



A good start for baby and mother makes a difference

A Baby Friendly hospital helps make it happen

Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland Annual Report for 2016

Activities in 2016 included to encourage and educate all maternity facilities towards implementing international quality practices, provision of information materials, supporting action plans on a wide variety of topics, as well as serving as the National Authority for the WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative in Ireland and undertake the monitoring and assessment of practices when invited to by the health facility.

The National Committee of the BFHI in Ireland networked and collaborated with individuals and entities nationally and internationally, raised awareness of the importance of quality standards in health service environments towards promoting and supporting breastfeeding, and managed activities of the Initiative so as to ensure effective functioning. Read more in the report.

[National Committee of the Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland](#)

The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative is a global programme initiated by the WHO and UNICEF in 1991 that recognises that implementing quality practice in the health services is crucial to the success of promoting and supporting breastfeeding, and that breastfeeding needs to be protected, and health services not used to market infant formula and related products.

The Irish programme, the Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland (BFHI), is an inclusive programme active since 1998 providing consistent evidenced-based information, capacity building, support, and monitoring of standards towards assisting all health facilities to implement and sustain an environment that routinely provides quality breastfeeding supportive practices towards lifelong health and wellbeing.

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.



All of the 19 maternity facilities participated in the Baby Friendly Health Initiative during 2016.

Based on the data returned by the hospitals to the BFHI national coordinator for 2015:

- 43% of births occurred in the nine maternity facilities externally assessed as meeting the standards to be a Baby Friendly designated hospital. This is higher than the percentage in most middle to high income countries.
- The majority of infants breastfed during their hospital stay (61%).

Hospital status at end 2016

Designated as meeting Baby Friendly criteria (National award):

Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe	Rotunda Hospital, Dublin
University Maternity Hospital Limerick	Galway University Hospital
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda	Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar
Cavan General Hospital	Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise
South Tipperary General Hospital, Clonmel	

Participation level (previously called Membership level):

Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital, Dublin	National Maternity Hospital, Dublin
Sligo Regional Hospital	University College Maternity Hospital, Cork
Letterkenny General Hospital, Donegal	Mayo General Hospital, Castlebar
University Hospital Waterford	St. Luke's General Hospital, Kilkenny
Kerry General Hospital, Tralee	Wexford General Hospital

What does "designated" or "participation" mean? See <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/participatinghospitals.htm>

In 2016, the Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland acted towards its objective to encourage and educate health facilities towards implementing best practices, including to develop and disseminate policies and guidelines and supporting education materials.

The BFHI in Ireland model has always been an inclusive model including the global baby-friendly practices as sustainable routine practice in all maternity units rather than situating designation as a Baby Friendly Hospital as an optional extra for a few maternity services. Therefore information, resources and supports were available to all participating hospitals and publicly via the website.

The Initiative is much broader than only promoting breastfeeding or increasing breastfeeding rates. Practices of the BFHI include appropriately skilled staff, informed parental decisions through the provision of appropriate and accurate discussions, supportive labour and birth practices, early and continued mother-baby contact, and feeding skills, for all babies and their mothers regardless of feeding decisions. Many of the practices in the Initiative directly link with other actions of the HSE Breastfeeding Action Plan and practices in the Maternity Strategy.

In 2016, hospital action plans included:

- improving skin to skin contact following C-section births,
- updating policies to ensure consistency across all hospitals,
- safe sleep practices,
- developing practice guidance that was clear and measurable on the healthy term baby who is not feeding well,
- reviewing scope of practice of health care assistants related to breastfeeding,
- expanding antenatal education sessions in outlying clinics,
- reviewing accuracy of data collection related to early and sustained mother-baby contact,
- neonatal pathway and practice guidance to ensure encouragement and assistance with breastfeeding/milk expression from antenatal to infant discharge,
- early initiation of hand expression for mothers of infants in the neonatal unit,
- ensuring antenatal discussion occurs for all women on pain management, and having a companion during labour.

Participating hospitals were each supported to carry out a planned action during the year to improve and sustain practices.

