

# ***The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Ireland***

## **Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit Project**

### ***What is the Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit Project?***

This is a project within the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in response to requests from paediatric units. At present, this project is not a global WHO/UNICEF project. Ireland has developed its own pilot project based on ideas from Australia and the UK. The aim of the BSPU is to improve the care of children and their mothers' by providing support for breastfeeding in paediatric services. In hospitals that provide maternity and paediatric services, units are encouraged to work jointly on breastfeeding activities. This project started in January 2001 and the first paediatric units became Members in autumn 2001.

### ***How does the Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit Project function?***

This project, like the overall Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, is about the progress towards supportive practices as much as the achievement of awards. Hospitals/paediatric units start by carrying out a self-appraisal of their practices using the checklist provided. This checklist is returned to the BFHI co-ordinator with a detailed action point plan for at least one item needed to raise standards. At this point hospitals/units are designated as a *Member of the Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit Project*.

After the hospital/unit has worked on its own action items, the hospital/unit can be assessed according to established criteria, either informally as part of assistance in developing plans to improve standards or an official external assessment for the Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit Award. If a hospital/unit meets the criteria fully it can be awarded *Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit Status*. However, if it is unable to meet the criteria fully at this time, a Certificate of Commitment is awarded and the hospital/unit is considered *Committed to Paediatric Breastfeeding Support*. Hospitals/units are required to provide yearly evaluation/audit reports, plan of action for continued improvement and can receive spot checks.

### ***What support is available from the HPH and the National BFHI Co-ordinator?***

Many hospitals are part of the Health Promoting Hospitals Network and as such are in contact with the HPH already receiving support for their overall health promoting projects. The co-ordinator of the BFHI drafts Irish adaptations of the BFHI materials, compiles reports, highlights BFHI related resources, acts as a link to BFHI internationally and generally co-ordinates the BFHI in Ireland. There is an advisory committee that is a multi-disciplinary group from a variety of work settings through the country. The committee's role is to facilitate implementation of the BFHI/BSPU *process* including identifying hospitals that are ready for assessment, organising assessment and designating status.

### ***Ten Steps to Supporting Breastfeeding in Paediatric Units***

- Step 1. Have a written breastfeeding policy, which is formulated in conjunction with the maternity services (where relevant).
- Step 2. Train health care staff caring for breastfeeding children in the skills necessary to implement the policy.
- Step 3. Provide parents with evidence-based written and verbal information about the benefits and management of breastfeeding and breastmilk feeding.
- Step 4. Plan all nursing and medical care to minimise disturbance to the breastfeeding and parent-child relationship.
- Step 5. Support mothers in their feeding method, assisting in the establishment and maintenance of breastfeeding and/or the safe expression and storage of breastmilk.
- Step 6. If a baby is unable to feed at the breast alternative techniques conducive to breastfeeding should be used.
- Step 7. Provide facilities that allow parents and children to be together 24 hours a day in order to promote breastfeeding on demand.
- Step 8. Provide mothers with an environment and facilities that meet their needs for privacy, information and appropriate nutrition.
- Step 9. Give no bottles or dummies/soothers to breastfeeding children unless medically indicated and with parents' permission.
- Step 10. Provide parents with information about breastfeeding support services and groups during admission and on discharge from hospital.

### ***The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative - a healthy start for babies and mothers***

The HPH Network is the Irish co-ordinating body for the WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative