



The Baby  
Friendly  
Initiative

UNITED KINGDOM

unicef 

# UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

**Making babies' health and wellbeing everybody's business**



# INTRODUCTION

## Welcome to the **Qualifications Framework Programme** from the **UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative.**

The Qualifications Framework by the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Baby Friendly Initiative is an eight-month programme which aims to increase knowledge and capacity related to infant feeding and very early child development.

The Leader qualification is designed to recognise and develop the infant feeding-related knowledge, skills and professional experience of those working to lead the implementation of the Baby Friendly standards within UK public services and universities and to advocate for the standards within their sphere of influence. The programme recognises the dedication and expertise of those working in the fields of infant feeding and very early child development by providing a recognisable and prestigious qualification that can act as quality assurance for employers, colleagues and the general public.

The Qualifications Framework is a distance learning programme which relies on a large self-directed element interspersed with facilitated seminars and peer support over an eight-month period. It is hoped that participation in this programme will influence cultural change in the UK as more people gain an understanding of the significance of infant feeding and very early child development on human health and wellbeing.

UNICEF UK promotes equality, diversity and inclusion in the Qualifications Framework Programme and welcomes anyone who is ambitious to make a difference for babies, their mothers, parents/primary caregivers and families as part of their work towards a Baby Friendly qualification. If that sounds like you, you have come to the right place and we will do all that we can to support you.

Learn more about the Qualifications Framework Programme: [unicef.uk/bf-qualifications](https://unicef.uk/bf-qualifications)

## LEADER QUALIFICATION

**Leaders** are those coordinating or leading on infant feeding and/or the implementation of the Baby Friendly standards in public services and universities. Leaders are staff who project manage infant feeding services or implement Baby Friendly on a daily basis. This includes those who have a strategic leadership role in relation to infant feeding as well as those who plan and provide specialist services. This qualification is also available to those not currently in a lead role, but who are interested in career progression. In this case, they need to demonstrate that they have proactively sought experience in assisting the lead with strategic coordination and thus are capable of achieving the requirements outlined for the leadership qualification.



*"This is an excellent programme to achieve. I have built confidence and knowledge, and have met fellow colleagues. I've enjoyed sharing, being valued and supported, and reflecting on my strengths and weaknesses."*

**- 2022 Qualified Leader**

# THE FRAMEWORK

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Framework is based on six **Vision Statements** which describe what is needed to improve outcomes for babies, their mothers, parents/primary caregivers and families related to infant feeding in the UK. Under each Vision Statement there is a list of **capabilities** which describe the knowledge, skills and understanding required to contribute to making the Vision Statements a reality.

Participants will complete a **portfolio** (equivalent to approximately 10,500 words) of learning, experience and reflection related to each Vision Statement and associated capabilities. The portfolio consists of short essays, activities, reflective exercises and a **learning log** to record resources accessed.

The structured framework of the programme supports the learner to evidence the knowledge and skills they have, whilst developing a deeper knowledge and understanding of infant feeding and very early child development, including how to implement and advocate for evidence-based practice within their own sphere of influence.

### Vision Statements:

1. It is common knowledge that human milk, breastfeeding and very early child development are the foundation of short- and long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.
2. All relevant public service workers are educated to deliver evidence-based care related to infant feeding.
3. Safe, effective and evidence-based infant feeding services are available to all babies, their mothers, parents/primary caregivers and families.
4. The Baby Friendly Initiative is implemented in all relevant services.
5. The wider societal and cultural context of infant feeding in the UK supports optimum health and wellbeing outcomes.
6. The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code) and subsequent resolutions are implemented throughout public services.

## GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The programme is not a taught course. Allocating time to learn from a distance and be self-directed is important. Monthly **Support Seminars** via Microsoft Teams provide structure and a space for participants to ask questions. These sessions also include time for peer-to-peer support. Seminars are not compulsory, however they will help participants to get the most from the programme and so attendance is monitored.

Participants are provided with a list of **suggested learning resources** to guide them in meeting the capabilities. These resources are not exhaustive and participants should use independently sourced material and their knowledge and experience to complete the course.

Participants who face challenges on the course which may prevent them from completing on time can submit mitigation with evidence to the Programme Lead using the **Extenuating Circumstances** form. Further guidance on Extenuating Circumstances is provided during the course.

Participants who submit their portfolio and are **referred** on one or more Vision Statement(s) on the first attempt are offered one re-submission opportunity to achieve a pass.

## GAINING THE QUALIFICATION

The portfolios are marked anonymously and moderated externally before ratification by the **Qualifications Framework Board**. The portfolio will be used as the basis for one-to-one interviews to determine the extent of participants' knowledge and understanding. Results from the portfolio and interview will be combined and qualification awarded based on the results.

Graduates of the programme will receive a certificate and qualification mark celebrating their status as a Baby Friendly **Qualified Leader (BFQL)**. They will also be included in a rollcall of honour at the Baby Friendly Annual Conference and their names will be added to the qualification register available publicly on the Baby Friendly website.



# HOW TO APPLY

Prospective participants are asked to read the Vision Statements and capabilities carefully and then use these to identify their own strengths and areas for development.

