



Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Infant Feeding Strategy 2025 – 2030

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



As the Executive Nurse Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Guardian, I am honoured to present the Infant Feeding Strategy which aims to promote and support optimal infant feeding practices within our health board and local communities of Merthyr, Rhondda, Cynon, Taf and Bridgend.

This strategy focuses on the important role of early bonding and nutrition, and how this contributes to the growth and well-being of infants in their first 1000 days, while considering the long term health of both current and future generations.

The strategy clearly sets out areas where support in the infant's feeding journey is needed and our vision on how we aim to do this, keeping the baby's and toddler's voice at the heart of our work.

The infant feeding strategic group will oversee the implementation of the aims set out in this document, working collaboratively across the health board locality.

We recognise that every family is different and we want to give them the best beginning, based on their individual needs and wishes, supporting them in their feeding choices. Breastfeeding has many benefits for women and children, and is one of the most effective ways to ensure child and maternal health. This infant feeding strategic action plan fits with our ambitions around creating health, inspiring people, improving care and sustaining our future. It is based on our CTMUHB organisational values:

- We listen, learn and improve
- We work together as a team
- We treat everyone with respect

This strategy provides direction and intends to act as a driver for action for all staff groups within Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board whose work impacts on families during the first years of a child's life.

Throughout our approach, we will integrate the five key principles from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Maternity & Neonatal Vision 2023 - 2026. Furthermore, we will work in alignment with the Healthy Child Wales Programme "To give all women, parents and families personalised care, with genuine choice, focussed on the safety and quality of experience, and giving all children the best start by providing safe and effective care in the first weeks of a child's life".



Executive Director of Nursing
Greg Dix

WHO and UNICEF recommend that children initiate breastfeeding within the first hour of birth and be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life. From the age of 6 months, children should begin eating safe and adequate complementary foods while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years of age or beyond. ([WHO 2019](#)).



*Important note: we recognise that not all pregnant people will identify as women. When referencing pregnant women throughout this document, this is intended to be inclusive of pregnant and birthing people of all genders. We acknowledge not all people identify as having breasts or as breastfeeding and we will adapt care on an individual basis.

INTRODUCTION

WHY DO WE NEED AN INFANT FEEDING STRATEGY?

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) has one of the lowest initiation and continuation rates for breastfeeding in the United Kingdom.

CTMUHB sets out the direction to support our population, health board wide, to protect, promote, support and normalise breastfeeding. Parents may choose to breastfeed, use expressed breast milk or use infant formula and this is often a very personal decision. While the strategy promotes the choice of breastfeeding we want all parents to feel supported in how they feed their baby.

This strategic plan provides the vision and direction for increasing breastfeeding rates in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend; by working together to build a better future for our children, communities and population health. The strategy is intended as a driver for action for all staff groups within the health board whose work impacts on supporting parents in the first years of a child's life.



