

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

First summit meeting of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative UK

The first summit meeting of the [World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative \(WBTi\) UK](#) will be held on **Monday 28 September** in London.

The meeting brings together all the key breastfeeding organisations in the country to complete the first UK WBTi assessment, a detailed exercise that will result in a "report card" on breastfeeding for the UK. This will give a clear picture of the state of breastfeeding – both policies and practices – in the UK.

The partner organisations will then put forward a plan highlighting what actions to take to address the gaps identified.

Launched in 2005 by [International Baby Food Action Network \(IBFAN\)](#), the [World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative](#) monitors **10 key breastfeeding policies and programmes**, drawn from the WHO's [Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding](#) and the [Innocenti Declaration](#). Over 100 countries have participated in the initiative so far.

The WHO *Global Strategy* recognises that for breastfeeding to be successful mothers and families need the right support along the whole course of breastfeeding – from giving birth in a Baby Friendly hospital, to going home to find skilled local support from midwives, health visitors, GPs, and mother support groups throughout their communities. After that they need maternity protection and breastfeeding breaks when they return to work. They need accurate information about breastfeeding – without marketing pressure from formula manufacturers – from friends, family and the media, as well as health professionals and policymakers.

Those countries that have enacted the WHO *Global Strategy* have seen marked improvements in breastfeeding rates. For example, a [recent report by Save the Children](#) looked at breastfeeding policies and practices in six countries, including the UK, and highlighted the importance of a strong national policy on infant feeding.

The UK meanwhile has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world. Only 1% of babies are exclusively breastfed for six months, despite recommendations by WHO and Department of Health.

For more information, contact:

Clare Meynell RM(rtd) IBCLC

Helen Gray MPhil IBCLC

Coordinators

World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) UK Working Group
<http://www.lcgb.org/wbti/>

Contact Clare at:

01243 512327

07584160892

clarelmeynell@gmail.com

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

The partner organisations involved in WBTi UK assessment include: Public Health Wales, Public Health England, CHIMAT, CPHVA, Institute of Health Visiting, NMC, National Infant Feeding Network, UNICEF Baby Friendly UK, Baby Feeding Law Group, Lactation Consultants of Great Britain, Association of Breastfeeding Mothers, Breastfeeding Network, La Leche League GB, NCT, IBFAN Baby Milk Action, Maternity Action, First Steps Nutrition Trust

WBTi - Ten indicators of policy and programme

1. *National Policy, Programme and Coordination:* Countries without a comprehensive policy on infant and young child feeding, spearheaded by a national coordinator, make less progress.
2. *Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, or Baby Friendly Initiative:* Breastfeeding rates have been shown to be higher among babies born in Baby-Friendly hospitals than among babies born in other hospitals.
3. *Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes:* Clever slogans, striking images, giving out of free samples or supplies, and all kinds of attractive gifts have been used to persuade mothers, health professionals and workers that bottle feeding is as good as breastfeeding. The provisions of the Code and WHA resolutions need to be enacted in national legislation and fully enforced.
4. *Maternity Protection in the Workplace:* One of the most common reasons mothers give for stopping breastfeeding is because they have to return to paid employment; women need adequate paid maternity leave and breastfeeding breaks in the workplace.
5. *Health and Nutrition Care System (in support of breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding):* Health professional training in breastfeeding.
6. *Mother Support and Community Outreach:* Community-based support for the pregnant and breastfeeding mother: access to mother support groups and other community support.
7. *Information Support:* Comprehensive national information, education and communication strategy with accurate information on infant and young child feeding, at every level from national to local facility, community and family.
8. *Infant Feeding and HIV:* Policies and programmes to support HIV+ mothers in their feeding decisions supported by up to date evidence (WHO Guidelines on HIV and infant feeding 2010)

9. *Infant Feeding during Emergencies:* In disaster situations it is difficult to use formula and bottles safely. Disasters and emergencies can happen in any country; the best preparation is good breastfeeding practices.

10. *Mechanisms of Monitoring and Evaluating Systems:* Are monitoring and evaluation data regularly collected and used to improved infant and young child feeding practices?

WBTi - Five indicators of practice

1. Percentage of babies breastfed within one hour of birth
2. Percentage of babies 0-6 months of age exclusively breastfed in the last 24 hours
3. Median duration of breastfeeding in months
4. Percentage of breastfed babies less than 6 months old receiving other foods or drinks from bottles
5. Percentage of breastfed babies receiving complementary foods at 6-9 months of age

Further information

The WBTi focuses on 10 key indicators from the evidence-based strategies in the WHO *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* and the *Innocenti Declaration*, which are described in the 2008 *Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding in Europe: a blueprint for action* and in *Infant and Young Child Feeding: Standard Recommendations for the European Union*.

European Blueprint for breastfeeding:

<http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/work/breastfeeding/pdfs/newblueprintprinter.pdf>

Standard recommendations for the European Union: https://www.ihan.es/cd/documentos/Rec_UE_en.pdf

The WBTi report is a valuable tool to assist governments to target scarce resources more effectively. About 100 countries are already participating in the WBTi; the latest reports and details are available online at www.worldbreastfeedingtrends.org.

Currently 11 European countries are engaging in the WBTi process. WHO Europe has recently released a statement saying: "Significant achievements in maternal and newborn health in the WHO European Region include better attitudes towards pregnant women, respectful collaboration and active engagement of women in decision-making during pregnancy and birth and better quality of care. However, the Region has the lowest breastfeeding rates of all the WHO regions."

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/maternal-and-newborn-health/news/news/2015/08/who-european-region-has-lowest-global-breastfeeding-rates>

Breastfeeding has been shown to be one of the most effective, and cost effective, early interventions for physical and emotional health, and a powerful strategy to reduce health inequalities, but the UK has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in Europe.

(see the *Breastfeeding Supplement* from the *1001 Critical Days*: http://www.1001criticaldays.co.uk/news_detail.php?id=49)

Even in a developed country like the UK, poor breastfeeding practices are costing at least £40 million a year in increased health costs

www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Baby_Friendly/Research/Preventing_disease_saving_resources.pdf

Research shows that improved implementation of these ten strategies is associated

with increased breastfeeding rates.

Lutter and Morrow 2013 Protection, promotion, and support and global trends in breastfeeding. Adv Nutr. 2013 Mar 1; 4 (2):213-9. 10.3945/an.112.003111.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23493537>

References

WBTi UK <http://www.lcgb.org/wbti/>

World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative <http://worldbreastfeedingtrends.org/>

WHO Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding

http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/global_strategy/en/

Innocenti Declaration

<http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/innocenti.htm>

Save the Children report 'Breastfeeding: Policy Matters'

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Breastfeeding_Policy_Matters.pdf