

South East London Infant Feeding Strategy 2024-2027



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Executive Summary

Our Southeast London (SEL) Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) has collaborated with local authorities, health visiting services, and NHS Trusts to develop the background information and make recommendations for an infant feeding strategy.

This document makes recommendations that can be implemented locally by all stakeholders involved in infant feeding services across SEL LMNS. The aim of this document, is to ensure that those providing and/or commissioning infant feeding services across the system, provide women, birthing people, families and carers with consistent, evidence-based, and timely support for infant feeding. SEL LMNS plays a vital role in assessing feeding patterns, addressing disparities, and promoting standardisation of information sharing. The strategy aligns with the Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) and supports the implementation of a Family Hubs (FH) model in local authorities, which emphasises whole system support.

To improve breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates, address disparities in access to safe formula feeding support, and enhance health outcomes for both mothers and infants, it is necessary to make recommendations across all areas impacting infant feeding including the introduction of solids. This document was developed using an adapted framework of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) and other national and local policies related to infant feeding services.

This document covers the period from conception to age two, often referred to as the first 1001 days. It will be adopted by all local authorities and providers in SEL and will be monitored by the LMNS Public Health workstream team in collaboration with local invested stakeholders. The overall aim of this document is to improve services and outcomes over a three-year period from 2024 to 2027.



Acknowledgements

SEL LMNS will like to express gratitude to the following groups and organisations who supported in the development and writing of this document.

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1. Introduction

Our Southeast London (SEL) Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) has collaborated with local authorities, health visiting services, and NHS Trusts to develop this infant feeding strategy.

This document aims to offer women and birthing people, families and carers with consistent, evidence-based, and timely support for infant feeding. The SEL LMNS plays a vital role in assessing feeding patterns, addressing disparities, and standardising policies across communities. Additionally, it oversees the local accreditation process for maternity services under the Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative. As part of the Government's Start for Life Programme, funding has been allocated for the implementation of a new Family Hubs model in four local authorities: Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark. These hubs will provide holistic support for infant feeding, including peer support programs, out-of-hours assistance, and integrated pathways with specialised support services. Detailed information on each Family Hub's approach to supporting infant feeding can be found in the individual Borough chapters of this document.

2. Aim of the Strategy

The SEL Infant Feeding Strategy aims to:

- Provide evidence-based support and information for families in feeding infants and young children, considering individual and cultural factors to promote health, growth, and development.
- Tailor support to meet the specific needs of every family in the system improving their experiences and outcomes.
- Increase initiation and continuing of breastfeeding rates while offering clear information on infant feeding to all families, including those using breastmilk, donor milk, or commercial milk formula.

- Address the needs of families with health or social considerations, ensuring equal treatment for all women and birthing people regardless of age, ethnicity, ability, identity, sexual orientation, or family makeup or socio-economic status.
- Provide context and evidence-based recommendations to guide the development of services locally across SEL.

3. The Scope

The strategy covers the period from conception to age two (the first 1001 days), focusing on the infant's first year and transition into toddlerhood. It aims to enhance services and outcomes over a three-year period (2024-2027), adopted by all local authorities and providers in SEL, monitored and evaluated by the LMNS Public Health workstream team in collaboration with maternity, health visiting services, and local authorities.

4. Mission

Our mission was developed with input from families and evidence from various stakeholders across SEL. Through diverse methodologies like surveys and interviews, we gathered insights to inform our vision. We aspire to empower families, foster healthy feeding relationships, and ensure every parent and or carer feels equipped to care for their child during the critical first 1001 days of life.

The focus of this strategy will be on the family's journey and experience, with the aim that everyone is fully supported and informed to meet their infant feeding goals whatever these may be.

5. Context

In 2020, there were 23,205 births recorded in SEL (Maternity Services Data). Maternity and neonatal care in this area are managed by three Hospital Trusts operating five units across Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. Between 2022 and 2025, the boroughs of Greenwich, Lambeth and Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark are receiving three-year funding from the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education to implement the Family Hubs (FH) programme. This initiative focuses on enhancing essential services during the Start for Life period, particularly in infant feeding support, and is tailored to meet each borough's specific needs. The FH programme aims to provide timely, high-quality, one-to-one support and to integrate infant feeding services across maternity and community settings. All boroughs in SEL have provided their local context, later in this document, and those participating in the FH programme have outlined their planned responses for the next two years.

Figure 1. SEL LMNS Geographical Footprint and maternity units



- 1** **Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**
St Thomas' Hospital Site and Evelina London Hospital site
- 2** **Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**
Denmark Hill hospital
- 3** **Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**
Princes Royal Hospital
- 4** **Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust**
University Hospital Lewisham
- 5** **Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust**
Queen Elizabeth Hospital



6. The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI)

The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative collaborates with healthcare facilities and children’s centres in the UK to promote breastfeeding and nurturing relationships between parents and infants (Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative). Through evidence-based practices and skilled support, they aim to create a supportive environment for infant feeding. Healthcare facilities meeting the Initiative’s standards receive accreditation as “Baby-Friendly,” indicating their commitment to high-quality care and infant feeding support (Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative). Full BFI accreditation is sought for all healthcare services and children’s centres in the SEL region, with an aspiration for Gold accreditation, signifying sustained adherence to BFI standards (Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative). The current status of BFI accreditation for our SEL services is shown in the table 1 (October, 2023)

