

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Integrated Care System

# Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Infant Feeding Strategy

2022-2027



# Add forward etc.

## Acknowledgements

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- North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust - Specialist Infant Feeding Team & Neo-natal services
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- National Childbirth Trust - Peterborough & Fenland Peer Support Service
- Romsey Mill - Young Parents Support Service
- Barnardo's - Peterborough and South Fenland Child & Family Centres
- Cambridge University Hospital NHS Trust - The Rosie Maternity Unit
- The Rosie Maternity Voices Partnership
- Peterborough & Hinchingsbrooke Maternity Voices Partnership
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Board - Children & Maternity Team
- Cambridge Breastfeeding Alliance
- Le Leche League
- Cambridgeshire County Council Child & Family Centres
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Authorities Public Health Team
- All of the over 300 respondents to the MVP Infant Feeding Survey 2022

# What is infant feeding?

This strategy is written to cover the feeding journey for families from the birth of their child to age two, a critical factor in these crucial early years that impacts on a baby's healthy growth and development. We want to ensure that all babies living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have the Best Start in Life, and we are aiming to create a community that enables parents to make informed choices about infant feeding in a way that optimises health and helps develop close, loving relationships with their baby.

Breastfeeding has numerous health benefits for both the breastfeeding individual and their baby, and skin-to-skin contact can be an important bonding experience. We also recognise that some parents may decide that formula feeding is the correct choice for them, whether that be as an alternative or in conjunction with breast milk. Education about the benefits of breastmilk and information on options such as expressing, pumping, and combination feeding should be provided, but in every case, we will respect personal choice and non-judgemental support will be offered, including how and when to start introducing healthy and nutrient-rich solid foods,

## Vision

Our vision is to create a supportive culture across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with a well-trained workforce who provide ongoing support across the feeding journey, enabling parents to make informed choices about infant feeding that optimises nutrition of babies and infants and helps develop close, loving parent-infant relationships.

## Aims

This strategy aims to achieve the following outcomes for families across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough:

1. Create a culture of breastfeeding so that the number of infants who are breastfed and the duration of breastfeeding increase.
2. Increase the number of infants who are not introduced to complementary solid foods until around 6 months of age.
3. Increase the awareness of parents and the general population of healthy and safe feeding practices for infants with a supportive system in place; and change behaviour accordingly.



# Context

We will be inclusive and responsive to any changes in national and local policies and guidance. The infant feeding strategy reflects the national and local policy context; including:

- [NHS Long Term plan \(2019\)](#)
- [Chapter 3; Better Births \(National Maternity Review, 2016\) Postnatal Care, \(3.22\)](#);
- [The Best Start for life, A vision for the 1,001 Critical Days](#);
- [Family Hubs](#)
- [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Maternity and Neonatal System \(LMNS\) Equity and Equality plan \(April 2022\)](#).

