

Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance



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The Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance, an umbrella group representing new parents and those who support them, is working towards implementation of the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative at every level in Oxfordshire.

What is the Baby Friendly Initiative?

The Baby Friendly Initiative, established in 1992, is a worldwide programme of the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

The Baby Friendly Initiative works with the health-care system to ensure a high standard of care in relation to infant feeding for pregnant women and parents and babies. Support is provided for health-care facilities that are seeking to implement best practice and an assessment and accreditation process recognises those that have achieved the required standard.

Baby Friendly maternity units practise the “**10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding**”:

1. *Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all healthcare staff.*
2. *Train all healthcare staff in the skills necessary to implement the breastfeeding policy.*
3. *Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.*
4. *Help mothers initiate breastfeeding soon after birth.*
5. *Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation even if they are separated from their babies.*
6. *Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless medically indicated.*
7. *Practice rooming-in, allowing mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.*
8. *Encourage breastfeeding on demand.*
9. *Give no artificial teats or dummies to breastfeeding infants.*
10. *Identify sources of national and local support for breastfeeding and ensure that mothers know how to access these prior to discharge from hospital.*

(<http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Health-Professionals/Going-Baby-Friendly/Maternity/Ten-Steps-to-Successful-Breastfeeding/>)

Community-based services that work with babies and their families, such as primary health care teams and Children's Centres, can also implement Baby Friendly principles and achieve Baby Friendly Community accreditation:

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Health-Professionals/Going-Baby-Friendly/Community/Community-Accreditation/>

Over its 20 year history, Baby Friendly has been demonstrably effective in improving breastfeeding rates in areas that have implemented it.

You can read about the Baby Friendly Initiative in the UK here:

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/>

Why is it important?

Feeding is a central concern for all new parents, whatever their choices. Infant feeding has long-term implications not only for the health of mother and child, but also for society and the environment. The costs of not breastfeeding, as outlined in the October 2012 UNICEF UK report “Preventing Diseases and Saving Resources”, are borne by the whole community: *“Low breastfeeding rates in the UK lead to an increased incidence of illness that has a significant cost to the health service. Investment in effective services to increase and sustain breastfeeding rates is likely to provide a return within a few years, possibly as little as one year”*.

(https://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Baby_Friendly/Research/Preventing_disease_saving_resources.pdf)

Baby Friendly accreditation is recognised by NICE as the *minimum* standard for all maternity care providers (NICE 2006: <http://publications.nice.org.uk/postnatal-care-cg37/key-priorities-for-implementation>)

Isn't it irrelevant to families who don't breastfeed?

The “10 Steps” practised in Baby Friendly facilities benefit all babies, whether breastfed or not. For example, skin contact straight after birth has been shown to stabilise babies and promote attachment with parents. Parents need clear, consistent, evidence-based information about feeding so that they can make fully informed decisions and achieve their own feeding goals. Where parents choose not to breastfeed, it is vital that they receive accurate information about safe formula feeding. In practice, about 3 out of 4 Oxfordshire parents want to breastfeed, but a significant proportion do not achieve their aim.

Isn't Oxfordshire already Baby Friendly?

The Oxford Brookes University Midwifery Programme was fully accredited as Baby Friendly in 2011. Of the county's maternity units though, only the small midwife-led units at Chipping Norton (temporarily closed for births as of 18/10/12) and Wallingford have Baby Friendly accreditation. The maternity unit at Wantage lost its Baby Friendly status after it failed to meet the standard for reaccreditation. These small units account for around 0.5% of approximately 8000 births in Oxfordshire each year.

The John Radcliffe and Horton Hospitals are not Baby Friendly; the JR's initial commitment to pursuing Baby Friendly accreditation was abandoned in 2001. Breastfeeding initiation rates in Oxfordshire are broadly in line with the regional average, but there is significant drop-off during the postnatal period, much of this occurring during the hospital stay. A recent audit (April 2012) carried out at the John Radcliffe Women's Centre on behalf of the OUH Trust's Maternity Services Liaison Committee showed that the rate of formula supplementation of breastfed babies in hospital has risen significantly since 2009; from 46% to 65% of all breastfed babies. A pioneering group of 5 Children's Centres in East Oxford is currently in the process of Baby Friendly Community accreditation.

Our immediate neighbours: Northampton General Hospital is at Stage 1 of the Baby Friendly accreditation process. Royal Berkshire hospital (Reading) and Great Western (Swindon) are at Stage 2. Cheltenham General has full (Stage 3) accreditation.

What can be achieved: Bristol and Glasgow both have UNICEF “Baby Friendly City” status, with full accreditation of all maternity units and community health partnerships (PCTs).

You can see the Baby Friendly status of all the UK’s hospitals and community health services here:

http://progress.babyfriendly.org.uk/htables/all_hospitals_acc_status.asp

Who or what is the Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance?

The Alliance is supported by Oxfordshire NCT branches, Oxford Baby Cafés Group and La Leche League Oxford. It includes representatives from these organisations, together with lactation consultants, independent midwives, breastfeeding Peer Supporters and many parents who want to see good quality feeding support extended to all families in Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance is keen to work with the OUH Trust and other stakeholders to achieve timely, skilled and consistent feeding support for all Oxfordshire families. It is our view that implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative is the most effective structure for doing it. Anyone who shares these goals is welcome to join us.

What does the Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance do?

The Alliance was formed in September 2012 as a response to concern amongst breastfeeding helpers and parents about the increasing levels of formula supplementation at the John Radcliffe Women’s Centre, and rising numbers of reports from families of poor feeding support in hospital. It acts as a point of contact for anyone who is concerned about improving access to timely, skilled and consistent feeding support in Oxfordshire. Coinciding with the release of UNICEF’s report on October 18th 2012 about the cost of not breastfeeding, the Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance began to raise awareness of the issue via local media. Representatives will be meeting with the OUH Trust’s new Head of Midwifery in early November. We will also be supporting a large survey of families’ experiences of infant feeding, to be carried out by the OUH Trust’s Maternity Services Liaison Committee.

Contacting Us

You can find Oxfordshire Baby Friendly Alliance on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/OxfordshireBabyFriendlyAlliance>

To support the campaign, join the Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/378262472251410/>

For more information you are welcome to contact Spokesperson **Joanne Bowlit** of Oxford NCT on 01865 554517 or email oxfordshirebabyfriendly@gmail.com