Table 1. SEL LMNS Maternity, Neonatal and Community BFI Accreditations

Setting	Accreditation				
	Certificate of commitment	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Gold
Maternity					
Guys & St Thomas’s Hospital				Reassessment due	
Kings College Hospital		X			
Princess Royal University Hospital		X			
Queen Elizabeth Hospital				Reassessment due July/Sep 2024	
University Hospital Lewisham				Reassessment due Feb 2024	
Neonatal					
Evelina London Neonatal				X	
Kings College Hospital Neonatal	X				
Princess Royal University Hospital Neonatal	X				
Queen Elizabeth Hospital Neonatal					
University Hospital Lewisham Neonatal					
Community Health Visiting					
Bromley Healthcare, Bexley Health Visiting				X	
Bromley Healthcare, Bromley Health Visiting				X	
Bromley Healthcare, Greenwich Health Visiting				Reassessment due Feb 2024	
Evelina London Community (Lambeth Health Visiting)				X	
Evelina London Community (Southwark Health Visiting)			X		
Lewisham Health Visiting				X	
Children’s Centres/Family Hubs*					
Bexley					
Bromley					
Greenwich				X	
Lambeth				X	
Lewisham					
Southwark					

7. Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding offers broad and long-lasting benefits to population health, contributing to improved life chances and well-being.

Human milk provides unique properties that support healthy development and reduce the risk of infectious diseases, malnutrition, and chronic conditions for infants. Additionally, breastfeeding benefits maternal health by reducing the risk of chronic diseases like cancer and diabetes. Investing in breastfeeding and support should yield significant economic returns, with estimates suggesting substantial savings in healthcare costs and improved outcomes for both women and birthing people and babies (Walters et al., 2017; Pokhrel et al., 2015).

The evidence highlights numerous health benefits of breastfeeding, including protection against childhood illnesses, reduced risk of maternal diseases, and support for mother-baby bonding (Victora et al., 2016; Rollins et al., 2016; Louis-Jacques & Stuebe, 2020). Encouraging breastfeeding also has implications for long-term conditions in adult women and birthing people and can reduce the risk of childhood cancer (Pokhrel et al., 2015; Su et al., 2021). Conversely, not breastfeeding has negative effects on child intelligence, educational outcomes, and behaviour (Horta et al., 2015). The optimal duration of breastfeeding, exclusive for around six months followed by continued breastfeeding, maximises health benefits (Kramer and Kakuma, 2012). Breastfeeding also plays a crucial role in nurturing close relationships and supporting maternal mental health, underscoring its importance for population well-being (Tucker and O'Malley, 2022).

8. Our Key Priorities based on infant feeding needs assessments across the SE London Region

Our key priorities for action have been identified by undertaking a number of local infant feeding need assessments, and the feedback received from families across SEL. This document will outline recommendations in each specific priority.

Figure 2. Key Priorities of SEL Infant Feeding Strategy



a) A more comprehensive antenatal offer

A more accessible antenatal offer which is flexible to suit all families and offers everyone the opportunity to have a meaningful infant feeding conversation, for each infant regardless of parity, is essential. Families should be given information about breastfeeding and both maternal and child health as well as building a responsive bond with their baby during pregnancy. Clear information on the infant feeding support that will be available to them postnatally should be provided in a format that best meets the family's needs. To achieve a more comprehensive antenatal offer, and a better infant feeding experience across SEL we will focus on achieving the following recommendations:

BFI Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All maternity, neonatal, health visiting and children's centre services in the region should be fully BFI accredited by 2027. • BFI accreditation of Health Visiting services and Children's Centres and FH is written into commissioning documentation. • Appointing guardians for BFI accreditation
Antenatal Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that vitamin supplementation and Healthy Start scheme are in place across maternity providers • Follow recommendations of First Steps Nutrition • Health care professionals to have individualised meaningful conversations in this period • Sign post to infant feeding support information and where to get support postnatally in their area • Information on services and resources should be available online and copies should be available in most common languages • Specific support for babies with additional needs such as diabetes, low birth weight, prematurity, twins, and or complex needs • Antenatal colostrum harvesting • Parents receive neonatal counselling including the benefits of breastmilk and expressing if it is likely their baby will deliver early, as part of BAPM pre-term optimisation, or there is an anticipated admission to the NNU
Standardisation of Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardisation of following policies: Infant feeding, Hypoglycaemia, Prolonged Jaundice, Readmissions Term Neonate, Mastitis, Safer Sleep, Weight loss, Frenulum division and HIV



b) Better access to information and support

Information and support should be available in multiple formats, including hard copy and digital offers. Families need to be able to find the support they need, when they need it and, in a language, they can understand. We will do so by focusing on the following actions required both at both at LMNS and Local authority settings.