OUR VISION

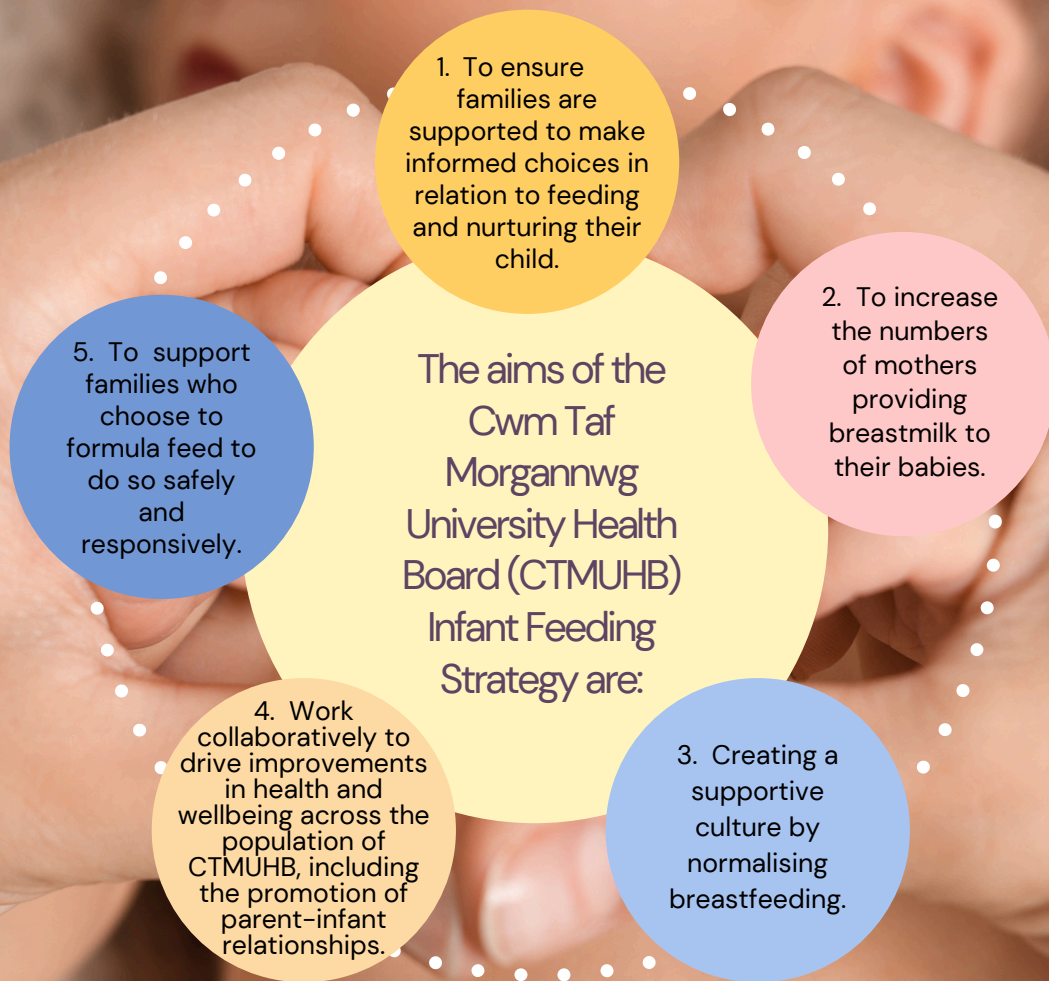
Our vision is to create a supportive culture across CTMUHB, with a well-trained workforce who provide ongoing support to families throughout their feeding journey, enabling parents to make informed choices about infant feeding that optimises nutrition of babies and infants and help them develop close,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

This strategy provides direction and intends to act as a driver for action for all staff groups within Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board whose work impacts on families during the first years of a child's life.

Throughout our approach, we will integrate the five key principles from the **Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Maternity & Neonatal Vision 2023 - 2026** and will work in alignment with the Healthy Child Wales Programme "To give all women, parents and families personalised care, with genuine choice, focussed on the safety and quality of experience, and giving all children the best start by providing safe and effective care in the first weeks of a child's life.



OUR AIMS



THE VALUE OF BREASTFEEDING

The provision of human milk is available for the baby whenever they need it and is completely free. Breastmilk is a unique substance, constantly changing to meet the needs of a baby and bursting with protective antibodies. It prevents a range of infectious and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including gastroenteritis, childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes and maternal breast cancer. We acknowledge the importance of breastfeeding for the health and development of infants and their mothers, and the link between breastfeeding and the prevention of major health inequalities (Renfrew et al, 2012).

There is clear evidence that breastfeeding has a profound positive influence on maternal and child health and child development. It is vital that breastfeeding is protected, promoted and supported.

The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI)



We are taking a whole systems approach to healthy weight. Infant feeding is a vital component of our approach to reduce the levels of childhood and adult obesity for our population within Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Increasing breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates across the population will impact on childhood and adult obesity rates. It requires a shift in the environment and culture across Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend.



