

UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

CASE STUDY: NEW INFANT FEEDING ROLES DRIVE CO-ORDINATION AND CHANGE FOR REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH TEAM

In this case study we speak with Ros Nunn, the Infant Feeding and Maternal Healthy Weight Co-ordinator for the North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) on how newly appointed roles across the service have helped to transform care.

For the North East & North Cumbria ICS Public Health Prevention in Maternity Team, appointing a **Regional Infant Feeding Co-ordinator (RIFC)** has led to an organisational transformation which has helped keep breastfeeding and infant feeding high on the public health agenda. This co-ordinated regional approach enables a strategic overview of local infant feeding support and increases access to Public Health Strategic Leads, Children and Young People Leads, Heads of Midwifery and Commissioners, helping to support all services to work towards Baby Friendly accreditation.

The full-time RIFC role has received funding for two years and incorporates the responsibilities of the **National Infant Feeding Network (NIFN) Lead**.

Alongside this, a **Regional Guardian role** has been developed and is tasked with strategically influencing and supporting a breastfeeding-friendly culture across the region, including promoting Baby Friendly at a strategic and corporate level. This includes creating a more collaborative environment for **Baby Friendly Guardians** who primarily work within their own services and organisations. The Regional Guardian brings these Guardians together to share best practice and ideas for moving forward, and links with the **NIFN Lead** to supervise progress and support services.

One of the successes of the Public Health Prevention in Maternity Team is the development of their **regional joint infant feeding objectives**, detailed below:

PUBLIC HEALTH PREVENTION IN MATERNITY TEAM: INFANT FEEDING OBJECTIVES

- Launch an infant feeding pathway and strategy to be embedded within regional services
- Progress all maternity and neonatal units to Stage 2 and 3 of Baby Friendly accreditation
- Complete Baby Friendly re-assessment for all fully accredited services in 2022 and progress towards the Baby Friendly Achieving Sustainability Gold Award by 2023
- Implement mandatory infant feeding training according to the Baby Friendly standards for all maternity and neonatal units
- Carry out relevant training to support accreditation of university midwifery and health visiting programmes according to the Baby Friendly standards
- Work with neonatal units to develop robust training packages and support children's centres to engage with Baby Friendly accreditation
- Support early implementation and evaluation of the pathway in South Tyneside and Hartlepool via National Bolster Fund
- Increase NHS and Local Authority participation in the evidence-based and nationally recognised Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA).

To fulfill these objectives, in 2021 the **Northern Local Maternity Neonatal System** and the **Northern Neonatal Network** provided funding to:

- Support all maternity units to be re-accredited, if not already part of the NHS Long Term Plan
- Fund assessments for all neonatal and special care baby units to reach full Baby Friendly accreditation
- Provide five-day bespoke training for all maternity Infant Feeding Leads
- Provide two five-day training sessions on Baby Friendly neonatal standards with the aim of having at least two staff from each unit being fully trained
- Support staff to attend the Baby Friendly Neonatal Conference and Annual Conference
- Enable midwifery and health visiting programmes to access training for two university lecturers with funding secured for Stage 1.

To maintain effective communication, the service continues to conduct quarterly NIFN meetings as well as NeoNIFN meetings every two months. The service also holds monthly drop-in sessions for Infant Feeding Leads and is currently launching quarterly regional university lecturer meetings. These are supplemented by the RIFC who provides direct support, address concerns and shares UNICEF UK updates across the network.

A quote from Ros shares:

*“Being able to attend and present in other forums through this role has allowed us to **keep breastfeeding high on the regional agenda**. We are a small team, however we have been able to prioritise breastfeeding across organisations and services including MatNeo SIP, the Neonatal Network and the Local Maternity and Neonatal System. We have also **been able to thread breastfeeding support through Public Health strategies and agendas** including obesity, tobacco dependency, preventative perinatal mental health, reproductive health, MECC, alcohol dependency and more.”*

- Ros Nunn, North East & North Cumbria ICS

