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Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly in Britain
Scaling up Breastfeeding in Wales, Scotland and England

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BACKGROUND
Global efforts to further improve exclusive breastfeeding rates have not been successful, in part because effective scaling-up frameworks and roadmaps have not been developed. Breastfeeding and the provision of human milk is the most accessible and cost-effective activity available to public health which is known to prevent a range of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), specifically childhood obesity, diabetes type 2 and maternal breast cancer1-3. The UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world; 80% of babies are breastfed at birth, only 1% are exclusively breastfed by 6 months4. Breastfeeding rates are lower among women in areas of higher deprivation, exacerbating health inequalities.

The Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly toolkit was developed through highly structured technical and academic collaboration, led by Yale University. It has been piloted in Mexico and Ghana.

- In the short term: it provides an evidence-based tool to guide countries in assessing their breastfeeding status, and their readiness to scale up.
- Long term: it supports countries to identify the concrete measures they can take to sustainably increase breastfeeding rates, based on data-driven recommendations.

PROGRAMME THEORY
The BBF Gear Model is made up of eight simultaneous conditions which sustain breastfeeding: the gears. Each gear must be sufficiently mobilised to turn the next, eg:

- strong, evidence-based advocacy can generate political will to enact legislation and policies to protect, promote and support breastfeeding
- the coordination, goals and monitoring gear can keep the multi-sectoral gears in motion and provide timely proactive feedback

Country-based committees allocate Gear Teams to score their country for each gear based on performance in 54 sub-categories or benchmarks over the preceding year. Teams present evidence for their scoring and together formulate the country’s overall BBF Index score, identifying gaps where action is needed and recommendations based on the data.

BBF GB
Launching BBF GB, breastfeeding experts from Scotland, Wales and England attended the first GB Engagement Committee in December 2017, agreeing to deliver BBF separately in each country to reflect structural and cultural variation.

- The CHSS team is now supporting three locally developed Country Committees of experts in Scotland, Wales and England to carry out the 5 step meeting process
- The GB Engagement Committee provides critical oversight of the process, findings and dissemination planning through twice yearly meetings
- Country committees began the benchmarking process from April 2018 using document and media searches, collaborative reviews and interviews
- Through scoring and identifying the gaps, teams are producing and prioritising focused recommendations based on a Delphi process delivered by CHSS

Alongside the countries’ work, CHSS and Yale are undertaking a structured media analysis to understand how often breastfeeding is discussed in the main media channels and to review its content, framing, main spokespersons and response.

THE 3 GB COUNTRIES

ENGLAND
With Public Health

- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 83% (95% CI)4
- Any BF: 57%
- Exclusive BF: 24% (95% CI)
- At 6 weeks:
  - Any BF: 71% (95% CI)
  - Exclusive BF: 17% (95% CI)
- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 75% (MINS 17)5
- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 50%, Exclusive BF: 22% (MINS 18)
- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 55% (MINS 17)

WALES
With Public Health

- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 71% (95% CI)
- Any BF: 40%
- Exclusive BF: 17% (95% CI)
- At 6 weeks:
  - Any BF: 74% (95% CI)
  - Exclusive BF: 22% (95% CI)
- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 75% (MINS 15)

SCOTLAND
With Scottish Government

- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 40% (95% CI)
- Any BF: 40%
- Exclusive BF: 17% (95% CI)
- At 6 weeks:
  - Any BF: 50%
  - Exclusive BF: 22% (95% CI)
- Initial BF rate (any breastfeeding): 55% (MINS 17)

NEXT STEPS

- Report scores and recommendations back to governments
- Share findings internationally with Yale and the other countries: Mexico, Ghana, Germany, Myanmar, China, Samoa
- Build on findings, develop new research questions
- Disseminate to academics, policy, practice and the public

More information at bbf.yale.edu

REFERENCES

5 STEP COUNTRY COMMITTEE PROCESS