Several mechanisms may potentially explain why breastfeeding protects against overweight or obesity. First, breastfeeding influences the development of a gut microbiota profile that is associated with a lower risk of obesity. Second, breastfeeding is associated with a healthier diet during childhood. Third, breastfeeding may also be associated with appetite regulation, as it may help children develop better satiety outcomes. (Horta, 2022)

CWM TAF MORGANNWG REGION BREASTFEEDING DATA

Each year, around 4,500 babies are born across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

In 2023 the breastfeeding rates across Cwm Taf Morgannwg were as follows:

90.8% of
infants
had skin to skin
after birth

57.4%
are
breastfed
at birth

10 days: any
breastmilk
46.5%,
exclusive
30.4%

6 weeks any
breastmilk
30.7%,
exclusive
21.6%

6 months any
breastmilk
22.5%,
exclusive
16.3%

Reference – Breastfeeding by age of baby, type of breastfeeding and health board. Stats Wales (published July 2024)
Link: [Breastfeeding by age of baby, type of breastfeeding and health board \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales)

CHILD MEASUREMENT PROGRAMME REPORT 2022- 2023

The latest Child Measurement Programme report shows that obesity in Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is the highest in Wales, and is statistically significantly higher than the Wales average. The proportion of children with obesity in Wales is higher than those reported in England and Scotland. Child Measurement Programme 2022- 2023 (Public Health Wales NHS Trust. 2024)

‘Breastfeeding is important for the health and development of infants and their mothers, and is linked to the prevention of major health inequalities’

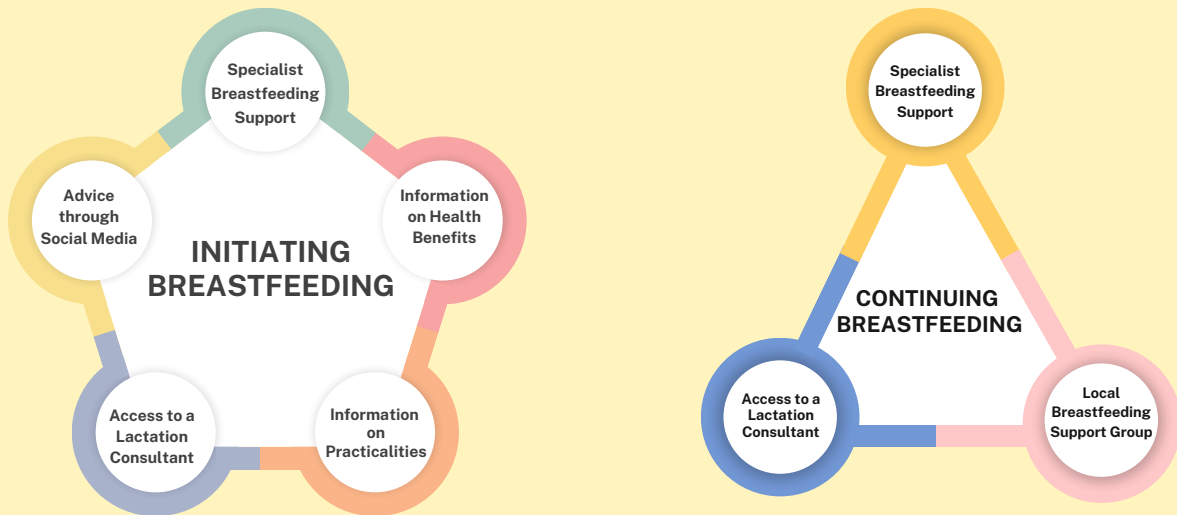
Welsh Government, 2019

INFANT FEEDING: PATIENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY FINDINGS IN CWM TAF MORGANNWG UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD AREA (2023)