SEL LMNS Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consolidation and adoption of infant feeding Padlets containing consistent and updated information to support infant feeding, nurturing relationships, and maternal-infant mental health support.• Padlets in plain English to be accessible across NHS and Health Visiting services through appropriate websites, available in multiple languages and British Sign Language.• Refer families to Unicef BFI-aligned resources at Eating Well by First Steps Nutrition Trust.
Local Authorities Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each Local Authority to lead in creating a comprehensive booklet detailing infant feeding support from pre-conception to 2 years, in partnership with local maternity and neonatal services.• Booklet to be available in both hard copy and digital formats, regularly updated, and distributed to families at key contact points.• Distribution in various community locations such as Children’s Centres, Family Hubs, voluntary breastfeeding support groups, libraries, community centres, cafes, food banks, GP practices, and playgroups and voluntary community services (VCS) that support local families with infant food issues.• Inclusion of information on Healthy Start benefits.• Inform families that all UK infant formulas meet the same standards, regardless of price. Clarify that only first formula is necessary in the first year, and formula is not needed after age one, unless advised by a health professional.• Local Authorities should consider the introduction of community champions to provide training and information on guiding local families to access infant feeding services and support.• Champions to be equipped with knowledge to support families throughout their infant feeding journey and connect them with appropriate resources.



c) Dedicated support throughout the early days

All new families should be provided with the feeding support they need in those critical first few days and weeks of life, responsive to their feeding choices. Consistent access to breastfeeding support in the hospital regardless of when a baby is born is essential. Face to face support as well as online or telephone support should be available in the community. Early support is key to ensure that common problems are identified and addressed. This support will also enable timely assessment, referral and intervention for infants that require specialist services or interventions. These may include but are not exclusive to those infants who have attached frenulum which is interfering with successful infant feeding. This support will be provided in both acute and community services and should include the following recommendations:

Postnatal Settings (Hospital and Community)

Breastfeeding Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging early skin-to-skin contact and first breastfeeding opportunity after birth. • Skin to skin contact should not be interrupted unless absolutely necessary. Routine checks such as weighing should be delayed as much as practicable possible. • Ensuring that clarity of definition what is considered as a first feed is included and standardised across acute settings in SEL. • Supporting families to develop close and loving relationships with their baby and promoting responsive feeding practices. • Encourage hand expressing as early as possible when infants are separated from their mothers.
Support and Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering support and observation of breastfeeds in the birth setting, regardless of length of stay. Ensuring equitable support services are available at night and weekends. • It is recommended the use of breastfeeding assessment tools at least twice in the first week of life as part of BFI standards
Supplementation and use of formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a clear policy on supplementation with informed consent from parents. • Hospital settings should follow WHO standards • Providing information on safe preparation of commercial milk formulas and sterilisation of feeding equipment. • Encouraging responsive/paced bottle feeding and providing support for families using breast pumps.
Breastfeeding Education and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing clear policies to support breastfeeding in cases of separation between mother and baby. • Offering breastfeeding families an infant feeding plan on discharge and clear signposting to post-natal breastfeeding support resources.

Postnatal Setting (Neonatal)

Infant feeding Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer high-quality support throughout hospital admission and post-discharge. • Provide standardised guidelines for donor human milk (DHM) use. • Create a comfortable environment that ensures parents can be close to their baby for expressing and feeding with the necessary equipment available. • Educate on safe storage of breastmilk. • Implement policies for safe storage and administration of breastmilk in neonatal settings • Support skin to skin (Kangaroo care) where appropriate
Feeding Practices and Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on responsive breastfeeding and alternative feeding methods. • Enable early expressing after pre-term delivery to optimise mothers own milk production • Provide support for breastfeeding challenges, including galactagogues where appropriate • Encourage cue-based care and appropriate timing for oral feeds. • Utilise assessment tools for transitioning from tube feeding.
Family Integrated Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support parents/carers as partners in their baby's care. • Families are seen as equal partners in the care team and integrated into all aspects of their babies' care. • Empower parents/carers to be present in the neonatal unit to facilitate bonding and improve long term outcomes • Families are signposted to support services including financial, psychological and practical support for families
Community Midwifery, Health Visiting and Neonatal Outreach Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring families receive support from the community midwifery service with an initial contact within 24 hours of returning home. • Providing ongoing infant feeding support during subsequent visits, with referrals to specialist services if needed



d) Ongoing support across the feeding journey including introduction to solid food

Families should know where to access community support however they feed their infants under 6 months and all families should be provided with knowledge of how and when to introduce solid foods which are healthy, nutritious and cost-effective for their infant and family. Families of babies born prematurely should be directed to appropriate resources and information regarding the introduction to solid foods, such as the Bliss 'Weaning Your Premature Baby' online guide (Bliss, 2023). All families should have a meaningful conversation about the limitations of commercial baby food and be given clear information that commercial milk formula is (in most cases) not needed after one year of age and that breastfeeding after one year of age provides significant health benefits for women and birthing people and babies.