A database of participating hospital activity and plans is maintained. Reports of these actions were shared through the BFHI Link newsletter and on the public BFHI web site Gallery and Research sections thus highlighting positive activity, reinforcing good practice and facilitating networks between maternity services. <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/research.htm> <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/gallery.htm>

The **action planning workshops** held at four venues were well attended with NMBI continuing education credits obtained for the workshops. Participant evaluation of the workshops generally rated the workshops as excellent and requested an annual workshop. BFHI information was rated as highly used and suggestions were gathered for further topics. Material for action planning was easily accessible to hospitals via the web site. <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/resources.htm>

Information and discussion was provided to individual hospitals on request regarding:



Email discussion was facilitated between the breastfeeding lead contacts across many maternity units to compare practices, respond to queries and work towards consistent practice for the topics of antenatal and early postnatal milk expression.

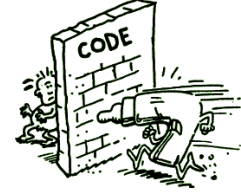
Developed PowerPoint and updated handouts for hospital BFHI contact person to use for short orientation to the infant feeding policy and the BFHI for their new staff.

Five new hospital BFHI contact persons were oriented regarding requirements of BFHI participation, supported in completing annual reports and plans assisting with networking, and developing their local team, as a result of on-going staff turnover within hospitals.

Developed an information session on how the Code of Marketing protects for the hospital BFHI contact persons to use for raising awareness including a video based discussion outline.

<http://www.babyfriendly.ie/images/Working%20Within%20The%20Code%20video%20discussion%20outline%20website.pdf>

Image from WABA



The BFHI in Ireland web site functions as an information point for those working in the maternity services, for service users and for the interested wider public.

Material was added to the web site at least quarterly.

<http://www.babyfriendly.ie> During the year sections were added with Irish research articles, posters and presentations from hospitals related to Baby-friendly practices, new diagrams of the stages and process of the BFHI in Ireland, photos from award events, as well as an education sessions, and a translation into Arabic of the parents' guide to the policy.

The BFHI Link newsletter was published three times during the year in print and on the website.

<http://www.babyfriendly.ie/newsletter.htm>

Contents included:

- Reports of experiences and achievements of hospitals in linking BFHI activity with quality programmes,
- Communication ideas for antenatal discussions and staff education,
- Feeding statistics,
- Research updates on evidence related to infant feeding and supportive practices including notification of Zika virus guidance from the WHO, HSE guidance on tongue-tie, breastfeeding as a part of sustainable development targets, neonatal practices towards improved mother-baby contact, importance of breastfeeding and more,
- Resource reviews including links for free downloads, and other items to assist in implementing the practices including staff materials on making changes, neonatal practices, infant formula constituents and more,
- Events and diary dates,
- Parent handouts on “Surviving the 2nd night”, “Is marketing activities influencing your infant feeding decisions” and Breastfeeding related Apps formed part of the BFHI Link publications and are also on a separate section of the web site including QR codes to facilitate easy access via smart phones. http://www.babyfriendly.ie/bfhi_link.htm

Unfortunately there was the need to notify hospitals there would be a reduction in BFHI services and supports from mid-December 2016 due to funding restrictions.

In 2016, the Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland acted towards its objective to serve as the National Authority for the WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative in Ireland and undertake the monitoring and assessment of practices when invited to by the health facility, in accordance with the guidelines of the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Hospitals renewed their Certificate of Participation (previously titled membership) for a further three years:

- Sligo University Hospital,
- Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital,
- University Hospital Waterford,
- Wexford General Hospital,
- National Maternity Hospital.

The five-year re-designation external assessment process was carried out with Limerick University Maternity Hospital, which included a review of the assessor reports by the Education, Standards and Assessment sub-committee, and was re-designated as a Baby Friendly Hospital. An award ceremony was held and media reported on this achievement including radio and print media interviews.

<http://www.babyfriendly.ie/participatinghospitals.htm>

***Limerick University
Maternity Hospital
successfully completed
the five-year
re-designation
external assessment
process.***

The re-designation process and requirements were discussed with Galway University Hospital, Regional Hospital Portlaoise, Regional Hospital Mullingar and the Rotunda hospitals as all were due to commence the process in late 2016. Due to funding restrictions this re-designation process did not start as planned in late 2016.