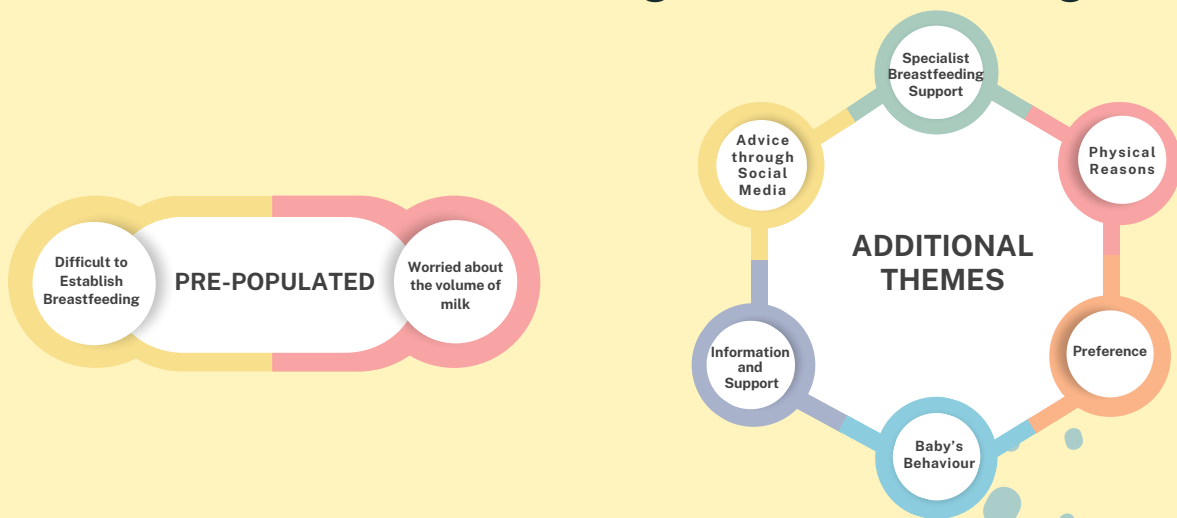
The Local Public Health 'Healthy Weight Team' carried out an online survey into breastfeeding experiences in 2023. The survey provided a range of insights from 171 families from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area. This strategy plans to build on and address the insight gathered through the Strategic vision and Delivery Plan. A copy of the full results of the survey can be seen within the appendix, Activities which encouraged breastfeeding initiation and continuation are outlined below:

*Pre populated refers to answers which were suggested answers within the survey, other answers detailed below are free text.

Finding Support Mechanisms



Barriers to Continuing Breastfeeding



Mothers and their families require support to be able to maintain breastfeeding while having the freedom and support to continue to participate in other areas of life as they choose, such as education and employment. (Lancet 2023)

PATIENT EXPERIENCE INSIGHT

“I was very well supported regarding breastfeeding my baby. I had skin to skin contact straight after giving birth and the staff at PCH were all amazing. xxx, xxx and xxx were superstars, they all showed me how to get my baby to latch and supported me so well. The community midwives I saw were also fantastic with feeding support, these were xxx, xxx and xxx. Thanks to these women, for their help and support, my baby is 13 months old and is exclusively breastfed.”

(Infant Feeding: Patient Experience Survey Respondent 2023)

“I had a brilliant midwife who helped me in the hospital after birth. However, without her support I'd have been left completely alone as no one else checked on me or gave me advice or even asked if I was breast or bottle feeding. No one has checked my latch or progress since”

(Infant Feeding: Patient Experience Survey Respondent 2023)

*Please note the Infant Feeding Survey outcomes were based on survey received responses from 171 families living in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area, with 126 of these breastfed on at least one occasion, please see full limitations within the report detailed in the Appendix.



OUR INFANT FEEDING AIMS



“Involving children, parents and carers in developing child health policies and interventions is vital to ensuring their success. We recommend that diverse voices and perspectives of children, through or in addition to their parents and carers, should be included in the development of policies and interventions to ensure they address their needs, and that implementation is effective. This could enhance success by raising awareness and increasing uptake.”

(Prioritising early childhood to promote the nation’s health, wellbeing and prosperity report 2024).



1

To ensure families are supported to make informed choices in relation to feeding and nurturing their child.

- a. Families will be offered a meaningful infant feeding discussion to explore feeding choices.
- b. Antenatal resources will be made available; to ensure a reliable source of consistent information is available for all parents.
- c. We will develop and deliver evidence-based interventions across CTMUHB to ensure an equitable service.

2

To increase the numbers of mothers providing breastmilk to their babies.

- a. Parents will be given information and resources to enable them to harvest colostrum in the antenatal period.
- b. Parents who encounter feeding difficulties will:
 - Be fully supported by staff and given consistent information.
 - Be appropriately referred to the right support.
- c. Specialist services will be available for complex feeding issues.



3

Creating a supportive culture by normalising breastfeeding.

- a. We will listen to families and staff, they will be valued and treated with dignity and respect.
- b. We will seek out the views of our community and continue to listen to feedback from women, birthing people, families and professionals.
- c. We will provide active support and encouragement to women, working collaboratively to support them to meet their feeding goals.
- d. Staff working within CTMUHB will be supported with their breastfeeding journey.
- e. Continue to develop and provide education for a competent workforce.
- f. Have a collaborative communications strategy with targeted actions.



