

WHAT IS THE BETSI CADWALADR UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD INFANT FEEDING STRATEGIC PLAN?

It's a comprehensive plan setting out a clear vision to create a supportive culture in North Wales to enable families to make informed decisions about how to feed their babies; which optimises their nutrition and helps develop close loving parent-infant relationships.

WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

The majority of women want to breastfeed because it is perfectly designed for their baby, protecting their babies from infections and diseases such as reduced risk of ear, respiratory, gastrointestinal and urinary tract infections, meaning less visits to hospital. Breastfeeding provides health benefits for the mother such as lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer and endometriosis and can help mothers remain a healthy weight. Breast milk is available for the baby whenever it's needed, building a strong emotional bond at the same time.

Around half of mothers in Wales start breastfeeding and rates fall steeply in the first few weeks. Only 1% of babies are breastfed exclusively at 6 months and Wales has the lowest initiation and continuation rates in the UK and this is the same in North Wales.

Breast milk adapts as the baby grows to meet the baby's changing needs. It is recommended to breastfeed exclusively for six months and after that, continue to breastfeed alongside family foods for as long as the mother and baby want. Women and families report that they stop breastfeeding earlier than planned due to the difficulties they face and the lack of support during the first few weeks following childbirth. Not only can this have a negative impact on the health of the baby and mother it can also impact on maternal wellbeing.

The Health Board aims to reduce health inequalities and support every child to have the best start in life. Optimal nutrition is a key contributing factor to this. A third of children in North Wales are now starting school at age 4 already overweight and obese. Breastfeeding, positive infant feeding practices and steady weight gain in the first year of life are the vital building blocks towards ensuring children are a healthy weight.

WHAT WILL THE HEALTH BOARD DO TO IMPROVE BREASTFEEDING RATES AND ENSURE OPTIMUM NUTRITION FOR INFANT?

The Health Board recognises the importance of providing impartial, evidence based infant feeding information and support to families regardless of the method of feeding. The Health Board will:

- Continue to listen to feedback from women, families and professionals.
- Provide all women and families with clear consistent information and support particularly in the first few weeks after childbirth.
- Improve services and effective partnership working to improve standard of care and support.
- Support NHS staff to continue to breastfeed when returning to work after maternity leave by providing appropriate facilities and time in the work place.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Support and promote breastfeeding with women and families in work and in the community.
- Ensure you have the right training and information to provide impartial evidence based advice and support to women and families about feeding their infant.
- Continue to collaborate with others to ensure a supportive culture is achieved to support families in North Wales.

HOW WILL THINGS GET BETTER FOR MOTHERS AND BABIES?

All mothers will have access to:

- Appropriate and consistent antenatal care to prepare them for breastfeeding.
- Opportunity for skin to skin contact after birth to help develop a close loving relationship with their baby, regardless of the choice of the method of feeding.
- Clear Information and support to enable them to make informed decisions at all stages of pregnancy and later on when introducing solid food and onto a healthy family diet.
- Promotion of breastfeeding in communities to normalise breastfeeding.

All health professionals who advise parents will:

- Promote optimal nutrition and be well informed and appropriately trained.
- Adhere to the BCUHB Breastfeeding Policy and Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative.
- Contribute to quality improvement and accurate data collection.

Parents who encounter feeding difficulties and challenges will:

- Be fully supported by staff and given consistent information.
- Be appropriately referred to the right support.

Access for parents to community based infant feeding support:

- From trained Health Professionals
- Peer supporters
- Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative
- Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme

HOW WILL WE KNOW THINGS ARE BETTER?

- Breastfeeding rates will increase and improved rates of exclusive breastfeeding at all stages:

Birth

Discharge
from
hospital

10 Days

6 Weeks

6 Months

- More staff will have the capacity and capability to deliver effective support for optimal nutrition for babies and infants.
- Health care settings and other relevant settings will have achieved Unicef accreditation.
- More mothers using formula will report that they are following recommendations for preparing formula, choosing appropriate milks and using responsive bottle feeding methods.
- When introducing solids, more will be reporting introducing solids at the recommended time.
- More families will report improved support and standard of care.
- Incidence of breastfeeding problems will be reduced.
- Auditing of improvement will be better.
- More premises in the community will support the Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme.
- In the long term, an increase in the number of children starting school a healthy weight.



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