The external assessment process commenced with University Hospital Waterford (which was successfully completed in early 2017).

On-site support visits were carried out with:

- Galway University Hospital,
- Cork University Maternity Hospital,
- National Maternity Hospital.

Other hospitals were supported and participated in monitoring with email and phone support.

The BFHI assessment team participated in continuing education and were active in their assessment and monitoring activities.

Assessment issues were discussed with other national BFHI coordinators including thoughts on Step-by-Step assessment, as initially done in the UK, and the documents review process.

Key social media sites were monitored to keep an eye on mothers' comments about practices that they experienced in Baby Friendly Hospitals, and issues arising in hospitals working towards designation as a Baby Friendly Hospital.

Audit tools that were developed by BFHI Ireland in 2015 to assist health facilities in improving their practices towards meeting and sustaining the BFHI standards and also towards full implementation of the national policy were reviewed with hospitals that were using these tools.

The intention was to progress the BFHI Ireland expansion to include assessment of neonatal practices in line with the international BFHI-Neo assessment tools. These tools had been piloted in two Irish hospitals and the development of supporting materials started in 2015. Due to funding restrictions this expansion did not take place in 2016 as planned.



Limerick University Maternity Hospital, Nov 2016

The Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland acted towards its objective to network and collaborate with individuals and entities with related objectives nationally and internationally.

Representations and submissions during 2016:

- The Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, Cuidiu-Irish Childbirth Trust, La Leche League in Ireland and the HSE had representatives on the BFHI National Committee.
- The BFHI had a representative on the Baby Feeding Law Group.
- The BFHI was represented on the National Breastfeeding Strategy Implementation Committee until the committee was disbanded by the HSE Health Promotion in mid-2016.
- BFHI in Ireland representatives attended the launch of Nurture - Infant Health and Wellbeing programme and maintained contact with the programme manager.

- Submissions to HIQA draft Maternity Standards, Healthy Cities Galway Early Years plan on baby friendly environment, and to Cuidiu Bump to Babe survey questions and regarding using BFHI terminology so responses could provide information related to BFHI practices.

National Collaborations:

- Specific baby friendly activities are linked to quality reporting themes and standards so as to reduce the burden of multi-programme activity and reporting and to facilitate quality managers to easily see how these activities help to show evidence the hospital is active in quality audits and improvements.
- Continued to gather examples of how BFHI activities in hospital link with HIQA Standards for publication on BFHI web site and in BFHI Link.
- Assisted a university with ethical queries related to research activities in a Baby Friendly hospital.
- Discussed with the assistant National HSE Breastfeeding Coordinator and gave permission for the use of BFHI information materials on the HSE breastfeeding website.
- Discussed and prepared information for public health doctors on infant feeding during flooding and responded to queries, arising from similar material provided to maternity services.
- Participation in a HSE commissioned review related to the BFHI.
- Worked with BFI UK on developing their Code video into a learning module adapted for Irish hospitals that could also be used by other countries. To mark HSE National Breastfeeding Week this learning module was circulated to hospitals and put on the BFHI web site.
<http://www.babyfriendly.ie/images/Working%20Within%20The%20Code%20video%20discussion%20outline%20website.pdf>
- Contact was made with Galway Infant Mental Health programme re linking with BFHI practices.
- Responded to a private midwifery company exploring if they could be assessed as Baby Friendly.
- Maintained contact with UNICEF Ireland Advocacy Officer regarding support for BFHI in Ireland, shared aims and materials.
- Contributed to marking 35 years of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes by writing and circulating info sheet to hospitals and other groups.

***The BFHI in Ireland
contributed to
national and
international
collaborations.***

International Collaborations and Networks:

- Responded to queries from BFHI Austria regarding the model of situating the BFHI within the Health Promoting Hospitals Network, as had been the model previously in Ireland.
- Contributed to the WHO Euro health inequalities project request for data on breastfeeding related practices in Ireland.

