



## Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland Annual Report for 2014

The main objective for which the BFHI in Ireland is established is to benefit the community by encouraging and supporting health-promoting practices towards ensuring a breastfeeding supportive health care environment which fosters life-long health for infants and their mothers.

The BFHI in Ireland is funded through a grant from the Health Promotion and Improvement, Health & Well-being Division HSE to facilitate it to provide information, support, and monitoring of standards towards assisting hospitals to provide this environment.

Good governance is an important component of any initiative if it is to be effective, transparent and sustainable. During 2014, a new Constitution was developed and approved that clearly sets out the objectives of the BFHI in Ireland. It outlines how its committees are structured to facilitate activities, and who can be on the national committee and sub-committees. There is also a policy on how any complaints are addressed and further policies and procedures are under development. The Constitution and the complaints policy are on open access on the website.

BFHI National Committee and sub-committee meetings were held regularly with on-going electronic contact, and the BFHI National Coordinator and committee members kept up to date with research, knowledge, skills and contacts to facilitate effective running of the BFHI. Quarterly reports on BFHI activities and finances, budgets and financial records for BFHI assessments, monitoring visits and general coordination work were provided by the coordinator to the committee. Cloud storage of governance and other key documents for BFHI began.

The BFHI in Ireland web site functions as an information point for those working in the maternity services, for service users and for interested wider public. During the year it was rearranged to make it easier for parents to access the parents' info sheets, to provide a more interesting front page including a map of the maternity units and their designation status, and additional material on monitoring practices. The upgrading of the website will continue in 2015 with plans for a section with Irish research and presentations from hospitals related to Baby-friendly practices. Have a look, and suggestions are welcome for what additional information would be useful on the site.

In 2014 one maternity unit unfortunately closed, and all of the remaining 19 maternity units participated in the Baby Friendly Health Initiative at some level. During 2014, Letterkenny Hospital renewed its certificate of participation (previously titled membership) and Portlincula commenced its five-year re-designation process. Support visits were carried out to Kerry General Hospital and Cork University Maternity Hospital. Other hospitals were supported and participated in monitoring with eight hospitals holding designation as a Baby-friendly hospital, of which Galway University Hospital and the Rotunda Hospital had formal monitoring visits at the half-way point in the five year cycle. The BFHI assessment team participated in continuing education and was active in their assessment and monitoring activities; one new member joined the team.

Based on the data returned by the hospitals to the BFHI national coordinator for 2013, 42% of births occurred in a Baby Friendly designated hospital, a similar rate to 2012 and higher than the 34% in 2010. The majority of infants breastfeed in hospital and are breastfeeding at discharge, with two maternity units having breastfeeding initiation rates above 70%. Only two maternity units had breastfeeding initiation rates below 50% (though both above 44%) which is an improving situation.

Participating hospitals each carry out a planned action during the year to improve and sustain practices. In 2014 there was a focus on building links between baby friendly activities and quality and patient safety standards with eight hospitals networking on this action. A wide variety of other actions were planned and supported including, improving skin to skin contact following C-section births, reducing supplement use, increasing donor milk use when needed, surveying antenatal education satisfaction, on-ward staff updates, first feed to be colostrum, and the use of the national maternity chart as a part of feeding care planning.

Reducing the influence of marketing of breast milk substitutes and related items is a major area for which hospitals request support. A letter to managers on staff member attendance at company funded events was prepared and circulated during the year.

There is staff turnover within hospitals and this resulted in six new hospital BFHI contact persons being oriented and supported regarding requirements of BFHI participation, completing annual reports and developing annual action plans. This included face to face training and a networking session with two hospital contact persons.

Development of job aids/resource packs for each Step commenced. This will bring the standards, evidence base, implementation guidance and tools, audit tools and other material together under each Step. Audit tools were developed for four Steps and piloted. These will be on the BFHI web site. An activity commenced to gather and examine the existing guidelines, protocols and procedure documents related to Baby-friendly practices towards developing consistent guidance across the maternity units and reducing duplication of work. The BFHI was also involved in the updating of the HSE/BFHI National Infant Feeding Policy.

The BFHI Link newsletter was published three times during the year including reports of experiences and achievements of hospitals, breastfeeding statistics, research updates, resource reviews, and other items to assist in implementing the practices including staff materials and parent handouts. The BFHI Link is available on the website and now includes QR codes to facilitate easy access via smart phones. The BFHI in Ireland activity was highlighted in conference and academic presentations in Ireland and internationally.

The BFHI in 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. In 2014, we participated in the pilot testing of international neonatal assessment tools towards increasing the support for breastfeeding and related practices among these infants and families.

The BFHI is represented on the National Breastfeeding Strategy Implementation Committee and sub-committee on health worker Education and Training, and works closely with the National Breastfeeding Coordinator. The Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, Cuidiu-Irish Childbirth Trust, La Leche League in Ireland and the HSE have representatives on the BFHI National Committee. The BFHI has a representative on the Baby Feeding Law Group.

During 2014, the BFHI National Coordinator examined national quality and audit programmes for possible linkages with BFHI, met with the national Quality and Standards lead (Dr Mary Browne), and prepared a document highlighting how BFHI links with National Healthcare Standards, that was circulated and on the BFHI web site. Further activity was carried out linking BFHI with the Healthy Ireland implementation plan at regional levels.

Input was made into the review of midwifery training and to the Better Health for Children report as well as the review of the National Breastfeeding Strategic Plan. Information was provided to media, to students including for the national midwifery student debate on breastfeeding, and to a clinician presenting internationally.

The Committee and the Coordinator thank all those involved in assisting the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative to be active and effective throughout 2014: 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.

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#### **Baby Friendly Health Initiative National Committee members at end 2014**

Chair: Maura Lavery, RGN, RM, IBCLC, CMS

Hon. Secretary: Mary Toole, RGN, RM, BNS, IBCLC, CMS

Hon. Treasurer: Nicola Clarke, MSc, RGN, RM, RSCN, IBCLC, FFMRCIS

Margaret O'Leary, RGN, RM, IBCLC, CMS

Mary Kelly, Health Promotion Officer

Eileen Earley, SRN, RM, IBCLC, CMS

Linda O'Callaghan, CMM/ACPCM/IBCLC

Pauline Treanor, RGN, RM, MBA, PGDip Governance

Angela Cahill, representative from Cuidiu

Mary Bird, representative from La Leche League of Ireland

Patricia Marteinson, representative from Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland

Siobhan Hourigan, MA Health Promotion, HSE National Breastfeeding Coordinator

BFHI National Co-ordinator: Dr Genevieve Becker, PhD, Dip Diets, MSc, MEd, IBCLC, MINDI, FILCA IBCLC  
[www.babyfriendly.ie](http://www.babyfriendly.ie)

#### **Hospital status at end 2014**

*Designated as meeting Baby Friendly criteria (National award):*

Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe Co. Galway

University Maternity Hospital Limerick

Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda

Cavan General Hospital

Rotunda Hospital, Dublin

Galway University Hospital

Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar

Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise

*Participation level (previously called Membership level):*

Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital, Dublin

Sligo Regional Hospital

Letterkenny General Hospital, Donegal

University Hospital Waterford

Tralee General Hospital, Co. Kerry

St. Luke's General Hospital, Kilkenny

National Maternity Hospital, Dublin

Wexford General Hospital

University College Maternity Hospital, Cork

South Tipperary General Hospital, Clonmel

Mayo General Hospital, Castlebar