Infant Feeding Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA should commission community infant feeding support services across Health Visiting, Children's Centres and Family Hubs • All LA commissioned programmes and projects should refuse relationships with any company that markets commercial milk formula, bottles or teats.
Infant Feeding Practices and Advice across the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear advice on proper sterilisation of feeding equipment and preparing formula with water at 70°C or above. Discourage the use of formula preparation machines. • Ensure families know they can access support for feeding regardless of method, including breastfeeding, formula feeding, weaning, and managing milk and solids. • Remind families registered for Healthy Start to call the helpline at childbirth. • Support eligible Healthy Start families to apply if not registered. • Encourage all eligible mothers to take Healthy Start vitamins for the first-year post-childbirth.
Implementation of the WHO Code of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities (LA) should adopt estate advertising guidelines, following the example of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, to prohibit advertising of commercial milk formula, bottles, teats, and inappropriate baby foods. • Directors of Public Health should endorse efforts to strengthen UK laws on marketing these products, aligning with the WHO Code and relevant resolutions. They should also avoid relationships with formula companies. • Retailers should receive training and guidance from LAs to prevent inadvertent advertising of commercial milk formula, prioritise breastfeeding support, and direct families to appropriate resources.

e) A well-trained workforce

Sufficient training opportunities are needed for all healthcare professionals and community partners who have contact with families in the early years to ensure staff have the skills and knowledge to support families with infant feeding sensitively, and know how to signpost to more specialist support if required. There should be clear and consistent training pathways for infant feeding specialists.

Training Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A multi-professional task and finish group for infant feeding should be established to standardise the content of education and training on infant feeding for health care professionals across SEL LMNS.
Staff Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adoption of minimum education and training standards across all professional groups within SEL LMNS, aligned with Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) curricula. Coordination and publication of these standards by SEL LMNS.• Provision of at least 2 hours of annual infant feeding training for everyone working in Children's Centres and Family Hubs, as well as all service providers in those venues. Training should cover services, BFI accreditation requirements, and local infant feeding support resources.• Ensuring that all health improvement staff, whether directly employed or in commissioned services, receive training on the preventive benefits of breastfeeding for infant and maternal health, as well as the environmental impacts of commercial milk formula feeding.• Ensuring that staff working in infant feeding roles have the skills required based on a locally agreed infant feeding support competencies framework• Infant feeding roles and job descriptions should be standardised and ensure that there is a diversity of qualifications and experiences on infant feeding posts.• Neonatal/Paediatric doctors should receive infant feeding training• Training in neonatal settings should be inclusive of the entire multidisciplinary team (medical, nursing, AHP and psychological professionals), and avoid age or gestation-based feeding support, prioritise individual needs.• Appoint a dedicated infant feeding lead for support and education.

f) Good quality of Infant feeding data

SEL LMNS collects various other data outcomes related to infant feeding across different services, including:

- Infant feeding at first feed (collected by maternity services)
- Infant feeding at discharge from neonatal or maternity services
- Infant feeding at discharge from community midwifery
- Infant feeding at the new birth visit (by health visiting services)
- Infant feeding at the 6-8-week health visitor check

However, there are significant challenges in how this data is collected and validated. Data is required to be broken down by several categories such as ethnic group, socio-economic status (deprivation deciles), mother's age, complex social factors, and prematurity. In practice, it has been difficult to obtain these detailed breakdowns during the process of developing this document. Additionally, there are gaps in data for infant feeding at 6 months and 1 year, as well as data on the age when solids are introduced. There is also minimal integration of data between maternity and health visiting services. These issues highlight the need for improvements in data collection and quality across the system. Additionally, there are inconsistencies in collecting feedback from service users.

It is therefore necessary that as a system we enhance data collection and quality around infant feeding, by standardisation of data collection, ensuring IT systems allow for data for efficient data entry, storage, and analysis. Therefore, it is recommended that data is also considered as part of the task and finish group scope recommended in priority e. The following recommendations should improve the quality of infant feeding data:

Staff training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff involved in data recording and system usage should information and training about accurate data recording as part of their infant feeding training
Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant feeding services should perform routine audits to ensure that data accuracy and identify areas for improvements
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that mechanisms to collect feedback on infant feeding services is implemented to improve data collection practices

g) Inclusive and Diverse Support for Breastfeeding in Our Communities

To meet the diverse needs of our communities, it is essential to promote breastfeeding-friendly spaces across public areas, ensuring that all breastfeeding families feel safe and welcomed without judgment. This involves not only establishing physical spaces conducive to breastfeeding but also incorporating diverse, positive images of breastfeeding in all information sources for families. Additionally, local data should be utilised to tailor infant feeding support and services to the specific needs of each population, aiming to reduce health and service access disparities. It is crucial that every family receives equal care, attention, and support, regardless of the age, parity, ethnicity, family size or composition, additional health or socio-economic needs, identity, or sexuality of the woman or birthing person. Through these efforts, we can create a more inclusive, supportive environment that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by different groups in our community.

h) Kindness, compassion and encouragement along the infant feeding journey

Everyone who comes into contact with families should show kindness, compassion and encouragement around infant feeding and remain non-judgemental. Every family should be encouraged to build a close and loving relationship with their infant/child regardless of how he/she is fed. All health workers in contact with women and birthing people, should offer encouragement and support whether they are breastfeeding or not.



9. Infant Feeding across Local Authorities

The following section provide more detailed information about infant feeding services available in the six local authorities within the LMNS footprint. National Schemes such as Healthy start in in offer across all six local authorities in SEL. Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark are also part of the family Hub programme as described previously. Therefore additional information on their response to this programme is also included.