- Linked with the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and the discussion of breastfeeding friendly health services as part of a wider breastfeeding friendly community.
- A baby friendly programme in California and a midwifery service New South Wales sought and were given permission to re-use some BFHI Link materials and web site info in their programmes. BFHI Luxembourg translated some BFHI Link materials and web site info into German and French; these translations were also posted on the BFHI in Ireland web site.
- Discussed with BFHI Denmark coordinator on the short and medium term effects of the reduction in governmental/national agency support for the Initiative in Denmark.

The BFHI in Ireland ensured it remained aligned to international standards.

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 aware of BFHI activities in other countries. In 2016 this included review, networking and discussion with other countries regarding their audit tools and process, and linking with other audit and quality systems, and updating documentation to use in monitoring visits.

Other international activities and achievements included:

- Prepared two yearly report for BFHI national coordinators network, which also was used as a data source for the WHO report *National Implementation of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative*. <http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/bfhi-national-implementation2017/en/>
- Inputted into WHO/UNICEF review of the research evidence for the BFHI practices.
- Worked with UNICEF New York and prepared a case study of BFHI in Ireland as a quality and health promotion model for UNICEF/WHO 25 year review of BFHI. This was one of thirteen countries included in a 2017 publication from UNICEF: *Working to Improve Nutrition at Scale* documenting country experiences in implementing the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) over the 25+ years of its existence. https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/BFHI_Case_Studies_FINAL.pdf
- Participated in the WHO/UNICEF BFHI 25th Anniversary Forum (Geneva) including a plenary presentation on the BFHI in Ireland as an exemplar national programme using a health promotion and quality model. http://www.who.int/nutrition/events/2016_bfhi_congress_24to26oct/en/
- Two representatives of the BFHI in Ireland participated in the International BFHI National Coordinators Network meetings in Geneva.

The Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland acted towards its objective to raise awareness of the importance of supportive health service environments in promoting and supporting breastfeeding, and awareness of the value of participation in the Baby Friendly Health Initiative.

Information was prepared and presented to:

- South-South West Midwifery Managers forum on *The value of participation in the BFHI*.
- Four workshops to assist networking between hospitals, raise awareness of the Initiative, to assist hospitals in their activities to involve more people within their hospitals and to develop feasible action plans.
- University of Limerick project team exploring community assessment processes and feasibility of linking to BFHI standards.
- South-South West Midwifery Conference on BFHI as a part of quality care.

Discussions held on education projects:

- Masters student undertaking HSE funded project collecting data on influences during antenatal care on feeding decisions.
- Public health undergraduate student related to BFHI standards, assessment and antenatal discussions.
- Melbourne Women's Hospital and La Trobe University on education for neonatal staff.

Other awareness raising activity:

- Gathered posters and articles and highlighted hospital activities on web site Research and Gallery sections. <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/research.htm> <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/gallery.htm>
- Attended and networked at ALCI conference.
- The BFHI poster and material were visible at events including the ALCI conference, and the WHO / UNICEF 25 years of the BFHI conference.
- BFHI web site functioned as an information point and served to raise wider awareness of the BFHI with mention of BFHI materials and standards on social media sites for parents and re-circulated to BFHI in other countries. <http://www.babyfriendly.ie/resources>

Responded to queries from health workers, general community, journalists, students and parents.

Requests from health workers, general community, journalists, students and parents on the purpose and activity of BFHI were responded to on topics regarding BFHI and related issues (e.g. costs and environment considerations, Code, feeding statistics, skin to skin contact, Saolta queries, staffing levels for IBCLC posts and dietitians in neonatal units to support human milk feeding, medications, how to complain about poor practices in hospitals and other topics).

The Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland acted towards its objective to plan, review and manage activities of the Initiative so as to ensure effective functioning exclusively for charitable, educational or scientific purposes.