## What we know about Infant Feeding in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

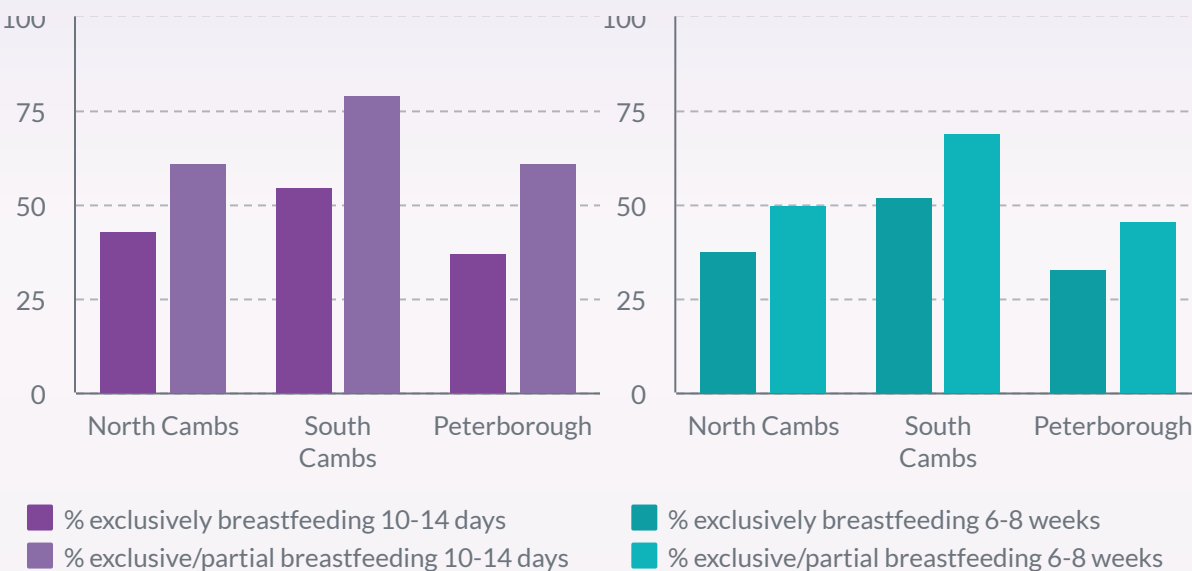
Data across maternity & health visiting services highlights significant inequalities across the geography, with outcomes worse in Peterborough & Fenland

A recent survey\* highlighted that over

# 50%

of women didn't feel they received enough antenatal information about feeding choices

\*Rosie and Peterborough & Hinchingsbrooke Maternity Voices Partnerships Infant Feeding Survey, 2022



81% of those birthing at The Rosie initiate breastfeeding, compared to 63% across Peterborough City Hospital and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital

Within our Neonatal units, we currently achieve 50% of maternal breast milk on day 2 and breastfeeding at discharge is 56%

# Benefits of Breastfeeding

## For the infant

Breastfeeding can protect your baby against the risk of:

- Infections, with fewer visits to hospital as a result
- Diarrhoea and vomiting, with fewer visits to hospital as a result
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Obesity
- Cardiovascular disease in adulthood

## For you

Breastfeeding helps to lower your risk of:

- breast cancer
- ovarian cancer
- osteoporosis (weak bones)
- cardiovascular disease
- obesity

## We recognise the benefits of breastfeeding to both the individual and the infant

Your breastmilk is perfectly designed for your baby

- Breastmilk protects your baby from infections and diseases
- Breastfeeding provides health benefits for you
- Breastmilk is available for your baby whenever your baby needs it and is completely free!
- Breastfeeding can build a strong emotional bond between you and your baby

# Our Key Priorities

# What we will do



A strong, whole-family antenatal offer

Cross-sector working to have an accessible antenatal education offer which is flexible to suit all of our families and supports them to make informed choices on infant feeding.



Easy access to information, services and support

We will have information and support available in multiple formats, including a strong digital offer and we will ensure this is easy to access to help families find the support they need, when they need it.



Dedicated support throughout the early days

We will work in a joined up way to make sure that all new mothers, birthing people and their partners are provided with any feeding support they need in those critical first few weeks of life that is responsive to their feeding choices to ensure their infant receives the nutrients they need to thrive.



Ongoing support across the feeding journey, including introduction to solid food

We are committed to supporting with all aspects of a woman's/birthing person's feeding journey, providing advice and support in line with their choice and wishes. We will ensure that families are provided with knowledge of how and when to introduce solid foods which are healthy and nutritious for baby and family.



A well trained workforce

We will ensure there are sufficient training opportunities across maternity, health, and community partners to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge to support families with infant feeding concerns sensitively and know how to signpost to more specialist support.



Inclusive communities

We will promote feeding friendly spaces across our communities and in public spaces to ensure that women and breastfeeding individuals feel safe and welcomed to feed without judgement when out and about with their infant.



Reduce health inequalities

We will make the most of data and local information to ensure support and provision is tailored to the diverse needs of our populations and reduce disparities between groups.