London Borough of Bexley



Local Policy

We have an Infant Feeding policy that covers Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich. This ensure consistency and close working links with the maternity departments of our feeder hospitals (PRUH, QE and DVH)

Infant Feeding Services

Women and birthing people living in Bexley can choose to birth their babies at one of three hospitals, Queen Elizabeth, The Princess Royal or Darenth Valley. For further information on infant feeding support available outside SEL and through Darenth Valley Hospital, please visit: Infant Feeding: Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust (dgt.nhs.uk) <https://maternity.dgt.nhs.uk/postnatal-care/>

What services are available to support infant feeding in the Borough?

Bromley Healthcare employs one full time Infant Feeding and Healthy Weight Lead, who works across Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich. Additionally, for the Borough of Bexley one Infant Feeding Specialist advisor is also employed 22.5 hours per week. We provide Infant feeding drop ins in North Cray and Danson and a specialist one to one Infant Feeding Clinic at West Street Children's centre, alongside ad hoc Infant Feeding Support telephone calls and video calls. The drop ins are covered by our Infant Feeding specialist and our trained Nursery Nurses who have completed the in-house BFI training. Our Band 5 Infant Feeding specialist runs the one to one clinic for those with complex feeding issues such as faltering growth. We are also able to offer telephone and virtual Infant Feeding support.

We are in the process of restarting our Antenatal Infant Feeding workshop and a starting solids workshop.

Our current breastfeeding prevalence at our New Birth Visits (10-21 days) is: 53% and our 6 – 8-week prevalence for breastfeeding is: 54.3%.

We are BFI accredited to Stage 3 and currently in the process of our reassessment.

Our current breastfeeding prevalence at our New Birth Visits (10-21 days) is: 53% and our 6 – 8-week prevalence for breastfeeding is: 54.3%.

London Borough of Bromley



Infant Feeding Services

The Health Visiting service is delivered by Bromley Healthcare. The latest data from the Health Visiting service (April – June 2023) shows information on infant feeding at the new birth visit for families living in the Borough. At the new birth visit (10-14 days) 77.9% of babies were receiving some breastmilk, with 49.3% being exclusively breastfed, 29.5% partially breastfed and 21.2% solely formula fed.

In the last quarter for which comprehensive data on infant feeding at 6-8 weeks was recorded (April – June 2023), 68.7% of babies were receiving some breastmilk, 44.7% were exclusively breastfed, 26.6% partially breastfed and 28.7% given infant formula only.

This data compares favourably with the latest national data on breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks (annual report for 2021-2022) where 49.3% of babies in England received any breastmilk at 6-8 weeks, 32.7% were exclusively breastfed, 16.6% were partially breastfed and 41.4% of babies received only formula milk.

What services are available to support infant feeding in the Borough?

At Princess Royal Hospital there is an infant feeding lead (1 FTE) and currently a team of 4.06 FTE infant feeding specialists' band 4 s, with intention to recruit a further 1.2 FTE into the team. The Infant Feeding Team offer 7 days a week inpatient daytime cover, and 7 days a week outpatient appointment at the PRUH for those who birthed at PRUH, or live in the Bromley Borough. Additionally, the team attend a collaborative drop in feeding clinic with the health visiting team on a Monday at Blenheim Children's Centre 09:30-11:00, run a helpline number 07:00-19:00 7 days a week, and a virtual parent infant feeding education session on a Thursday 17:00-19:00, bookable via Eventbrite. Once at establishment, the team will join the Wednesday health visiting team drop in feeding clinic, introduce face to face parent education sessions and offer daily inpatient workshops. The Kings Trust is currently working towards stage 2 with Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative.

There are two Infant Feeding drop ins in the Borough run weekly – one collaboratively delivered between the Infant Feeding team within maternity and Health visiting and one delivered by Health Visiting as well as a one to one clinic delivered by the Infant Feeding Specialist from the Health Visiting Service.

49.3% of babies in England received any breastmilk at 6-8 weeks, 32.7% were exclusively breastfed, 16.6% were partially breastfed and 41.4% of babies received only formula milk

Royal Borough of Greenwich



Local Policy

There are a number of local plans at the Royal Borough of Greenwich which support this infant feeding strategy. These include:

- Our Greenwich (corporate plan)
- Health and wellbeing strategy
- Healthier Greenwich Partnership (ICP)

Infant Feeding Services

At Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich there is small infant feeding team which consists of an infant feeding lead, 2 part time infant feeding specialists (band4) and an additional part time infant feeding advocate (band 3)] who offer infant feeding workshops on the ward, one to one support and specialist infant feeding support to birthing people and families. The hospital is currently working towards re-accreditation with Unicef Baby Friendly.

Monthly face-to-face infant feeding sessions are run for families at the hospital (first Tuesday of the month 6-8pm) and all families can attend an online 4-hour course Birth, Baby and You on the first Saturday of the month which includes information on infant feeding support and Children's Centre services.

