

A close-up photograph of a baby's face, focusing on the eyes and nose. The baby has light skin and bright blue eyes. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of green and yellow, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text 'breastfeeding manifesto' is overlaid in a bold, orange font in the upper right quadrant.

breastfeeding manifesto

Supporting this manifesto will help to:

- Break down inequalities in health · Improve the health of the nation
- Save the health service money · Ensure that UK Governments fulfil their existing commitments

This Manifesto has been produced in consultation with over thirty UK organisations working to improve awareness of the health benefits of breastfeeding and its role in reducing health inequalities across the UK.

In the United Kingdom nine out of ten women who stop breastfeeding before their baby is six weeks old would have liked to breastfeed for longer. Every year more than 300,000 women across the UK are not receiving the support or information they need. If these women had received consistent, accurate information and support, the vast majority of them could have continued to breastfeed their babies.

The UK Governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life¹, yet fewer than 2% of babies in the UK are exclusively breastfed at six months. Internationally, a multi-faceted approach to infant feeding has been found to lead to significant increases in breastfeeding rates and consequent improvements in child health.

Evidence demonstrates that breastfeeding also leads to significant health benefits for mothers, can counteract health inequalities, leaves no ecological footprint and saves money.

¹ WHO recommends that breastfeeding continue for up to two years of age or beyond.

SOME FACTS

If all babies were breastfed for at least three months, the reduction in the incidence of gastroenteritis alone would **save** the NHS in England and Wales over **£35 million** each year.

Formula-fed children are twice as likely to be **hospitalised** with a chest infection within their first seven years compared to children who were breastfed for at least the first three months.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A close-up, profile view of a baby's face, showing the eye, nose, and ear. The baby has light skin and green eyes. The background is softly blurred, suggesting a warm, intimate setting.

We look forward to a society where:

Women feel enabled to initiate and continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish

Parents are supported to make informed choices about feeding their babies

Everyone is aware of the significant benefits associated with breastfeeding

During the first six months of life, formula-fed children are **five times** more likely to suffer from urinary tract infections than breastfed children.

The longer a woman breastfeeds for, the greater her **protection** against breast cancer.

Premature babies who don't receive any breastmilk are up to **ten times** more likely to suffer a life-threatening bowel disorder.

Formula-fed children are more likely to develop childhood **obesity** and **diabetes**.

OBJECTIVES

1

Implement the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding

We call on the Government to fully implement the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding,² which was developed by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to focus world attention on the impact that feeding practices have on the health and survival of children.

2

Implement postnatal care guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence³ and the accompanying Public Health Evidence into Practice document

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) postnatal care guidelines include a recommendation that all maternity care providers implement an externally evaluated structured programme that encourages breastfeeding using UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative as a minimum standard. The accompanying *Public Health Evidence into Practice* Document outlines a range of strategies for promoting breastfeeding. Both these action plans should be appropriately resourced and fully implemented.

² http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/New_Publications/NUTRITION/gs_iycf.pdf

³ A Framework for maternity services in Scotland: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/health/ffms-00.asp>

3

Improve training for health professionals

Before qualifying, all relevant health professionals should receive sufficient training to enable them to provide parents with accurate information and appropriate practical and emotional support. Post registration training should be mandatory for all those offering help and advice to breastfeeding mothers. Staffing levels must be adequate to enable health professionals to provide this support.

4

Work with employers to create a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers

The Health and Safety Executive guidelines do not provide sufficient protection for women returning to work who would like to continue to breastfeed³. We call on the Government to legislate for breastfeeding breaks for women at work, in line with several other European countries.



³ Returning to work is the most common reason for stopping breastfeeding for mothers with babies over six weeks old

5

Develop policy and practice to support breastfeeding in public places

We call on the Government to do all it can to protect women's right to breastfeed in public places and encourage greater social acceptance of this important and natural practice.



6 Include breastfeeding education in the curriculum

To enable young people to grow up with an understanding of the benefits of breastfeeding, we call on the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that breastfeeding is included in the curriculum at the nursery, primary and secondary levels. To ensure that this education is accurate, up to date and free from commercial influence, it should be provided by independent experts.

7 Adopt the World Health Organization International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant Resolutions

The marketing of formula milk has been shown to undermine breastfeeding and thus infant health. Therefore it is important that marketing is controlled to the standards set out in the WHO International Code and subsequent resolutions.

Achieving these **seven objectives is crucial** if the UK is to initiate and sustain improvements in infant feeding practice. Working towards these objectives will help to ensure that women, irrespective of their socio-economic or ethnic background, are empowered to breastfeed for as long as they choose.

We call upon parliamentarians, policy makers and relevant organisations to demonstrate their support for this manifesto and help realise its vision.

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This document has been prepared by the Breastfeeding Manifesto Coalition, whose growing base of members includes:



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Mother & Infant Research Unit - University of York

If you are an MP, MSP, AM or Peer, please use the contact details above to register your support for the Manifesto. Otherwise, please register your support by visiting our website:

www.breastfeedingmanifesto.org.uk