

# UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

## STAGE 3 AND RE-ASSESSMENTS IN NEONATAL UNITS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK



**7 October 2020**

### **Introduction**

This document is intended to support Infant Feeding Leads/teams and senior staff working in neonatal units to consider and plan Baby Friendly Stage 3 and re-assessments during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Initially, the outbreak impacted significantly on the ability of services to provide usual standards of care and therefore on the ability to work towards Baby Friendly accreditation. As time has gone on, many services are reconsidering their initial reactions and how these have impacted on the implementation of best practice and are starting again to progress with Baby Friendly accreditation in a structured way to improve care. Many services are asking Unicef UK how to work towards the standards, even as the pandemic continues.

Remote-based assessments are now being offered and we anticipate that this will continue for the foreseeable future. In general, these are working well, with staff interviews carried out using video technology and parent interviews carried out by phone. However, it is difficult to carry out assessor observations in neonatal units, which form an integral part of Stage 3 and re-assessments.

We recognise that some services want to progress their assessments in the near future, while others require more time to adjust; we are happy to be flexible to meet individual needs. The following information is aimed at services which would like to progress to assessment in the next 6-12 months.

### **What are the issues?**

#### **Meeting the standards**

It may not be possible to implement all standards fully during the Covid-19 crisis and services may require new innovations to do so. For example, access to family members, including siblings and grandparents, is likely to be restricted. Ensuring that parents are partners in care and have access to their baby may require different ways of working and new equipment, such as screens between cots, video technology, etc. Local lockdown restrictions will also need to be considered.

#### **Carrying out observations**

As stated above, carrying out the assessment remotely and without the ability of an assessment team to visit the unit hinders our ability to observe the environment and observe interaction between staff and parents and parents and their baby. This

potentially limits the available evidence on which the assessment team base their recommendations.

### **Carrying out assessments**

Having considered the challenges, below is a summary of how we anticipate being able to carry out assessments. More information will be provided in the relevant guidance documents.

#### **Staff interviews**

- These will be amended slightly to ask staff about the impact of Covid-19 on their work and the practices put in place to help mitigate against the effects on babies, mothers and families related to the Baby Friendly standards.
- The interviews will be carried out using video-enabled platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, Zoom, etc.

#### **Mother interviews**

- These will be amended to include questions related to the impact of Covid-19 on their care, particularly as it relates to Standard 3: Parents as Partners in Care.
- For mothers who are resident in the unit, the interviews can be carried out using video-enabled platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, Zoom, etc. For those mothers who are at home, the interviews can be carried out by phone.

#### **Observations**

- These will be carried out via a non-recorded video tour of the unit conducted by the Infant Feeding Lead.

#### **General**

- Particular attention will be made to previous recommendations so that we can be clear that these have been addressed.
- The application form and guidance have been amended to include a section about how the service has managed the Covid-19 situation.
- The audit tool will be amended to include the new questions and this will be made available for free to all services who have previously purchased a copy.
- All Stage 3 and re-assessments will be deemed to be valid in terms of accreditation/re-accreditation, with a caveat on the website that the standards were met under 'Covid-19 conditions'. Future assessments will require a visit in person. Re-accredited services will not be able to progress to a Gold assessment without a future visit being carried out.

### **Contact us**

Services with individual queries are asked to please contact the Baby Friendly office by email at [bfi@unicef.org.uk](mailto:bfi@unicef.org.uk)