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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE IN IRELAND

BFHI LINK

What did you do in 2002? What will we see in 2003?



It is the time of year for reports and plans. Each unit/hospital participating in the BFHI prepares and submits an Action Plan each year for one or more items they will focus on in the year. Generally, your Action Plan for 2003 is related to the Service Plan for the unit or department. In a few weeks, each hospital/unit, will be asked for their report. Is it ready?

You are part of a network—which means working together, sharing and learning from each other. Unfortunately a few hospitals/units are very quiet, even when specifically asked to communicate. Some do not share their BFHI Action Plan nor their end of year reports with the BFHI Co-ordinator, so their colleagues in other hospitals cannot learn from them. This quietness may look like they do not want to be part of the network. So, each participating hospital/unit will be asked to indicate each year that they want to be a member of the BFHI. If a hospital/unit does not respond, they will no longer be listed as a member of the BFHI and will not receive the benefits of membership.

What did the BFHI Co-ordinator do in 2002? There were 3 issues of *BFHI LINK*; a workshop for all BFHI/BSPU hospital co-ordinators; meetings of the national advisory committee including a meeting focused on evaluating breastfeeding education; participation in the International HPH Conference and the BFI UK conference; speaking at the National Breastfeeding Conference; poster displays at conferences; visits to hospitals; and participation in the review of the 1994 National Breastfeeding Policy, as well as communicating with many people about implementing BFHI practices.

In 2003, plans include the launch of the BFHI website and the breastfeeding supportive workplace project; more units/hospitals to gain Certificates of Commitment to BFHI and more paediatric units to become members, as well as the continuing communication via BFHI Link, with individual hospitals and units and by participating in national and international forums.

Awards

Certificate of Commitment

Maternity Unit, Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe

Certificate of Membership

Paediatric Unit, Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe

Presented October 2002

www.hphallireland.org

Have you seen what
is there?



The benefits of balancing breastfeeding and employment...

Breastfeeding has a tremendous impact on the health of women and children. The protective properties of breast milk for babies have been well documented in medical science – breastfeeding protects infants from numerous infections, while sick babies are more likely to be formula fed than breastfed (Ball, 1999, Lawrence, 1997). For mothers, breastfeeding is convenient and cost-effective, helps them to bond emotionally with their child and benefits the mother's health.

Perhaps less well known is the fact that employers also stand to benefit significantly from mothers who breastfeed. A happy and healthy baby at home equals a happy mother who is productive in her employment. Breastfeeding has become an issue for employers and workplaces in Ireland because:

- * Irish Women now make up nearly 40% of the workforce (O'Connor, 2001).
- * More and more women are combining motherhood with paid employment.
- * Studies have shown that returning to work is a major reason for early weaning.
- * The benefits of breastfeeding have been recognised in the Dail, with legislative protection proposed to support 'lactation breaks' during the working day.

In order for breastfeeding to be maintained women need to breastfeed their baby or have access to comfortable facilities where they can express their milk if separated from their baby. Employers can support breastfeeding by putting into place policies that will meet either one or both of these requirements. While there are some costs involved in this, the benefits far outweigh these costs, making them cost-effective.

Supporting breastfeeding is good for employers because it...

Reduces Absenteeism – Parental absenteeism increases as infant illness rates increase and by contrast parental attendance improves with healthier infants (Cohen, 1995). Reduced absenteeism therefore leads to increased productivity in the workplace. This is particularly so where teamwork is involved, as absenteeism can interrupt team workflow.

Leads to Lower Staff Turnover – Women are more likely to return to work after maternity leave, saving the employer the costs of recruiting and training a new employee – costs which can be high.

Increases Productivity – Employees are likely to show increased commitment to their job, as well as increased productivity. This is because less time will be spent worrying about a sick infant at home.

Creates a Positive Corporate Image – Employer viewed as 'progressive' and 'family friendly'. Family Friendly Policies represent an important recruitment incentive. It can also lead to high morale within the workforce, and positive relations between employers and employees.



Further Information

Ball, TM, Wright, AL. (1999). *Healthcare costs of formula feeding in the first year of life*. Pediatrics 103(4):870–876.

Cohen, R. & Mrtek MB, & Mrtek, RG. (1995). *Comparison of maternal absenteeism and infant illness rates among breastfeeding and formula feeding women in two corporations*. American Journal of Health Promotion, 10(2): 148–53.

Lawrence, R. (1997). *Maternal and child health information bulletin: A review of medical benefits and contraindications to breastfeeding in the United States*. Government Printing Office: Washington DC, 1997. www.ncemch.org

O' Connor, P. (1998). *Emerging Voices: Women in contemporary Irish Society* Dublin, IPA.

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) www.waba.org.my

Is there a Safety Statement displayed at work listing any hazards and risks to pregnant and breastfeeding women as a result of exposure to specific chemical, or biological agents, processes, or working conditions?

Employers can assist breastfeeding by...

Support and information

- * Drawing up a breastfeeding policy statement, which outlines the company's commitment to support the practice of breastfeeding amongst staff.
- * Making employees aware of their rights – with regard to maternity benefits, and also of policies in operation in the company that support their right to breastfeed.
- * Making managers, supervisors and co-workers aware of the importance of supporting breastfeeding.
- * Educating employees about the importance of breastfeeding, and forming support groups within the facility for mothers who are breastfeeding.
- * Assisting with childcare e.g. providing on-site crèche / help with locating childcare places / childcare allowance.

Facilities/Space

- * A warm clean room, where women can either breastfeed their baby, or express their milk, with washing facilities, seating, a table and an electric power point. A door with a lock is also a must.
- * Storage facilities: In order to store milk safely, a refrigerator can be installed. A safe area for the storage of pumping and sterilising equipment is also important.

Time

- * Offering mothers flexi-time work options and/or job-sharing; this may involve returning to work part time for a temporary period or long term. Offering unpaid extra leave.
- * Facilitating lactation breaks – Before returning from maternity leave, employees need to discuss lactation breaks (of at least 20 minutes per 4 hours in addition to lunch and tea breaks) with their supervisor so that cover can be arranged.

The National Breastfeeding policy recommends that the health service takes a lead in providing a breastfeeding supportive workplace. Does it?

Steps to a Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace

1. Have a written policy addressing the importance of support for pregnant and for breastfeeding staff, and regarding lactation breaks and other supports in the facility.
2. Provide information for all managerial, supervisory, personnel staff in particular and for co-workers on the implementation of this policy.
3. Inform employees who are pregnant or considering pregnancy of their maternity benefits and the breastfeeding supports in the facility.
4. Provide comfortable private and safe facilities for expressing and storing breast milk.
5. Keep the work environment clean and safe from hazards to pregnant and breastfeeding women.
6. Provide paid breastfeeding breaks of at least 20 minutes per four hours with cover provided for the women's work while she is on a break.
7. Offer flexible work hours/work site to pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Join the Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace Project of the Irish National Health Promoting Hospitals Network.

Send for an information pack.

The **Rotunda Hospital** marked Breastfeeding Week by having an information stand at reception and a Breastfeeding Quiz for all staff. The Quiz was won by Student Midwife Paula Keenan. The prize of € 200 was donated by Ms. P Traenor, Director of Midwifery. Breastfeeding interest was raised with the quiz and lots of fun was had by all participants in finding and checking the answers!!

Share Your News



Longford/Westmeath and **Portlaoise** hospitals both have new posts for a lactation midwife. Congratulations. So watch for great things happening in the midlands!

The first **Department of Health and Children Breastfeeding Conference** was held in October in Dublin Castle with wide participation. Speakers came from Ireland, Scotland and the USA.

The **National Maternity Hospital** now includes comprehensive training in assisting breastfeeding to all their student midwives.

Congratulations to all the new IBCLCs and to Sarah McCann who was the highest scorer in Ireland on the IBLCE 2002 exam. Sarah has been a La Leche League Leader in Co. Antrim for seven years and is part of the Professional Liaison Department of LLL of Ireland. There are now 121 IBCLCs in all of Ireland.

Do you support your mothers who are formula feeding? Handout sheets to assist learning how to make up formula and to sterilising equipment are available—free from advertising. See BFI UK publication, *Implementing Baby Friendly Practices*, www.babyfriendly.org.uk

Three projects from BFHI in Ireland and the Irish National Health Promoting Hospitals Network:
Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative
Breastfeeding Supportive Paediatric Unit
Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace
Are you participating?

**Please photocopy
 BFHI LINK
 for further distribution.**



We welcome your news items and suggestions.
 Contact the BFHI Co-ordinator,
 c/o Health Promoting Hospitals Network,
 James Connolly Memorial Hospital,
 Blanchardstown, Dublin 15,
 email: bfhi@iol.ie



Diary Dates

- Feb 21st-22nd **Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, Annual Conference**, Maynooth. Contact: 069-68199
- March 22nd-23rd **La Leche League of Ireland Annual Conference**, Killarney. Contact: 074-32003
- May 13th **Northern Ireland Breastfeeding Conference**, Armagh City Hotel. Contact 048-9031-1611 or j.calvert@hpani.org.uk
- May 24th **Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, Spring Study Day**, Venue to be confirmed. Contact: 069-68199
- July 31st—Aug 3rd **International Lactation Consultant Association Conference**, Milk, Mammals and Marsupials. Sydney, Australia. Contact: www.ilca.org or 01-4589532

Why balance breastfeeding and employment

Babies who are breastfed are healthy - a healthy baby means less time missed at work as well as less cost for health care.

Breastfeeding means you get to sit down and relax with your baby when you come home - while someone else makes the dinner.

Replacements for breast milk cost money - money you could use for other things.

Breastfeeding means you can feed the baby at night without moving from your warm bed - more rest for mother.

Breastfeeding means no formula to shop for and no bottles to make - more time.

Women who breastfeed for a few months have less risk of getting breast cancer.

Breastfeeding benefits the employer too - less time off work, less staff turnover.



How to balance breastfeeding and employment

It depends on your job and what hours you work. In general, consider:

- ◇ Can you take more leave so your baby is around six months old and taking some foods/fluids in addition to breastfeeding?
- ◇ Is there childcare near your work so you can feed the baby as needed during work time? Some mothers eat their lunch at the childminders while feeding the baby.
- ◇ Can you express your milk at work if you are not able to be with your baby?
- ◇ Could your childminder bring the baby to you at work?
- ◇ Can you work flexible hours to fit the work around your baby's needs -shorter day or long lunch break?
- ◇ Could your baby come to work with you for all or part of the day especially when very young?
- ◇ Could you change your job to one that is more family friendly?
- ◇ Can you work from home for some or all of the time?



Graphic by Paulo Santos, Brazil

What to find out about balancing breastfeeding and employment

During your pregnancy or before your maternity leave is over, talk to your manager about your need for support for continuing breastfeeding when you return to work.

You need **time** - either to feed the baby or to express. These breaks are in addition to lunch and other breaks. Your work needs to be covered while you are on a break so that you do not feel rushed or uneasy or feel your co-workers are annoyed by your break. You may want to discuss flexible working hours, too.

You need **space**. Is there a warm, clean place where the baby can be brought to you or where you can express in privacy?

You need **support** - to know that breastfeeding is seen by managers and co-workers as important.

Talk with other mothers who continued breastfeeding after returning to work to find out how they do it. Contact your local breastfeeding support groups to find other mothers.