans and audit results** may have been requested following a broadly successful assessment where a small number of issues needed to be addressed. Flexibility will be provided and we will work with services individually to work out a plan.

- **Gold assessments** can be scheduled and carried out as planned during the Covid-19 outbreak. However, some parts of the assessment will not be carried out during this time, for example the staff culture audit and possibly mother interviews, if needed. These can be completed once the situation has settled.

- **Gold re-validations** We anticipate that there may need to be slight adjustments to timescales, however we would aim to carry out Gold re-validations within 3 months of the planned date. We can be very flexible about the timing of senior staff interviews.

**Internal audits**

We recognise that it may be very difficult to carry out internal audits at this time.

If you wish to delay submitting your annual audits, please email the Baby Friendly office.

**Contact us**

Services with individual queries are asked to please contact the Baby Friendly office.

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