

UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

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



Updated 26 June 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. It provides an update to our original statement from 30 March 2020. As we settle down into a 'new normal', Unicef UK is starting to receive a number of queries from services who want to make progress with their Baby Friendly accreditation, whilst others continue to deal with the fallout from the pandemic and are not yet ready to proceed.

Given the ongoing uncertainty about how the pandemic will progress and the potential for further waves of infection, we anticipate that Baby Friendly assessments carried out on-site are unlikely to be possible in the forthcoming months. We are therefore developing a remote-based assessment process which will be available initially until the **end of 2020**. A number of pilot assessments have already been run remotely and it has been found that, with the appropriate video technology, these provide sufficient evidence to be able to make relevant Baby Friendly awards.

As previously stated, we recognise that these are extraordinary times and that each service will require an individual and flexible approach. Services with assessments booked or due in the near future are therefore being contacted to establish what their needs are. If you have an assessment due, please contact us to discuss any queries and to make plans.

Preparing for assessments

Assessments which have been postponed or are due to be scheduled can be booked once the service is ready to proceed. To aid decision making, you should consider your service's:

- Ability to meet all the required standards: We recognise that some care is being delivered differently whilst still meeting Baby Friendly standards, e.g. antenatal parent education classes may have been temporarily replaced with one-to-one phone conversations. However, we are also aware that standards are not being met in some services. If that is the case, you are encouraged to have a conversation with the Baby Friendly team before proceeding with an assessment.
- Audit results: Carrying out an effective audit will help you to decide whether the service is likely to meet the necessary standards. If some of the standards are not being met, then we again encourage you to discuss your issues and needs with the Baby Friendly team.

Assessment stages

Below is a summary of how we anticipate being able to carry out each type of assessment. More information will be provided in the relevant guidance documents.

At present, mother interviews will be carried out by phone. Staff interviews will be conducted using video-enabled platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, Zoom etc.

Planning days

- Planning days can be carried out remotely by video call. We will show a PowerPoint presentation to all staff who are able to attend, followed by a meeting with a smaller group to review the action plan. Staff can dial in as individuals or in a small group providing that social distancing can be maintained.

Stage 1 assessments

- These are already carried out remotely and will continue in that way.
- If you have a Stage 1 assessment due in the near future, the deadline can be extended as required.

Stage 2 assessments

- These can be carried out remotely, assuming your service can make the necessary technology available for your staff to be interviewed by our team. Please refer to the updated guidance documents to check what is needed.
- Stage 2 assessments are typically due two years following Stage 1 accreditation, but the deadline can be extended as required. We will support services to progress to assessment once audit results demonstrate readiness.

Stage 3 assessments

- These can be carried out remotely. Please refer to the updated guidance documents to check what is needed.
- Stage 3 assessments are typically due a year following Stage 2 accreditation, but the deadline can be extended as required. We will support services to progress to assessment once audit results demonstrate readiness.

Re-assessments and follow-up assessments

- These can be carried out remotely, assuming your service can make the necessary technology available for your staff to be interviewed by our team. Please refer to the updated guidance documents to check what is needed.
- If your re-assessment is due in the near future, the deadline can be extended for up to 12 months.

Gold assessments and re-validations

- Gold assessments are already carried out remotely and will continue in that way. However, it may not be appropriate to carry out some parts of the assessment during this time, e.g. the staff culture audit and possibly mother interviews, if needed. These can be completed once the situation has settled.
- We anticipate that there may need to be slight adjustments to re-validation timescales. However, we would aim to carry out Gold re-validations within three

months of the planned date. We can be very flexible about the timing of senior staff interviews.

Annual audits

- We recognise that it may be difficult to carry out internal audits at this time. If you wish to delay submitting your annual audits, please email the Baby Friendly office. However, where possible we do recommend that audits continue in order to establish the impact of any changes to the service.

Booking assessments

Based on the conversations we have been having, we anticipate a high demand for assessment bookings in 2021. We therefore suggest that if you anticipate that your service will be ready for an assessment next year, you consider making a booking in order to secure a preferred date. As usual, it will be possible to re-schedule without charge with 3 months' notice.

Assessment costings

Our pilot assessments have shown us that doing assessments remotely takes more assessor time, however as we are not incurring costs for hotel accommodation and travel, we will make a slight reduction in the charge for an assessment carried out remotely.

Contact us

Please contact the Baby Friendly office by email with any queries at bfi@unicef.org.uk