We recognise the impact infant feeding issues has on mental health and will ensure all staff respond sensitively to any questions or concerns raised by families.

# Working together

Integrated Care Board & Public Health

Maternity & Neonatal Services

Healthy Child Programme

Child and Family Centres & Voluntary Organisations

Maternity Voices Partnerships & Service User feedback

# 1. A strong whole-family antenatal offer



We would like parents to feel supported during pregnancy to explore their thoughts about infant feeding.

Therefore, we will enable cross-sector working to build on existing good practice to establish a consistent and accessible antenatal education offer across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Embedded as part of the emerging Family Hubs offer and delivered by a multidisciplinary team of midwives, health visitors, child and family centre staff, and appropriate voluntary sector partners, the sessions will be flexible to suit all our families and support them to make informed choices on infant feeding, parent infant relationship building, and responsive parenting. Tailored antenatal infant feeding education will be offered to support younger parents and more vulnerable parents and carers.



"I think more support for pregnant women [would help] and more info about how it will hurt and how much baby feeds and why"

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*



"I feel that educating in the antenatal period would help women to be able to be better prepared and more knowledgeable with what is to come."

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

We will offer all first-time parents face to face antenatal education sessions, with a virtual antenatal education offer available for those families who choose this, and for parents of second or subsequent pregnancies.

We will maintain the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation across all 3 maternity units in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Midwifery staff will use key touchpoints to discuss infant feeding questions and to explain the benefits of skin-to-skin contact and building a reciprocal relationship with the baby when feeding.

## Actions: How we will get there

- Face to face antenatal classes are offered to all first-time expectant parents, including fathers/partners, to provide consistent advice on the importance of early relationships and the benefits of breastfeeding for the health and wellbeing of both the individual and the baby.
- Complete co-produced evaluation of the 'Pathway to Parenting' pilot in Wisbech including the virtual offer developed during the pandemic. Embed recommendations into refreshed programme and develop a timeline to roll out updated Pathway to Parenting antenatal offer across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- A virtual antenatal education offer (which will include infant feeding information) will be made available for those families who choose this, and for parents of second or subsequent pregnancies.
- During the antenatal period, conversations around infant feeding are initiated by maternity staff at the first booking appointment and at regular intervals during the pregnancy, including the benefits of skin-to-skin contact and building a reciprocal relationship with the baby.
- Breastfeeding information, including technique, good management practices and availability of support that would help a woman succeed, such as detailed in the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative, are included in maternity care.
- Tailored antenatal infant feeding education is offered to underserved groups, e.g. younger parents, and/or more vulnerable parents/carers.
- My Pregnancy Preferences, (Personalised Care and Support Plans (PCSP) is offered to all expectant mothers across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to support understanding and provide further information of individual choices for pregnancy, birth and the first few weeks of pregnancy.

## 2. Easy access to information services & support



It is essential that all parents have access to 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.

Timely provision of information and support will help parents make an informed decision on infant feeding method and have a successful feeding experience, whether they breastfeed, combination feed or formula feed their infant.

"All women and their partners should be provided with impartial, evidence based information so that they can make informed decisions on how they would like to feed their new born baby. If their choice is not to breastfeed, then they must be offered support and advice on how to use infant formula safely and correctly"

(NICE Guidance, 2008)

"Being signposted to further support services [would have helped] and not left to my own devices"

"Knowing about that support from the beginning. I kept getting told there's support out there when I felt like I was already reaching out for some but no-one told me what this support was or what form it came in"

(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)

Therefore consistent, accurate information and advice will be available in multiple formats, including a strong digital offer and we will ensure this is easy to access to help families find the support they need, when they need it.

We acknowledge that fathers and partners can feel left out or overwhelmed when expecting a baby. To address this we will ensure resources are available to support fathers and partners in caring for their baby, to encourage them to get involved and to gain confidence in parenting.