Good governance is an important component of any initiative if it is to be effective, transparent and sustainable. Activities towards ensuring good governance included:

- BFHI National Committee and sub-committee meetings were held regularly with on-going electronic contact between meetings.
- 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 assessments, monitoring visits and general coordination work were provided by the coordinator to the committee.
- During 2016, financial control was monitored by the Management and Finance sub-committee and costs kept within budget.
- The Committee met the requirements for charity registration under the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA).
- Cloud storage of governance and other key documents for BFHI continued.
- Orientated two new committee members to their roles and responsibilities with the updated orientation pack.
- All committee members signed an annual declaration related to conflict of interest and loyalty and confidentiality.
- Completed updating of Policies and Procedures related to expenses reimbursement, removal from committee, and complaints policy.
- 'On the Journey' registration completed with Governance Code.
- The public annual report Constitution, complaints procedure, status of participating hospitals and information on the role of the committee and coordinator were publicly accessible on the BFHI web site towards transparency of activity.

BFHI National Committee and sub-committee meetings were held regularly.

The BFHI in Ireland was funded in 2016 through a grant from the HSE Health Promotion and Improvement, Health and Well-being Division to facilitate it to provide information, support, and monitoring of standards. This grant aid was reduced from previous years which restricted the services, supports and capacity building that the National Committee of the BFHI in Ireland could provide to participating hospitals, the families they served and the wider community.

Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland Financial Report

Jan – Dec 2016

~ Includes costs incurred in 2016 though some payments were un-cleared at end of Dec.	OUT ~	IN
Income from HSE grant aid 2016		30000
Other income		nil
Carried forward from 2015		22680
Salary (contracted flexible hours)	33912	
Office facilities, general communications	8478	
Specific costs (newsletter printing , hospital assessment related costs, meeting expenses, BFHI web/email domain, workshop expenses)	7593	
Total	€49983	€52680

The BFHI National Committee and the Coordinator thank all those involved in assisting the Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland to be active and effective throughout 2016: the health workers in the participating hospitals, the members of the assessment teams and the volunteer national committee and their managers who facilitated them to have the time for these duties, UNICEF Ireland, as well as the breastfeeding and parenting organisations that encouraged their members to expect Baby Friendly practices.

Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland National Committee members 2016

Chairperson: Maura Lavery, RN, RM, CMS/IBCLC

Honorary Secretary: Mary Toole, RGN, RM, CMS/IBCLC

Honorary Treasurer: Nicola Clarke, MSc, RM, RGN, RSCN, IBCLC, FFMRCISI

Plus 2 representatives from each sub-committee:

Strategic Planning and Governance sub-committee:

Mary Mahon (Chair), RN, RM, BScN, MSc LHPE, MSc HI, IBCLC

Fionnuala Cooney, MB, MRCOG, MSc Epi, FFPHMI, working as Specialist in Public Health Medicine

Angela Cahill resigned from the committee during 2016 and was replaced by Elizabeth Mitrow, representing Cuidiu-Irish Childbirth Trust

Patricia Marteinsson resigned from the committee during 2016 and was replaced by Aideen Breen representing Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland

Mary Kelly, Health Promotion Officer completed her term as an individual member during 2016

Siobhan Hourigan, HSE National Breastfeeding Coordinator resigned from the committee during 2016

Management and Finance sub-committee:

Nicola Clarke (Chair), MSc, RM, RGN, RSCN, IBCLC, FFMRCISI

Maura Lavery, RGN, RM, CMS/IBCLC

Margaret O'Leary, RGN, RM, IBCLC

Pauline Treanor, RGN, RM, MBA completed her term as an individual member during 2016

Education, Standards and Assessment sub-committee:

Linda O'Callaghan (Chair), CMM/ACPCM/IBCLC

Mary Toole, RGN, RM, BNS, IBCLC

Mary Bird, representing La Leche League in Ireland

Eileen Earley, SRN, RM, IBCLC

Aileen Doyle, BSc, MSc, RM, IBCLC

Agnes Fitzgerald, RGN, RSCN, IBCLC

Claire Hawkes, BVSc, MSc, Cert ES, Dip ECVS resigned from the committee as an individual member during 2016

BFHI National Co-ordinator: Dr Genevieve Becker, PhD, Dip Diets, MSc, MEd, IBCLC, MINDI, FILCA IBCLC



Baby Friendly Health Initiative in Ireland
c/o Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. D07 RHA8
contact@babyfriendly.ie www.babyfriendly.ie
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