

UNICEF UK INFOSHEET



IMPLEMENTING BABY FRIENDLY IN EARLY YEARS SERVICES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

January 2024

1. How do we implement Baby Friendly within Family Hubs and other early years settings?

The best starting point is the [Guide to the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards](#) which explains what services must do to meet the Baby Friendly standards and implement the Baby Friendly programme, including information on the assessment process. This should be read alongside specific guidance for [children's centre](#)* services.

You may like to consider facilitating a [planning meeting](#) where a member of the Baby Friendly team can explain the process and help you to develop an action plan.

It is likely that your local health visiting service will have made some progress towards implementing the standards. It will therefore be helpful to liaise with the infant feeding lead who may be able to provide guidance and support, for example by acting as a mentor to support the service to get started.

**We are currently in the process of reviewing the standards for health visiting and children's centre services. This work will update the standards to include Best Start for Life Family Hubs requirements and is anticipated to conclude early 2024. In the meantime, we suggest you begin by looking at the current children's centre standards.*

2. Who should lead the project?

Baby Friendly requirements include having a nominated infant feeding lead to oversee the implementation of the standards in each service. It may also be suitable to consider a small team approach where individuals take responsibility for key areas. However, it will remain necessary for someone to take responsibility for co-ordinating the work.

Therefore, it may be helpful to consider the various tasks in order to inform the job description of the person/team. The remit of the role would include:

- Staff training, including ongoing updates
- Audit
- Project management
- Provision of infant feeding support

There are several effective models that ensure all activities required for accreditation in early years services are covered. For example, one individual with a health professional background and/or an individual with a breastfeeding/infant feeding background is likely to be the optimal model, as this person should be able to fulfil the whole set of needs and oversee the project with the vision and knowledge to deliver. This role should have protected hours to enable effective implementation and progress. Other staff within the service could provide support and create a team approach so that tasks can be shared.

It may also be possible for aspects of the role to be shared with another local service, for example staff training or support with infant feeding. You might want to enquire if other services in your area/city are working on the Baby Friendly journey and set up a meeting with the relevant infant feeding lead, team and partners to plan joint working.

The number of hours dedicated to the role will vary depending on the size of the area. However, given the amount of work, it is likely to be a full-time equivalent number of hours with more needed for a large service.

3. What training and support does Baby Friendly offer?

Baby Friendly offers a number of [courses](#) for staff who are leading on the work, for example a two-day Breastfeeding and Relationship Building course, Train the Trainer, and Audit and Achieving Sustainability, all of which can be accessed individually or as part of a 5-day course. We will be delivering a 5-day course aimed specifically at those leading in early years services early in 2024. Email bfi@unicef.org.uk to enquire.

4. What training do staff need?

All staff who have any contact with parents are required to have training. The type and amount of training will vary depending on role. To clarify what is expected, we have broken down the training needed into three levels according to staff role:

- **Level 1 staff** – staff who work in a role which involves greeting and signposting families, but does not involve providing specific support, e.g. reception staff.
- **Level 2 staff** – staff who in addition to the above, work directly with parents at home or in the centres providing general parenting support. Examples include early years workers and family support workers. This support can be one-to-one or in groups, e.g. baby massage, stay and play, etc.
- **Level 3 staff** – staff who in addition to the above, provide support with breastfeeding, either one-to-one or in a group setting.

Further details on the content required by each group can be found in the [Curriculum Guidance document](#). We suggest that where possible, you work collaboratively with the local health visiting service to provide the training (particularly for staff at Level 3). Our [audit tool](#) will enable you to assess whether the training provided has been effective.

5. Do we need to work with the local health visiting service?

It can be very advantageous to work collaboratively with your local health visiting service, as there are benefits to be gained with issues such as data sharing, joint training and service provision. Ideally, Baby Friendly assessments can be carried out jointly which makes them more straightforward and results in an element of cost saving.

6. What if the health visiting service is already accredited?

We can work with you to design a bespoke assessment pathway to enable you to fit into the health visiting service accreditation pathway or to 'catch up' if necessary. It is also possible to have assessments independently of the health visiting service. We can work out a plan with you to suit the needs of your service.

7. Do we need our own lead if the health visiting service has one?

It is possible that in some services, particularly those areas with integrated services, that the health visitor lead may also be able to manage the leadership of the early years service. In general, however, it is most likely that the amount of work needed would be greater than could be achieved by one individual.

It is also worth considering that the two services may work in different ways with different working cultures and environments. Therefore, having a dedicated lead within the early years service is optimal. Depending on how things work in your area, it may be possible to work as a team, perhaps facilitating joint staff training or education for parents.

8. Are externally commissioned services considered as part of the assessment process?

Yes, it is possible that services commissioned by the local authority to support mothers in your area with infant feeding and relationship building will be considered as part of your assessment process. This would occur if that service was used as part of your agreed package of support for local mothers and your service routinely referred mothers to the support they offer. In this case, it is important to review the training provided for any staff to make sure it includes and doesn't conflict with the Baby Friendly standards. When you are auditing a sample of the commissioned service, staff should be included, and mothers asked about any support provided.

9. How much does the process cost?

The Baby Friendly Initiative works within UNICEF UK and we cover all the costs of the programme. This means charging for services. We charge for planning meetings (these are optional) and for the assessment pathway. Charges can vary depending on the size of the service, number of centres/staff and we can provide a bespoke estimate on request: bfi@unicef.org.uk. Please inform us of service size and staff numbers.

10. How do we get started?

A good place to start is to download the children's centre version of the [draft action plan](#) and [Stage 1 application form](#) from the Baby Friendly website. Working your way through these will help you to understand, in detail, the work that needs to be carried out. It would also be helpful to 'map' services currently provided across all of the early years services in your area so you can establish what is in place and any gaps.

Talking to other local services about what they are doing can be very helpful, for example understanding what services are on offer can help with generating ideas and can also help you to ensure that service provision across the area as a whole meets need. One way to do this might be via the National Infant Feeding Network (NIFN). You can find out more about the NIFN group in your area [here](#).

11. What other resources do Baby Friendly offer?

The Baby Friendly website includes lots of information which can be downloaded free of charge. You can sign up to our news and research mailing [here](#).