



The Baby
Friendly
Initiative

UNITED KINGDOM



The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

LEADER OF CHANGE QUALIFICATION

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



unicef.uk/babyfriendly

United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK),
Registered Charity No. 1072612 (England & Wales),
SC043677 (Scotland).

Introduction

Welcome to the **Leader of Change Qualification Programme** from the **UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Baby Friendly Initiative**.

The Leader of Change Qualification is an eight-month programme which aims to increase knowledge and capacity related to infant feeding and very early child development.

The qualification is designed to recognise and develop the infant feeding-related knowledge, leadership skills and professional experience of those working to lead the implementation of the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly standards within UK public services and universities or those advocating for practice to be aligned to the standards within their sphere of influence.

Participants are acknowledged for their dedication and expertise in these fields through a recognisable and prestigious qualification that can act as quality assurance for employers, colleagues and the general public.

This 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 Leader of Change Qualification 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 Leader of Change Qualification on our website: unicef.uk/bf-qualifications

“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 Programme is a recipe for how to lead a service.”

- Qualified Leader

The Leader of Change

Who is it for?

The **Leader of Change Qualification** is suitable for those coordinating/leading on infant feeding and the implementation of the Baby Friendly standards in public services and university programmes. 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 participants who are not currently in a lead role, but who are interested in career progression. In this case, they would need to demonstrate that they have proactively sought experience in assisting the lead with strategic coordination and thus would be capable of achieving the requirements outlined for this leadership qualification.

Applications are also welcome from those that would benefit from aligning their practice with the Baby Friendly standards to influence change within their organisation that supports infant feeding and early child development.

For example:

- Speech and Language therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Peer supporters
- Pharmacists
- Dietitians/Nutritionists
- Perinatal and infant mental health teams
- Social workers
- Allied health professionals

“[The programme] helped bridge the gap between my existing knowledge and the practical, evidence-based approaches needed in infant feeding. I developed the ability to align my work with broader public health priorities and to advocate for evidence-based infant feeding practices within my team.”

- Qualified Leader

Programme overview

The programme framework is based on the **eight Baby Friendly Principles** and **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.

Each Vision Statement is supported by a list of **Capabilities** which outline how participants are expected to contribute positively to achieving the vision.

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 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.

“The Qualifications Programme increased my knowledge and understanding of the Baby Friendly standards and their consequences for holistic care.

It opened up possibilities for our service and identified the gaps so clearly – it made me feel like I had to do something about this.”

- **Qualifications Programme graduate**



Principles

1. A child rights approach which gives the preverbal infant a voice
2. A dyad-centred approach supporting continuity of closeness and recognising the importance of zero separation
3. Equitable, inclusive and respectful care with consideration to the family, social and cultural context of individual lived experience
4. A relationship-centred approach to care
5. Safe, effective, trauma-informed and evidence-based care
6. Compassionate communication skills
7. A multi-disciplinary and inter-professional approach enabling continuous and consistent care pathways
8. Emphasis on reflection, self-awareness and self-care.

Vision Statements

- **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.
- **Vision Statement 2:** All relevant health workers* are educated to deliver evidence-based care related to infant feeding and supporting close and loving parent-infant relationships.
- **Vision Statement 3:** Safe, effective and evidence-based infant feeding services are available to all babies, mothers, parents/primary caregivers and families.
- **Vision Statement 4:** The Baby Friendly Initiative is implemented and sustained in all relevant services.
- **Vision Statement 5:** The wider societal and cultural context of infant feeding in the UK supports optimum health and wellbeing outcomes
- **Vision Statement 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 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 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 **Qualification Programme 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 the 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 of Change (BFiQL)**. 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.

**HEALTH WORKER: Any individual, whether employed in public services, private settings, or by voluntary organisations, who has contact with babies, their mothers, parents/primary caregivers and families. In the context of the Baby Friendly programme, this also includes lecturers and educational leads working within Baby Friendly accredited university programmes, as well as enrolled students.*

How to apply

Prospective participants are asked to read the [Principles, 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, along with support from your line manager, to complete the programme within eight months alongside your current role. 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 for a Baby Friendly qualification 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.

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 of Change 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.
 - Considering the interrelationship between breastfeeding and emotional wellbeing, analysing how early relationship building impacts on short- and long-term outcomes for mothers and 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, incorporating a child's rights perspective.
 - Demonstrating sensitive, compassionate communication skills and an ability to reflect, have self-awareness and ensure self-care.
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Vision Statement 2: All relevant health workers are educated to deliver evidence-based care related to infant feeding and supporting close and loving parent-infant relationships.

The Leader of Change will be capable of:

- Demonstrating self-awareness of how they advance their own learning and remain up-to-date, including reflecting on and responding to emerging evidence as appropriate.
- Considering the learning needs of the multi-disciplinary team and their scope of practice, identifying strategies for how these can be met.
- Planning and co-ordinating effective education programmes including advocacy for attendance.
- 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 of Change will be capable of:

- Demonstrating in-depth and up-to-date knowledge and skills related to common and complex infant feeding practice and challenges as appropriate to role.
 - Modelling sensitive and compassionate communication, recognising the interrelationships between infant feeding and mental health.
 - Using an evidence-based, trauma-informed and relationship-centred approach to co-ordinating safe, effective, equitable, inclusive and respectful services centred around local needs.
 - Monitoring, evaluating and progressing services to improve outcomes.
 - Planning or supporting services to enable continuous and consistent care pathways centred around local needs, with a multi-disciplinary and inter-professional approach.
 - Demonstrating a dyad-centred approach to care supporting continuity of closeness and recognising the importance of zero separation.
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Vision Statement 4: The Baby Friendly Initiative is implemented and sustained in all relevant services.

The Leader of Change will be capable of:

- Explaining the role of the Baby Friendly Initiative in supporting child rights and giving the pre-verbal infant a voice.
- Interpreting and applying the Baby Friendly 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, or co-ordinating effective alignment of the Baby Friendly standards within services.
- 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 of Change will be capable of:

- Examining the impact of family, societal and cultural influences on infant feeding and individuals' lived experience.
 - Demonstrating the importance of providing equitable, inclusive and respectful care to support optimum health and wellbeing outcomes for all.
 - 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.
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Vision Statement 6: The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code) and subsequent resolutions are implemented throughout public services.

The Leader of Change 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, students and families receive to ensure that this is accurate and effective.
 - Interpreting negative messaging pertaining to infant feeding and knowing how to act accordingly.
 - Demonstrating self-awareness and compassionate communication skills.
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Learn more

To learn more about the programme, visit our website at [unicef.uk/bf-qualifications](https://www.unicef.uk/bf-qualifications) and read the case studies, frequently asked questions and tips for a successful application.

Please contact the Baby Friendly Qualification Programme team at bfqualification@unicef.org.uk with any questions.