4

Work collaboratively to drive improvements in health and wellbeing across the population of CTMUHB, including the promotion of parent-infant relationships.

- a. Analyse and act on feedback detailing the influencing factors on feeding decisions.
- b. Introduce the 'voice of the baby' in decision making.
- c. Engage with multi-agencies to gain commitment to collaborate in a wider societal change to normalise breastfeeding within our communities such as Children's Services, Libraries.
- d. Work within the health board to have link nurses and to develop infant feeding pathways.
- e. Link with schools and further education to promote positive messages around breastfeeding and responsive parenting.



5

To support families who choose to formula feed to do so safely and responsively.

- a. We will continue to develop digital resources to ensure availability of clear, consistent information.
- b. Communication and information will be clear, appropriate in format, relevant, consistent and easy to understand.
- c. Families who chose to feed their babies with formula milk will be:
 - Signposted to appropriate resources to support decision making.
 - Supported by staff in accordance to the WHO International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes.
 - Educated in the safe preparation of formula milk.
 - Supported to responsively bottle feed their babies.
 - Supported to also to provide breastmilk for as long as they wish.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL DRIVERS

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board's Infant Feeding Strategy has been developed in accordance with the following:



NATIONAL DRIVERS

Baby Friendly Initiative Standards

The [Baby Friendly Standards](#) provide services with a roadmap for transforming care for all babies, their mothers and families. The standards enable public services to better support families with feeding and developing close, loving parent-infant relationships, ensuring that all babies get the best possible start.

All Wales Breastfeeding 5 Year Action Plan

This [action plan](#) has identified strategic goals and aims to guide action in both immediate support for women and families and the wider population health incentive to consider breastfeeding as an option and ensure it is culturally acceptable

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (Welsh Government, 2015)

Improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales

Healthy Weight Healthy Wales (Welsh Government 2022-2024)

Long term strategy to prevent and reduce obesity in Wales

A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care (2018)

Plan sets out a long term future vision of a 'whole system approach to health and social care', which is focussed on health and wellbeing, and on preventing illness.

NICE Guidelines

The [Post Natal NICE \(2021\) Guidelines](#) cover the routine postnatal care that women and their babies should receive in the first 8 weeks after the birth. The guidelines outline planning and supporting babies feeding which will inform the development of this strategy and vision.

World Health Organisation/ Unicef Global infant feeding Strategy (WHO and Unicef, 2003)

LOCAL DRIVERS

CTM 2030: Our Health, Our Future

Building Healthier Communities Together. Aims to unite people across Cwm Taf Morgannwg around a shared understanding of the everyday things affect people's health and wellbeing in our region.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Maternity & Neonatal Vision 2023 – 2026



The Lancet's breastfeeding series emphasises that breastfeeding is not the sole responsibility of women and that overcoming the cultural and practical barriers to breastfeeding is an important societal responsibility. (*Prioritising early childhood to promote the nation's health, wellbeing and prosperity report 2024*)

'Unicef UK's Baby Friendly Initiative is calling on the UK and devolved governments to take urgent steps to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in the UK. It is time to shift responsibility for tackling this public health issue away from individual parents, and change the conversation away from guilt and blame. Instead, we need to acknowledge the role we can all play in creating a supportive, informed environment for all parents, enabling mothers to breastfeed for as long as they wish. Find out more: www.unicef.uk/bficaltoaction.'
(Baby Friendly Initiative UK)

A WHOLE SYSTEM AND POPULATION APPROACH

Our vision will be delivered at two strategic levels working in parallel to benefit the population of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB).

1. The Health and Care System.
2. The Whole System and Whole Population Approach.

The Health and Care System

- Strategic Lead for Infant Feeding
- All CTMUHB Staff to receive training in breastfeeding awareness
- Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation across applicable CTMUHB Health Services
- Peer Support across CTMUHB
- Multidisciplinary training programme on infant feeding
- Specialist breastfeeding support for a breastfeeding infant and parent where required

Whole System and Population Level

- Clear information
- Journey to normalisation
- Baby Friendly environment across CTMUHB
- Healthy Schools - underlying beliefs
- WHO International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes compliant
- CTMUHB workforce to develop a positive and inclusive ethos towards breastfeeding

A BABY'S JOURNEY THROUGH CTMUHB



Our aims demonstrate that we are committed to nurturing a baby's feeding journey within the health board, this involves not only addressing their nutritional needs but also building a strong relationship between the parents and baby.