## Actions: How we will get there

- Timely, accessible, accurate, evidence-based information and support in relation to the emotional, nutritional and health needs of all infants regardless of the method of feeding chosen by a family is available.
- Parents will be provided with clear information on referral pathways, including tongue tie referral pathways, and the availability of equipment for loan to parents who need it (e.g., breast pumps).
- We will raise awareness of infant feeding support that is offered by midwives, health visitors, and 3rd sector providers via an integrated communications plan which is accessible and in multiple formats, which is reflective of our local communities.
- Families will be provided with knowledge of how to introduce solid foods which are healthy, easy & simple to prepare, and nutritious for baby and family.
- Appropriate information on peer support groups is provided to help with emotional and practical support.
- We will align infant feeding information across our local digital platforms to ensure parents are connected to online infant feeding information and are aware of the reliable and evidence-based resources.
- To support fathers and partners in caring for their baby we will roll out and promote the use of DadPad and [Start For Life](#) resources across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.



# 3. Dedicated support throughout the early days

We will work in a joined-up way, across maternity, community health services and wider voluntary and community provision to make sure that all new parents and their partners are provided with the feeding support they need in those critical first few weeks of life that is responsive to their feeding choices to ensure their baby receives the nutrients they need to thrive.

All parents should have access to one-to-one practical help on hospital wards and in the community (from healthcare professionals and/or trained peer supporters and community specialist breastfeeding support groups) to support skin to skin contact after birth, breastfeeding initiation, responsive feeding and relationship building during the immediate postnatal period.



"More help, support and guidance in the hospital. The crucial days to get it right as my baby became too used to the bottle."

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

Maternity services, the health visiting service, and children and family centres provide universal support with breastfeeding. Statutory service provision will be enhanced by trained peer supporters and community provision; if additional support is required, then the referral pathway will be clear and easy to follow.

We want all parents to be given information and support to develop a close and loving relationship with their baby. Breastfeeding should be seen as an a realistic option for all families, but parents who use formula as all or part of their feeding methods are offered support including offering skin to skin contact, keeping baby close, feeding responsively and learning to understand baby's needs.

"Support when we got home [would have helped], I found it hard to latch and it affected how I felt about feeding"

"I would have liked to have breastfed for longer but I didn't receive enough support and some of the support I received was not helpful at all and very forceful at times"

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

## Actions: How we will get there

- All parents have access to one-to-one practical help on hospital wards and in the community (from healthcare professionals and/or trained peer supporters and community specialist breastfeeding support groups) to support breastfeeding initiation, responsive feeding and relationship building during the immediate postnatal period.
- Effective support in hospital and in the early postnatal stage, to ensure skin to skin contact after birth, regardless of delivery or feeding method.
- Families actively contacted and offered infant feeding support in the immediate postnatal period in areas of low breastfeeding rates.
- Face to face infant feeding support (from healthcare professionals and trained peer supporters) is provided.
- Timely access to tongue tie support and treatment is available, when impacting on feeding and in line with the ICB tongue tie policy.
- Equipment is available on loan for parents who need it (e.g. breast pumps), and staff sensitively support parents to use it.
- Referral pathways will be detailed so that the next steps are clear to both service user and health care professional.





# 4. Ongoing support across the feeding journey including introduction to solid food

We are committed to supporting with all aspects of a family's feeding journey, providing ongoing information and support in line with their choice and wishes and promotes safe feeding practices. Parents will be actively directed to virtual and out of hours infant feeding support and resources as well as local support services.

Alongside support from the health visiting infant feeding team, we will ensure drop-in infant feeding support sessions are available in the community to provide timely support to all families along their feeding journey. We will strengthen our breastfeeding peer support offer, using "expert by experience" to provide peer-to-peer support and information to families both in-person and virtually. Peer support will be available to families at any stage of their journey and accessible regardless of whether they are currently breastfeeding or not.

"There's not nearly enough information on feeding this way, it really needs to be improved as this could dramatically improve the breastfeeding numbers, we were able to wean my daughter off formula once she returned to her birth weight and now I am exclusively breastfeeding 8 weeks later!"

