



Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland Annual Report for 2013

The BFHI in Ireland is now active for over 15 years. A focus this year was to continue towards providing for the sustainability of the BFHI practices as the normal routine health care and towards linking quality programmes and BFHI practices.

The name of the Initiative was amended to use Health rather than Hospital initiative to reflect the potential activity that extends broader than hospitals. This name was registered as a business name and the logo was amended. An independent web site was established.

All of the 20 maternity units participated in the Baby Friendly Health Initiative in 2013. During 2013, two hospitals, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda and Cavan Monaghan, underwent scheduled five-yearly full re-assessments and were re-designated. Support and discussion was carried out with other hospitals moving towards reaching the standards needed for designation. Four hospitals: Waterford Regional, Sligo Regional, Wexford General, and the Coombe Women & Infants University, renewed their certificates of participation (previously titled membership). The BFHI assessment team participated in continuing education and was active in their assessment work.

Based on the data returned by the hospitals to the BFHI national coordinator for 2012, 42% of births occurred in a Baby Friendly designated hospital. This is higher than Germany, England, Finland, USA, Italy, France, and Spain among others. The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative began in Ireland in 1998 when the prevalence of any breastfeeding on discharge was 31%; in 2012 it was 53% with a range of 38-70%. Research published in February 2013 indicated the breastfeeding initiation in Ireland is more likely in a Baby Friendly hospital¹.

Participating hospitals each carry out a planned action during the year to improve and sustain practices. As usual there is a wide variety of actions planned and supported. In 2013 these included: staff education sessions as parts of other actions in most hospitals, as well as focused plans for monthly short ward updates on practices in the policy and sessions targeted at the needs of GP trainees; improving antenatal information and discussions by various means; antenatal expression of colostrum for women expecting their infant to be at higher risk of hypoglycaemia; skin to skin contact with some focusing on c-section births; educating and supporting mothers who are not breastfeeding; renewed emphasis on mother's position for comfortable breastfeeding including the purchase of footstools; care plans for mothers/infants with breastfeeding difficulties; reducing supplement use; raising awareness of the importance, availability and use of donor bank human milk; early start to expressing and increased use of colostrum in the neonatal unit; examining why some mothers initiate but cease all breastfeeding before discharge.

The BFHI Link newsletter was published three times during the year including reports of achievements, breastfeeding statistics, and items to assist in implementing the practices including staff materials and parent handouts. The BFHI Link is available on the website. The December issue was issue number 50! The BFHI in Ireland activity was highlighted in conference and academic presentations in Ireland and internationally, with a display at events and in media items including articles in Health Matters and in the National Institute of Health Research publications.

BFHI Ireland is active in the International Network of BFHI National Coordinators and in contact with UNICEF and WHO ensuring BFHI Ireland remains aligned to international standards and is aware of BFHI activities in other countries.

The BFHI is represented on the National Breastfeeding Strategy Implementation Committee and sub-committees and works closely with the National Breastfeeding Coordinator. BFHI is also linked with the Health Promoting Hospitals Network and has a representative on the Baby Feeding Law Group. Specific activities during the year focused on evaluation of the national strategic action plan for breastfeeding, provision of joint materials, reviewing of national documents, examination of health worker training needs, linking of the BFHI with HSE clinical programmes and standards, meeting with senior people in the Department of Health and Department of Children, alignment of audit processes, and Code of Marketing related activity.

The BFHI is funded through a grant from the HSE Health Promotion. The BFHI in Ireland continued restructuring towards developing a longer term governance structure and sustainability. The Committee and the Coordinator thank all those involved in assisting the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative to be active and effective in 2013: the staff members in the participating hospitals, the members of the assessment teams and the committee and their managers who facilitated them to have the time for these duties, UNICEF Ireland, breastfeeding and parenting organisations that encouraged their members to expect Baby Friendly practices, and Siobhan Hourigan, National Breastfeeding Coordinator.

Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative National Committee members 2013

Chair: Maura Lavery, CMS/IBCLC, HSE Dublin North East

Hon. Secretary: Pauline Treanor, representing hospital CEOs/managers

Treasurer: Nicola Clarke, IBCLC, Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland

Margaret O'Leary, CMS/IBCLC, HSE West

Mary Kelly, Health Promotion, HSE West

Mona Condon, PHN, IBCLC, HSE Dublin South

Mary Toole, CMS/IBCLC, HSE Dublin West

Eileen Earley, CMS/IBCLC, HSE-Mid-Leinster

Linda O'Callaghan, CMM/IBCLC, HSE South

Nikita White, UNICEF Ireland

Angela Cahill, Cuidiu

Mary Bird, La Leche League

Helen Byrne, HSE Quality and Patient Safety

Siobhan Hourigan, National Breastfeeding Coordinator

BFHI National Co-ordinator: Dr Genevieve Becker, IBCLC

www.babyfriendly.ie

Participation in 2013: All of the 20 maternity units participated at some level
8 units are designated Baby Friendly

ⁱ Becker GE. Does the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) make a difference in Ireland? *National Institute of Health Sciences Research Bulletin* 3(4):43, Feb 2013.

http://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/Leadership_Education_Development/National_Institute_of_Health_Sciences/Research_Bulletin/NIHS_Research_Bulletin_February_2013.pdf