Greenwich has 23 Children's Centres (CC), in four area clusters, managed by 3 different providers groups. Those in bold will be the new Family Hubs as part of work funded by The Department of Education Family Hubs grant. All CC in Greenwich have full Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative Accreditation (re-accredited 2023).

East – Waterways CC

Discovery CC, Abbey Wood CC, Mulberry Park CC (Greenwich Leisure Limited GLL)

Central – Brookhill CC

Plumstead CC, Slade CC, Margaret Bondfield CC within Glyndon Community Centre, Eglinton CC, Mulgrave CC, Cardwell CC (Homestart Greenwich)

South – Storkway CC

Vista Field CC, Alderwood CC, Eltham CC, Greenacres CC, Shooters Hill CC (Greenwich Leisure Limited GLL)

West – Quaggy CC

Rachel McMillan CC, Pound Park CC, Robert Owen CC, Sherington CC, Invicta CC (Quaggy Development Trust)

Greenwich has 23 Children's Centres (CC), in four area clusters, managed by 3 different providers groups

Bromley Healthcare provide 3.7 FTE infant feeding advocates to support 5 weekly infant feeding drop-ins and one appointment only drop-in across the Borough. In addition Quaggy CC has a drop-in supported by an independent lactation consultant who also offers 3 referral appointments a week. Infant feeding drop-ins regularly see over 200 families a month. Our services also include an infant feeding specialist clinic that offers one to one sessions for complex cases run by Band 5 Infant Feeding specialist in Greenwich Health visiting.

Families can also receive infant feeding support from health visitors at well-baby clinics. For families with more complex infant feeding issues, we have a clinic run by our Band 5 specialist from Greenwich health visiting team.

Adult education classes in the Borough provided by Greenwich Community Development Agency (GCDA) offer support on the introduction of solids and feeding young children.

Greenwich has a Breastfeeding Friendly scheme which encourages businesses and public settings across the Borough to provide safe and encouraging spaces for women and birthing people to breastfeed. Breastfeeding Friendly is also embedded, and is a compulsory criteria, within the Good Food in Greenwich charters for retail, community and hospitality. Royal Greenwich have a breastfeeding policy for local authority staff who return to work whilst breastfeeding with a dedicated room.

Our response to the Family Hubs

Additional services will be introduced 2023-2025 as follows:

- In 2023/24 a new **breastfeeding peer support service** is being jointly funded with Lewisham Borough which will offer additional breastfeeding support to families in both the hospitals and in the community. Paid peer supporters will offer support on the wards at weekends and in the evenings and will also support infant feeding drop-ins and some home visits. Volunteer peer supporters will be also be trained to support the community drop-ins and to act as community champions.
- Greenwich and Lewisham Boroughs are also jointly commissioning the development of a **midwife/nurse led tongue-tie service** at both University Hospital Lewisham and Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich which should allow faster assessment and treatment of tongue-tie where needed.
- Bromley Healthcare are also being given additional funding to provide **additional infant feeding support antenatally** to ensure that all women can access meaningful conversations about infant feeding and can find out about the support available to them postnatally.
- **Additional communications** will be funded to ensure that information about the services and support for infant feeding in the Borough are clearly signposted at every opportunity and contact. Additional support sessions will run in CC around the introduction of solids and managing eating in the early years



London Borough of Lambeth



Local Policy

- Lambeth's borough plan, "Our Future, Our Lambeth,"
- Lambeth Together's health and care plan for 2023-28, "Our Health, Our Lambeth,"
- The "Health and Wellbeing Strategy" for Lambeth (2023-28).

Infant Feeding Services in Lambeth

Infant feeding services at Lambeth are fully accredited by UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative and working towards Achieving Sustainability. Services are supported by a dedicated infant feeding lead. Local infant feeding support is commissioned in Lambeth and delivered by Specialist Midwifery teams, Health Visiting teams and The Breast Feeding Network.

Antenatal support

Antenatal drop-ins are held in Children's Centres with a focus on infant feeding education and preparation monthly alongside the postnatal support group. One-to-one sessions are also offered via video call and in person at Children's Centres by referral.

Targeted antenatal support is offered by Early Intervention Health Visitors as a part of the Bright Beginnings pathway. Referral for infant feeding debriefing and specialist support can be made to the Specialist Infant Feeding Midwives in the antenatal period.

Postnatal support

All Lambeth residents have access to universal drop-in groups where they can receive support and guidance on infant feeding from Peer Supporters and the Health Visiting Team. These groups provide an informal setting for women and birthing people to connect with other families and seek support. Groups currently run across four days a week at different locations across the borough at the following venues:

Monday: Gracefield Gardens Health Centre (Streatham)

Tuesday: St Stephen's Better Start Children's Centre (North Lambeth)

Thursday: Benton's Lane Better Start Children's Centre (West Norwood)

Friday: Jubilee Better Start Children's Centre (Tulse Hill)

One-to-one sessions are also offered via video call and in person at Children's Centres by referral

Specialist Infant Feeding Support

Kings College Hospital Specialist Midwives provide specialist infant feeding support at home to families living within the KCH catchment area, up to 21 days postpartum by referral. Guy's and St Thomas' Evelina Specialist Midwives provide one to one infant feeding support to Lambeth families with children of any age. Following a referral, the team offer appointments at the following Better Start Children's Centres:

Monday: Henry Fawcett Children's Centre (North Lambeth)

Tuesday: Sunnyhill Children's Centre (Streatham)

Thursday: Jubilee Children's Centre (Tulse Hill)

Friday: Clapham Manor Children's Centre (Clapham)

Outside the Breastfeeding network (BFN), voluntary sector support provided can vary but all families are signposted to the national breastfeeding help line by health visitors and maternity, which can be accessed 24/7. Monthly walking groups aimed at local families are provided by Lambeth Breastfeeding Network Peer Supporters and Peer Helpers.