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Baby and Toddler Voice will be central to care provided within the health board. By "voice" we mean how the rights of the baby alongside the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) can be considered in all decisions that concern them. This might include considering how the baby might be making sense of their environment and how they might describe how they're feeling if they were able to tell us.

There are many times that babies and infants may need services within Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and at every point it is vital that parents feel supported in their feeding journey. From the early days through to introducing solid foods and beyond.

Maternity, Neonatal and Health Visiting Services integrate the Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards to form part of the care delivered. These standards are to support, promote and protect breastfeeding and were expanded to include the importance of parents building a relationship with their baby, responsive feeding and safe formula feeding (UNICEF 2013).

RESPONSIVE FEEDING

This diagram explains how the connection between parents and babies can develop as part of feeding and the cycle of building a relationship. Beginning in the Antenatal period:



'I breast fed my first 2 boys and just loved the bond and closeness it gave us'
Parent comment
Insight report 2023

'Baby decided it was time to stop (just shy of 12 months)'
Parent of breast fed baby comment
Insight report 2023

Dr Karen Bateson, Head of Strategy and Development at the Parent-Infant Foundation said:

"It's surprisingly common for a parent to struggle to bond with their baby. The Securing Lives report (2021) report highlights the importance for a parent to seek help if they don't feel their relationship with their baby is quite right and shines a light on all the ways professionals can support families to get that relationship back on track".

Bateson et al (2021) highlights those problems in relationships that can unfold in future years and often result from unaddressed problems in the early years between babies and parents.

Placing value and importance on the time spent connecting and feeding baby is important for parents to know as this informs part of the early foundations for brain growth and development.



REALISING OUR VISION ACROSS THE CWM TAF MORGANNWG REGION

What will success look like?

- Within our Maternity Units, Neonatal Units and Health Visiting Service there are named Infant Feeding Co-ordinators who will support service improvement and improve the knowledge and skills of staff.
- Midwives, Neonatal Staff and Health Visitors with identified clinical interest will be supported to achieve additional breastfeeding/lactation training and create greater knowledge & skills for all members of the multi-professional team.
- All Maternity, Neonatal, Health Visiting and Paediatric Health Care settings will have achieved or will be working towards the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation with a vision of aiming for gold sustainability.
- There will be a team of Baby Friendly Guardians in every service within the CTMUHB and we will encourage them to work together as a group (including community and third sector guardians).
- All communities in CTMUHB will have active breastfeeding peer support and a retention and sustainability model in place.
- Hospital departments and organisations within CTMUHB will link together to promote breastfeeding friendliness in public spaces.



- Through our Maternity Voice Partnership with families, we will see an increase in the number of families reporting improved support and standards of care, who will:
 - Report meeting their breastfeeding goals.
 - Report antenatal conversations regarding feeding their baby.
 - Be supported to introduce solids alongside chosen method of feeding at the recommended age of 6 months.
 - Continue to report choices around infant feeding decisions were respected.
 - Continue to report that mothers are being given active support and encouragement.
- The infant feeding support service will have capacity to support the increased number of breastfeeding families by utilising community teams to allow timely access to breastfeeding support.
- Infant Feeding Co-ordinators will liaise with staff and Data Managers to ensure that robust, useful and accurate data is collected to monitor and improve breastfeeding rates and mothers' experiences of breastfeeding.
- Staff that support families with infant feeding will receive training in Community Food and Nutrition Skills for the Early Years and will have understanding of the benefits of good nutrition and hydration.
- Staff that support families with infant feeding will receive training in Making Every Contact Count to support health behaviour conversations.
- We will ensure we engage with other parts of the system including the Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight to develop further insight into families feeding choices across CTMUHB.



SUMMARY

The Infant Feeding Strategy for CTMUHB aims to promote and support optimal nutrition for babies and infants by normalising and creating a breastfeeding friendly culture. This strategy ensures families are well supported in making informed feeding and nurturing decisions, ultimately driving improvements in health and wellbeing across the population. Key objectives include increasing breastfeeding rates, enhancing parent-infant relationships, reducing childhood obesity, and supporting safe and responsive formula feeding.