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

We will ensure that families are provided with clear and consistent information on introducing complimentary solid foods which are healthy and nutritious for baby and family. We will support families to delay introducing solid foods until around 6 months of age, with continued breastfeeding advised for the first year and beyond.

To ensure access to support services, a system wide referral pathway for when difficulties arise and referral into specialist services will be developed.

"More hands on F2F support. Videos and website information can only get you so far. Also having a new-born is so overwhelming that you really don't have much capacity to take on new information"

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

## Actions: How we will get there

- System wide referral pathway for when difficulties arise and referral into specialist services is in place and widely shared with families and across the workforce.
- Easy access to the health visiting infant feeding team is available to parents via a single point of access with in-person support available if needed via triage
- Community support is available to all who need it so they can continue breastfeeding for as long as they would like to.
- Appropriate information on peer support groups is provided to help with emotional and practical support, with peer support presence with universal Children's Centre sessions and health clinics as appropriate
- Support available for all eligible families to take part in the Healthy Start voucher & vitamin scheme
- Families will have easy access to evidence based advice on how to introduce solid foods with local workshops available via child and family centres as well as signposting to national resources such as the National Breastfeeding Helpline and Start for Life Breastfeeding Friend.



# 5. A well-trained workforce

We will develop a training programme across maternity, health, and community partners to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge to support families with infant feeding concerns sensitively and know how to signpost to more specialist support. This includes ensuring there is a sufficient number of staff appropriately trained to identify and respond to more complex infant feeding needs and timely support is offered to all families who need it so they can continue breastfeeding for as long as they would like to.



"I had conflicting advice and didn't know what to do"

"I think a weekly drop in centre is one of the best ways to reach mums that desperately need support with feeding"

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

This will be achieved by being responsive to the needs and feedback of service users, using continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities to upskill our workforce in identified areas of weakness as well as emerging themes and trends identified by those seeking specialist infant feeding support.



"I feel more extensive training on spotting things like tongue tie and latch issues would help a lot of people"

"For all breastfeeding training to be up to date and the same for all midwives, otherwise new mothers are unsure what to believe."

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

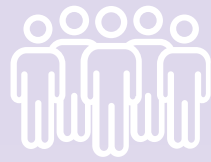
We will ensure that, at a minimum, all our Maternity and Health Visiting services are at least BFI (Baby Friendly Initiative) Level 3 accredited and will explore opportunities to expand this to other community provision such as Family Hubs and Child & Family Centres. We will also make sure that there is a system in place to support the ongoing recruitment and retention of peer-supporters.

We will work in close partnership with our third sector partners and private practitioners to support us in our vision and create networking opportunities to ensure information is shared across system partners to ensure consistency in messaging and advice so that families do not receive conflicting information.

## Actions: How we will get there

- We will ensure the workforce has the knowledge, skills and education to promote breastfeeding through quality assured training opportunities. We will seek to introduce minimum training standards across all sectors
- We will regularly seek feedback from families to learn from their experiences and adjust workforce training in light of this.
- We will increase the proportion of professionals who work with families with young babies that receive basic training on infant feeding knowledge.
- We will ensure that all peer supporters receive thorough initial and ongoing training to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to confidently and competently support families and signpost to other services as required. There is will be a recruitment and retention plan developed to ensure there is a sufficient pool of peer supporters available.
- To align with our UNICEF UK Baby Friendly accredited hospitals, we will explore the possibility of attaining accreditation for our child and family centres and evolving Family Hubs.

# 6. Inclusive communities



Breastfeeding in public is openly welcomed across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and all individuals, by law, are protected to breastfeed in public, anytime, anywhere. We will promote feeding friendly spaces across our communities and in public spaces to ensure that parents feel safe and welcomed to feed without judgement when out and about with their infant.

Whilst breastfeeding has amazing health benefits for both the individual and the child, not every parent who wants to breastfeed has the support they need to do so and we know that it can be a daunting experience to breastfeed whilst out and about with your family. It can inhibit some peoples choices to go out, create social isolation, and returning to work can mean some stop breastfeeding before they would like to. Normalising breastfeeding in public and creating feeding friendly environments is something we can all help with through conversation and support.