The Lambeth Public Health team provides training to professionals working with families and young children, breastfeeding and infant feeding are key topic areas.

Free D scheme

Lambeth provides free vitamin D supplements to children less than 4 years old, pregnant women and birthing people, and new mothers and birthing parents or carers up to one-year postpartum. This is called the "Free D Scheme".

The vitamins are available at selected pharmacies, details of which are available on the council's website.

It is expected that midwives, health visitors and other HCPs inform families about the schemes and are encouraged to give them a "Free D" card to take to pharmacies. Children's Centre workers are also actively encouraged to tell parents and carers about the scheme.

Alexandra Rose Voucher scheme

The Alexandra Rose Voucher scheme provides vouchers to expecting families and families with a child up to five years old on certain benefits. These can be spent on fruit and vegetables at local markets and available via Children Centres.

Our response to Family Hubs Programme:

- Continuation of work towards Baby Friendly Achieving Sustainability, the Gold Standard for services in the community including recruitment of administrative support for the Infant Feeding Team.
- Recruitment of three Start For Life Community Nurses to bolster support offered at the infant feeding drop ins as well as providing support with Perinatal Mental Health and Parent-Infant relationships.
- Increasing hours for The Breastfeeding Network to expand the drop-in groups to six groups across five days an increase one to one support offered to families in both the antenatal and postnatal periods.
- Increasing the offer available at the drop in groups by purchasing equipment and training materials and offering specialist training in Lambeth in Tongue Tie, Stopping Breastfeeding and LGBTQ+ lactation.

London Borough of Lewisham



Local Policy

There are a number of local plans at the London Borough of Lewisham which support this infant feeding strategy. These include:

- SEL London ICS Joint Forward Plan for Lewisham 2023/4
- Lewisham Food Justice Action Plan 2023
- Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review- BLACHIR Report 2022

Infant Feeding Services

Specialist infant feeding support in our Borough is provided by local midwifery and health visiting teams. In addition, since September 2023 the Breastfeeding Network (BFN) has been commissioned to provide additional peer support services. The following infant feeding services are provided at Lewisham. This information is also update and available online here <https://myhv.lgt.nhs.uk/page/breastfeeding/>

Table 2. Infant Feeding Support Services in Lewisham

Day	Time	Location
Monday	1pm – 3pm	Downderry Children’s Centre, Shroffold Road, Downham BR1 5PD – DROP IN.
Tuesday	1pm – 3pm	Bellingham Children’s Centre, 109 Randlesdown Road, SE6 3HB – DROP IN.
Wednesday	10am – 12pm	Lee Health Centre, 2 Handen Road, SE12 8NP – DROP IN.
Thursday	10am – 12pm	Evelyn Children’s Centre, 231 Grove Street, Deptford, SE8 3PZ – DROP IN.
Friday	1pm – 3pm	Ladywell Children’s Centre, 30 Rushey Mead, SE4 1JJ – DROP IN.

Specialist infant feeding support in our Borough is provided by local midwifery and health visiting teams

Our Response to the Family Hub Programme

To lead on this work a local strategic group has been established to take forward the Delivery Plan and priorities for action. The Lewisham Family Hubs Infant Feeding Steering Group which includes public health, health visiting, maternity, children and family centres, Maternity Voices Partnership, and CYP Joint Commissioning. The group was set up in May 2023 and meets on a quarterly basis. The funding from the DfE Start for Life Programme is being used to enhance or expand existing support, as well as new activities. We want to harness the existing expertise and resources within Lewisham. Ideally activities should be as sustainable as possible once funding ends.

The following priorities for action have been developed from what emerged from the public consultations and stakeholder workshops as well as aligning with local policies. These services have all been developed within the context of the emerging Family Hubs, providing new and expectant parents with easier access to existing infant feeding support, as well as the new initiatives set out below.

1. Ensure bottle feeding is acknowledged, whilst not encouraged, and support is provided to enable to families to this safely and in a way that provides opportunity for responsive skin-to-skin feeding, and is in line with Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative (BFI) guidance.
2. Provide quicker access to advice or information on infant feeding in line with BFI guidance, supporting those on hospital wards and in their homes, targeting those that may be less likely to attend community infant feeding support.
3. Increasing the availability of peer support for parent/carers in relation to infant feeding.
4. Increasing the provision of Infant Feeding Hubs delivered by Lewisham Health Visiting Service.
5. Improving the provision of information and education on infant feeding in the antenatal period (*Maternity Voices Partnership Priority*).
6. Increasing and improving the provision of support for babies with attached frenulum both before, whilst they are waiting, and after procedure (*Maternity Voices Partnership Priority*).
7. Ensure BFI accreditation is maintained for Maternity and Health Visiting services and is secured for Neonatal Services, and that Family Hubs are welcoming and comfortable spaces for parents/carers to breastfeeding.
8. Establishing a pathway for the provision of emergency infant formula milk.
9. Developing of culturally specific and appropriate introducing solid food support initiatives for Black African and Black Caribbean parents/carers (*BLACHIR Opportunity for Action*).