Key initiatives involve enhancing antenatal resources and parent education, incorporating user feedback to provide individualised care, improving digital resources, and offering targeted support for feeding difficulties. Through these efforts, the strategy aims to create a supportive environment that prioritises the health and wellbeing of infants and their families, leading to improved nutritional outcomes and stronger community health.

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Geraldine Gibson - Infant Feeding Coordinator for the Neo Natal Service

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Membership of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Infant Feeding Strategy Group

Bridgend County Borough Council

Merthyr County Borough Council

Rhondda Cynon, Taf County Borough Council

Infant Feeding Voices Partnership



You can contact our women's experiences midwife
via the email

CTM.WomensExperiencesCTUHB@wales.nhs.uk

DUTY OF QUALITY FOR INFANT FEEDING STRATEGY

The Infant Feeding Strategy has been created by applying the framework set out in the Duty of Quality guidance. The Duty of Quality provides assurance to the Welsh Government and public that the health board is committed to improving and protecting the health, care and wellbeing of the current population and future generations. We will achieve improvement by working with service users, wider partners and health board services, applying a Duty of Quality across all of the health services that serve the population of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. Working together, we can ensure quality is embedded in a whole system. This approach will guarantee that the health board delivers services that are safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and person centred.

	Role	Responsibilities
Safe	We will learn lessons, be transparent, share learning and deliver best practice. This will ensure there are high quality, highly reliable and safe systems in place that avoid preventable harm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will develop and deliver evidence-based interventions across CTMUHB to ensure an equitable service. ➤ We will continue to develop and provide education for a competent workforce ➤ We will work within the health board to have link nurses and to develop infant feeding pathways. ➤ We will analyse and act on feedback detailing the influencing factors on feeding decisions. ➤ We will monitor progress of the strategy through the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Strategic Infant Feeding Group.
Timely	We will ensure that infants and families have access to evidence based, high quality advice, guidance and care when they need it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will continue to work towards the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards. ➤ We will ensure robust and continual learning takes place across the whole organisation. ➤ Implementing and monitoring improvements from learning identified through incidents, audit, data, reviews, concerns and feedback ➤ Antenatal resources will be made available; to ensure a reliable source of consistent information is available for all parents.
Effective	We will ensure the care and treatment we provide is meaningful and will achieve optimal health outcomes for the infant, mother and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Families will be offered a meaningful infant feeding discussion to explore feeding choices. ➤ Parents will be given information and resources to enable them to harvest colostrum in the antenatal period. ➤ Parents who encounter feeding difficulties will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be fully supported by staff and given consistent information. · Be appropriately referred to the right support. ➤ Specialist services will be available for complex feeding issues. ➤ We will provide active support and encouragement to women, working collaboratively to support them to meet their feeding goals.
Efficient	We will work collaboratively as a 'whole system' to make the most effective use of resources to improve health outcomes for our infants. Mothers and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engage with multi-agencies to gain commitment to collaborate in a wider societal change to normalise breastfeeding within our communities such as Children's Services, Libraries ➤ Link with schools and further education to promote positive messages around breastfeeding and responsive parenting. ➤ Staff working within CTMUHB will be supported with their breastfeeding journey
Equitable	We will ensure that infants, mothers and families have equitable access to health care which will provide a platform for them to attain their fullest potential. We will protect the welfare and safety of children and their families who become vulnerable or at risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will continue to develop digital resources to ensure availability of clear, consistent information. ➤ Communication and information will be clear, appropriate in format, relevant, consistent and easy to understand. ➤ All Health Board staff are responsible to adhering to Safeguarding policies and procedures. ➤ We will ensure that information is provided to individuals in their first language to enable them to be fully engaged with their care and support.
Person centred	We will incorporate the baby and toddler voice in everything we do. We will work in partnership and listen to all service users to ensure the best experience and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will listen to families and staff, they will be valued and treated with dignity and respect. ➤ We will seek out the views of our community and continue to listen to feedback from women, birthing people, families and professionals. ➤ Introduce the 'voice of the baby' in decision making.