"I never quite overcame the embarrassment when nursing in public"

"not everyone wants to go to breast feeding groups. I also found the children centres have breast feeding groups and not formula feeding"

*(Infant Feeding Survey 2022)*

## Actions: How we will get there

- We will use the learning and evaluation of the #FreeToFeed Campaign which launched across South Cambridgeshire in Autumn 2022 to roll out a county-wide commitment and encourage local businesses to sign up to this scheme.
- Our workforce themselves are supported to continue to breastfeed when returning to work after maternity leave and are provided with appropriate facilities to breastfeed in the work place.
- Community spaces, including child & family centres and Breastfeeding support groups will be inclusive and non-judgemental spaces for women, their partners, and wider family members, irrespective of feeding choices.
- Information and support will be tailored to be inclusive of under-represented communities, for example the promotion of DadPad, the parenting app for fathers and [Start for Life](#).



# 7. Reduce health inequalities

We will make the most of data and local information to ensure support and provision is tailored to the diverse needs of our populations and reduce disparities between groups and across our geography. We will use this intelligence to shape services and target support in the places and communities where it is needed most.

Cultural and social attitudes play a role in a woman's decision on how to feed their infants and we recognise the importance of providing impartial, evidence based infant feeding information and support to parents.

We will ensure that in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough support is available to all parents throughout their feeding journey, including young parents, those in low income groups and marginalised communities.

We also recognise the impact infant feeding issues can have on someone's mental health and can compound feeding challenges. Will ensure all staff respond sensitively to any questions or concerns raised by families without stigma or judgement, making sure that the voices of our service users are listened to and their personal choices and opinions are valued.



"Ensuring continuity of care for 75% of women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and from the most deprived groups."

*(NHS Core 20 Plus 5: An Approach to reducing health inequalities, area of focus 1 2021)*

## Actions: How we will get there

- We will work with business intelligence and data teams across health and community services to improve how we are gathering and using information to tailor support to where it is needed most.
- Our health visiting infant feeding team will work closely with the in-service psychologist to ensure that parents accessing their services get appropriate support with their mental health and wellbeing
- We will build upon existing provision and initiatives such as the [Raham Project](#) , the [Lantern Initiative](#) , and from young parent projects, using their insights to ensure that information and support reaches all families in a way that is accessible and acknowledges the diverse cultural differences between our communities.

# How will we know that we are making a difference?



More healthcare and community staff will have accessed up to date training relevant to their role, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to provide advice, information and guidance to families. This will be measured through training evaluation mechanisms.

Families using formula will report to their using recommendations for safe preparation of appropriate formula suited to the infants needs and using responsive feeding methods.

Families will report improved satisfaction levels with the quality of care, support and information they received across their journey, including in the antenatal period. Audits will show improvements against this.

More families will report introducing healthy and nutritious solid food at the recommended time.

For those who are experiencing infant feeding problems, they will report accessing timely and effective support suited to their level of need. There will also be a reduction in inappropriate referrals to specialist services, including tongue tie.

The development of a community breastfeeding scheme which will expand across the County and more premises will support the campaign.

In the longer term, we expect to see an increase in the proportion of children starting school at a healthy weight, which will be evidence through National Child Weight Measurement Programme (NCMP) data.

Breastfeeding rates will increase across all stages, including the length of time individuals are exclusively breastfeeding and there will be a reduction in geographical disparities

Birth

10-14  
days

6-8  
weeks

# Governance & Accountability

The infant feeding network will co-ordinate the delivery of the 7 key priorities identified in this strategy.

An action log will be maintained to ensure timely delivery against identified key actions which are required to support delivery of the priorities. Accountability will be shared across the system with the most appropriate team/service lead(s) on each area.

The Best Start in Life Programme Board will oversee progression of the Strategy Implementation and progress reports will be made to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Maternity and Neonatal Board.