London Borough of Southwark



Local Policy

The following local policies/strategies support/complement our infant feeding strategy.

- Southwark’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-27)
- Sustainable Food Strategy
- Southwark Plan (specifically strategic policies “A great start in life” and “Thriving neighbourhoods and tackling health inequalities”)
- Annual Public Health Report

Infant Feeding Services in Southwark

There is currently an Infant Feeding Lead based in Evelina London’s Health Visiting Service, who facilitates two of the Southwark drop in groups alongside a team made up of a Health Visitor, a Child Development Worker (who have undertaken in house two day breastfeeding training) and a Breastfeeding Network Peer Supporter.

The other two drop in groups are run by two Breastfeeding Network Peer Supporters.

There are also volunteers supporting the drop in groups, some coming through the Breastfeeding Network who are about to train a cohort of 12 new volunteers in Southwark. See drop in groups information:

Southwark council provides free vitamin D supplements to children less than 4 years old

Day	Time	Location
Mondays	12pm – 2pm*	1st Place Children and Parents’ Centre 2 Chumleigh St, SE5 0RN – DROP IN
Tuesdays	10am – 12pm*	Crawford Children and Family Centre Crawford Rd, SE5 9NF – DROP IN
Thursdays	10am – 12pm*	Rotherhithe Children and Family Centre Southwark Park (Hawkstone Rd entrance), SE16 2PF – DROP IN.
Fridays	12pm – 2pm*	Rye Oak Children and Family Centre Whorlton Rd, SE15 3PD – DROP IN.

These drop in groups are welcoming spaces for women, birthing people and co-parents to come along and receive support with breastfeeding infants of any age.

In addition the Infant Feeding Lead provides specialist support by referral and appointment.

Southwark is currently at Stage 2 of Baby Friendly Accreditation.

Specialist infant feeding support is offered through health visiting (Evelina) and midwifery (KCH) teams. Infant feeding leads from Evelina HV team (who are IBCLCs) provide specialist support for complex breastfeeding issues, by referral, and at any point in their breastfeeding journey. KCH midwives also provide specialist support within their catchment area for the first 28 days of life.

Early Intervention Health Visiting Service: Bright Beginnings

For families requiring more targeted and specialist service, the Bright Beginnings pathway has been developed, which is delivered by Early Intervention Health Visitors (EIHV). This pathway provides rapid assessment and support to families with complex health and social care needs, in order to improve health outcomes for children and families. In practice, this looks like additional contacts through pregnancy up to transfer to school nursing (see contact schedule).

Free D scheme

Southwark Council offers free vitamin D supplements to children under 4, pregnant women, new mothers, and birthing people up to one year postpartum through the "Free D Scheme." Supplements are available at 19 participating pharmacies, listed on the council's website. Midwives, health visitors, and other healthcare professionals are expected to inform families and provide "Free D" cards. Children's Centre workers are also encouraged to promote the scheme.

Alexandra Rose Voucher scheme

The Alexandra Rose Voucher scheme provides vouchers to expecting families and families with a child up to five years old on certain benefits. These can be spent on fruit and vegetables at local markets. The scheme is available to families living in areas of highest deprivation in Southwark, ensuring access to healthy foods to the most vulnerable of the population. The scheme helps to bridge the gap before starting school, at which point children receive free school meals.

Our Response to the Family Hubs

Additional services will be introduced 2023-2025 as follows:

- A full-time infant feeding lead will be employed by the Evelina health visiting team to support the capacity of infant feeding support as part of the Family Hubs programme and bolster progress to Stage 3 Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation for the community services.
- An admin role, jointly funded by Southwark and Lambeth, will be employed by the Evelina health visiting team to provide administrative support including improving the way infant feeding data is collected and collated.
- From 2023/24 a new breastfeeding peer support service delivered by the Breastfeeding Network is being commissioned which will offer additional breastfeeding support to families in the community. Paid peer supporters will offer support at drop ins to allow for an increased number of drop ins per week, including out of hours, and will also offer some home visits. Volunteer peer supporters will be also be trained to support the community drop ins.
- The Baby Buddy app developed by Best Beginnings is being commissioned to provide an evidence-based digital tool to families, guiding them through common breastfeeding and infant feeding issues, and providing a 24/7 Helpline.
- Southwark is providing funding to improve the environments of the breastfeeding drop ins, including provision of comfortable breastfeeding chairs and cushions, and information resources.
- Funding is being used to fund early year's workforce training, including UNICEF's "Achieving sustainability" and tongue tie training.
- Southwark has purchased electric, closed-system breast pumps and equipment which will be available for loan by residents of the Borough at low or no cost depending on personal circumstances.

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