

Total score: 52.5/100

Policies and Programmes: Indicators 1–10

Key gaps	Key recommendations	Score	
Indicator 1: National policy, governance and funding		2016	2024
Implementation of the All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan (AWBAP), approved in 2019, has been delayed and not all actions are funded.	Welsh government to continue implementation of the All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan (AWBAP) and commit to long-term, index-linked funding.	4	9.5
Indicator 2: UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI)*		6.5	7
Although there is an explicit commitment to Baby Friendly in the AWBAP and the Welsh government expects progress in accreditation, the best model for a national approach has not been identified.	Welsh Government to identify the best model for a national approach, then mandate and fully fund time-bound implementation and maintenance of the Baby Friendly standards across all health boards; this requires working with Public Health Wales and Health Boards.		
Indicator 3: International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes		6	5
a. The scope of UK legislation is too narrow as it does not include all formulas, bottles and teats, or digital marketing. b. Inadequate monitoring and enforcement of the existing regulations.	UK government to: a. Widen the scope of the legislation to include the marketing of all formula milks up to age 36 months, equipment (primarily bottles and teats) and digital marketing. b. Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of regulations.		
Indicator 4: Maternity Protection		6.5	6
a. Statutory maternity, paternity and parental leave payments are worth less than half the National Minimum Wage. b. No right exists to paid breastfeeding breaks and suitable facilities on return to work.	a. UK government to increase maternity, paternity and shared parental pay to at least the National Minimum Wage. b. UK government to enact a statutory right for paid flexible breastfeeding breaks and suitable facilities to breastfeed, express and store milk.		
Indicator 5: Health Care Systems, in support of breastfeeding & Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)		5.5	6
Little/no mention of infant feeding in some high level pre-registration standards for health professionals working with mothers, babies/ young children; no mention in nursing standards.	The institutions responsible for professional standards to ensure that infant feeding is a mandatory element in pre-registration training for health professionals who work with mothers, babies/ young children; the NMC to ensure that infant feeding is explicitly included in nursing standards.		
Indicator 6: Counselling Services for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Mothers*		8	6
a. Local variation in provision and access to integrated postnatal services, including peer support, voluntary sector and specialist services. b. No national standards for infant feeding roles.	a. Welsh government to liaise with health boards and clinical networks to ensure a range of integrated postnatal services, including peer support, voluntary sector and specialist services, by setting an infant feeding service requirement for all health boards. b. Government/health department to establish national standards for infant feeding roles.		
Indicator 7: Accurate and Unbiased Information support		7	5
While communications are mentioned in the AWBAP, implementation has been delayed.	Welsh government to implement a national breastfeeding information, education and communications (IEC strategy) with aims, objectives and timescales, building on the AWBAP.		
Indicator 8: Infant feeding and HIV		8.5	3
a. No mention of infant feeding in national guidance. b. NHS resources are not consistent with current BHIVA guidelines. c. New mothers living with HIV do not always receive consistent skilled support with feeding their infants.	a. Wales to develop national guidance. b. National and local NHS to ensure guidance and resources follow current BHIVA guidelines. c. Health Boards to ensure tailored and specialist lactation support (informed by current evidence) is available for women living with HIV and avoids stigma.		
Indicator 9: Infant and Young Child Feeding during Emergencies (IYCFE)*		0	0
No coordinated strategy, national planning, or preparedness for IYCFE.	Welsh government to develop and implement policies for IYCFE preparedness planning, aligned with global guidance, building on work in response to COVID-19.		
Indicator 10: Monitoring and evaluation*		5	5
a. National and local data are not always used effectively to improve practice and strategy. b. The data currently collected on complementary feeding are not compiled nationally.	a. Government, Public Health Wales and health boards to work together to improve collection and reporting of data to inform the work of national and local teams. b. Health boards, Public Health Wales and Welsh government to collaborate to bring together, analyse and use data on complementary feeding (already collected by health visitors).		
* Some criteria changed since 2016 report.			
Scores are out of 10: 0–3.5 4–6.5 7–9 >9		TOTAL	57 52.5

What is the WBTi?

The World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) is a collaborative national assessment of implementation of key policies and programmes from WHO's *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* (IYCF) and the Innocenti Declaration. WBTi is distinctive in having a strong conflicts of interest policy. It brings together the main agencies and organisations involved in aspects of IYCF in a particular country to work together to collect information, identify gaps and generate recommendations for action. The UK assessment combines the scores, weighted by population, for the individual four nations – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This is the second UK assessment; the first was carried out in 2016.

WBTi UK Core Group members

- Association of Breastfeeding Mothers (ABM)
- Baby Milk Action
- Breastfeeding Network (BfN)
- First Steps Nutrition Trust (FSNT)
- GP Infant Feeding Network (GPIFN)
- Hospital Infant Feeding Network (HIFN)
- Institute of Health Visiting (iHV)
- Lactation Consultants of Great Britain (LCGB)
- La Leche League GB (LLLGB)
- Leicester Mammars
- Maternity Action
- NCT
- Royal College of Midwives (RCM)*
- UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI)
- University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

* The RCM declared itself free of conflicts of interest from May 2023 until October 2024.

Infant Feeding Practices* Indicators 11-15

	2016	2024
Indicator 11: Early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth	UK 60%	UK 46-61%
Indicator 12: Mean % of exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months	13%	29%
Indicator 13: Median duration of breastfeeding	Just over 2 weeks	3 weeks
Indicator 14: Bottle feeding: % of babies 0-12 months fed with bottles	UK 88%	UK 80%+
Indicator 15: Complementary feeding: % babies receiving solids at 6-8 months	UK 98%	UK 94-99%

* Indicators are based on WHO public health indicators, enabling global comparisons. Data collection methods have changed across the UK since 2016.

Advisory Group

- **England:** Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, Early Years, Children and Families Directorate, Department of Health and Social Care
- **England:** Child and Maternal Health Intelligence, Population Health Analysis, Chief Analyst Directorate, Department of Health and Social Care, England
- **Northern Ireland:** Health Improvement Policy Branch, Department of Health
- **Scotland:** Improving Health and Wellbeing Division, Children and Families Directorate
- **Wales:** Public Health Wales

Breastfeeding is a human rights issue for both the child and the mother.

UN Human Rights joint statement, 2016¹

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendations for the UK (2023):²

41(f) Continue its efforts to promote breastfeeding, including by:

- strengthening support for mothers, including through flexible working arrangements;
- fully implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and strengthening relevant legislation;
- raising awareness of the importance of breastfeeding among families and the general public.

1. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2016/11/joint-statement-un-special-rapporteurs-right-food-right-health-working-group>

2. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/112/77/pdf/g2311277.pdf>