Feedback from qualified participants is that the programme 'takes more time than you anticipate, and the time goes very quickly'. We therefore strongly recommend that you think about how you can fit the programme into your everyday life and when would be the best time to apply. Participants have also reported finding the programme academically challenging but worthwhile, requiring confident use of self-directed learning, researching and writing skills. Participants are required to submit a portfolio of work equating to approximately 10,500 words.

Please consider that you have the necessary study time to complete the programme within eight months. If you are interested in applying, please complete the form when applications open and submit to the Baby Friendly office. This form will be considered anonymously against set criteria, and participants will be informed of whether they have been successful or not. Each course will have a limited number of places and so it could be that participants are asked to apply again.

We are committed to inclusion and accessibility in our selection process. Therefore, as part of the application process, you will be asked to complete an anonymous equality monitoring form. This data will help us to review our processes and ensure they provide equitable access to participants. This is not compulsory and your answers will not be used as part of the selection process.

Due to the high volume of applications received, participants will be selected first on the following criteria and thereafter based on a randomised selection process:

- Applications which are filled in completely and correctly
- Applications which are of high quality

If you have previously applied and been unsuccessful you are welcome to apply again and will be considered under current application criteria.

Once accepted, the participant will be asked to formally enrol in the course and pay the associated fee.

## LEARN MORE

To learn more about the programme, visit our website at [unicef.uk/bf-qualifications](https://unicef.uk/bf-qualifications) and read the frequently asked questions and tips for a successful application. You can also listen to a podcast developed by the Baby Friendly team and the Qualifications Framework Board featuring two Qualified Leaders.

Please contact the Baby Friendly Qualifications Framework Programme team at [bfqualification@unicef.org.uk](mailto:bfqualification@unicef.org.uk) with any questions.

*"This was the first piece of work I have done within infant feeding where I could stand back and look at how it all fits together. It reflected everything I stand for and am trying to achieve. The Qualifications Framework Programme is a recipe for how to lead a service."*

- 2020 Qualified Leader



# VISION STATEMENTS AND CAPABILITIES

## VISION STATEMENT 1

It is common knowledge that human milk, breastfeeding and very early child development are the foundation of short- and long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.

### THE LEADER WILL BE CAPABLE OF

- Evaluating the health outcomes and impact of breastfeeding from individual and family level to macro level (public health and public cost implications).
- Comparing and contrasting the key differences between human milk and modified cows' milk.
- Analysing how early relationships impact on short- and long-term outcomes for babies.
- Outlining how the microbiome may be supported through birth and breastfeeding.
- Considering the evidence for the impact of early nutrition on epigenetic processes.
- Utilising an in-depth and up-to-date knowledge base to influence their practice.
- Disseminating this knowledge strategically within their sphere of influence.
- Utilising their knowledge to make appropriate links to positively influence wider public health initiatives.
- Modelling sensitive and compassionate communication skills to support positive interactions and empowered decision making for those who are pregnant, new mothers and primary carers.

## VISION STATEMENT 2

All relevant public service workers are educated to deliver evidence-based care related to infant feeding.

### THE LEADER WILL BE CAPABLE OF

- Demonstrating how they advance their own learning and remain up-to-date, including monitoring and responding to emerging evidence as appropriate.
- Identifying the learning needs within their sphere of influence and considering strategies for how these can be met, including planning and advocacy.
- Co-ordinating effective education programmes.
- Evaluating education programmes, identifying any gaps in learning and taking steps to address these as required.
- Analysing the emerging evidence and disseminating this appropriately to ensure that training remains contemporary and up-to-date.

## VISION STATEMENT 3

Safe, effective and evidence-based infant feeding services are available to all babies, mothers, parents/primary caregivers and families.

### THE LEADER WILL BE CAPABLE OF

- Demonstrating in-depth and up-to-date knowledge and skills related to common and complex infant feeding practice and challenges.
- Modelling sensitive, compassionate communication to support positive interactions/empowered decision making.
- Monitoring, evaluating and progressing services to improve outcomes.
- Planning or supporting the delivery of safe, effective and evidence-based services centred around local needs including specialist services for complex feeding issues.

## VISION STATEMENT 4

The Baby Friendly Initiative is implemented in all relevant services.

### THE LEADER WILL BE CAPABLE OF

- Interpreting and applying the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards and process.
- Engaging, motivating and negotiating across all levels to progress and sustain the Baby Friendly standards.
- Co-ordinating the effective implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative within services, including Achieving Sustainability.
- Collaborating with others to support and inform the Baby Friendly action planning, monitoring and evaluation process.

## VISION STATEMENT 5

The wider societal and cultural context of infant feeding in the UK supports optimum health and wellbeing outcomes

### THE LEADER WILL BE CAPABLE OF

- Examining the impact of societal and cultural influences on infant feeding and wellbeing.
- Implementing strategies to positively impact the culture within their sphere of influence.
- Developing action plans with realistic timescales and budget to support the increase of breastfeeding rates.

## VISION STATEMENT 6

The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code) and subsequent resolutions are implemented throughout public services.

### THE LEADER WILL BE CAPABLE OF

- Interpreting the Code and its application to public services.
- Upholding the Code within their own sphere of influence, including monitoring and ensuring compliance.
- Managing violations, ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest related to the Code.
- Reviewing the information that staff and families receive to ensure that this is accurate and effective.
- Interpreting negative messaging pertaining to infant feeding and knowing how to act accordingly.

## **CONTACT US**

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