

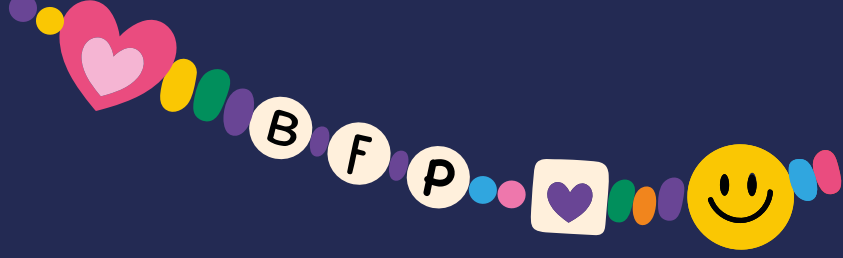
Hounslow's Baby Feeding Plan

2024–2027



London Borough
of Hounslow





Introduction

The London Borough of Hounslow Baby Feeding Plan 2024–2027 sets out a clear direction for supporting breastfeeding. It provides guidance to NHS services, local government, voluntary sector organisations, and families to protect, promote, and normalise breastfeeding. Breastfeeding supports physical and emotional health, prevents diseases, and reduces health inequalities, benefiting not just the baby but also the mother, wider family, and society.

However, many mothers face challenges with breastfeeding, with eight out of ten stopping earlier than they would like. Declining breastfeeding rates have led to fewer than 50% of babies in England receiving breastmilk at eight weeks of age. While the plan promotes breastfeeding as the preferred choice, it recognises that all parents should be supported in feeding their baby safely, whether by breastfeeding, expressing milk, using infant formula, or a combination of methods.

Using local and national breastfeeding data, alongside insights from professionals and parents, this plan aims to enhance support, improve access to services, and increase local breastfeeding rates through targeted action.



The Baby Feeding Plan aims to:

- ✓ Support more mothers to start and continue breastfeeding
- ✓ Identify areas with lower breastfeeding rates and provide targeted support
- ✓ Normalise breastfeeding across the borough
- ✓ Reduce differences in breastfeeding prevalence, particularly in deprived communities
- ✓ Ensure all parents feel supported, regardless of their feeding choices
- ✓ Align with the Northwest London Infant Feeding Strategy to learn from wider best practices

Supporting breastfeeding is a shared responsibility.



Breastfeeding plays a crucial role in:

- ➔ Reducing infant mortality and childhood obesity
- ➔ Addressing socioeconomic and health inequalities
- ➔ Improving oral health outcomes for children
- ➔ Protecting children against infections and diseases
- ➔ Enhancing long-term educational attainment

Vision

Hounslow aspires to be a borough where:

- ➔ Mothers, birthing parents, and families feel empowered and supported to breastfeed
- ➔ Breastfeeding is initiated early and continued for as long as the mother wishes
- ➔ Parents receive non-judgmental support to feed their baby safely, however they choose
- ➔ Breastfeeding is widely accepted and accommodated in all public spaces
- ➔ Families can easily access breastfeeding support and advice
- ➔ Services work collaboratively to provide inclusive and accessible care
- ➔ Breastfeeding is considered a natural and essential practice

Breastfeeding benefits



For babies, breastfeeding lowers the risk of:

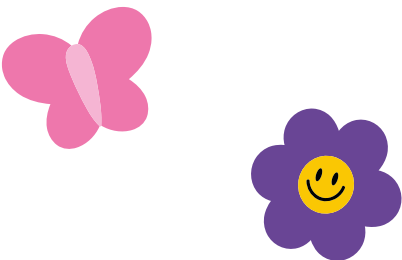
- ➔ Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- ➔ Infant mortality
- ➔ Childhood obesity
- ➔ Common infections such as gastroenteritis, ear, respiratory, and urinary tract infections
- ➔ Necrotising enterocolitis (NEC)
- ➔ Dental decay and misalignment
- ➔ Leukaemia and allergic conditions
- ➔ Hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases
- ➔ Delayed cognitive development

For mothers, breastfeeding reduces the risk of:

- ➔ Obesity
- ➔ Breast, ovarian, and uterine cancers
- ➔ Osteoporosis in later life
- ➔ Cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure
- ➔ Rheumatoid arthritis and Type 2 diabetes
- ➔ Unintended pregnancy

Breastfeeding also has wider benefits for society, contributing to environmental sustainability and reducing healthcare costs.

Data and Current Support



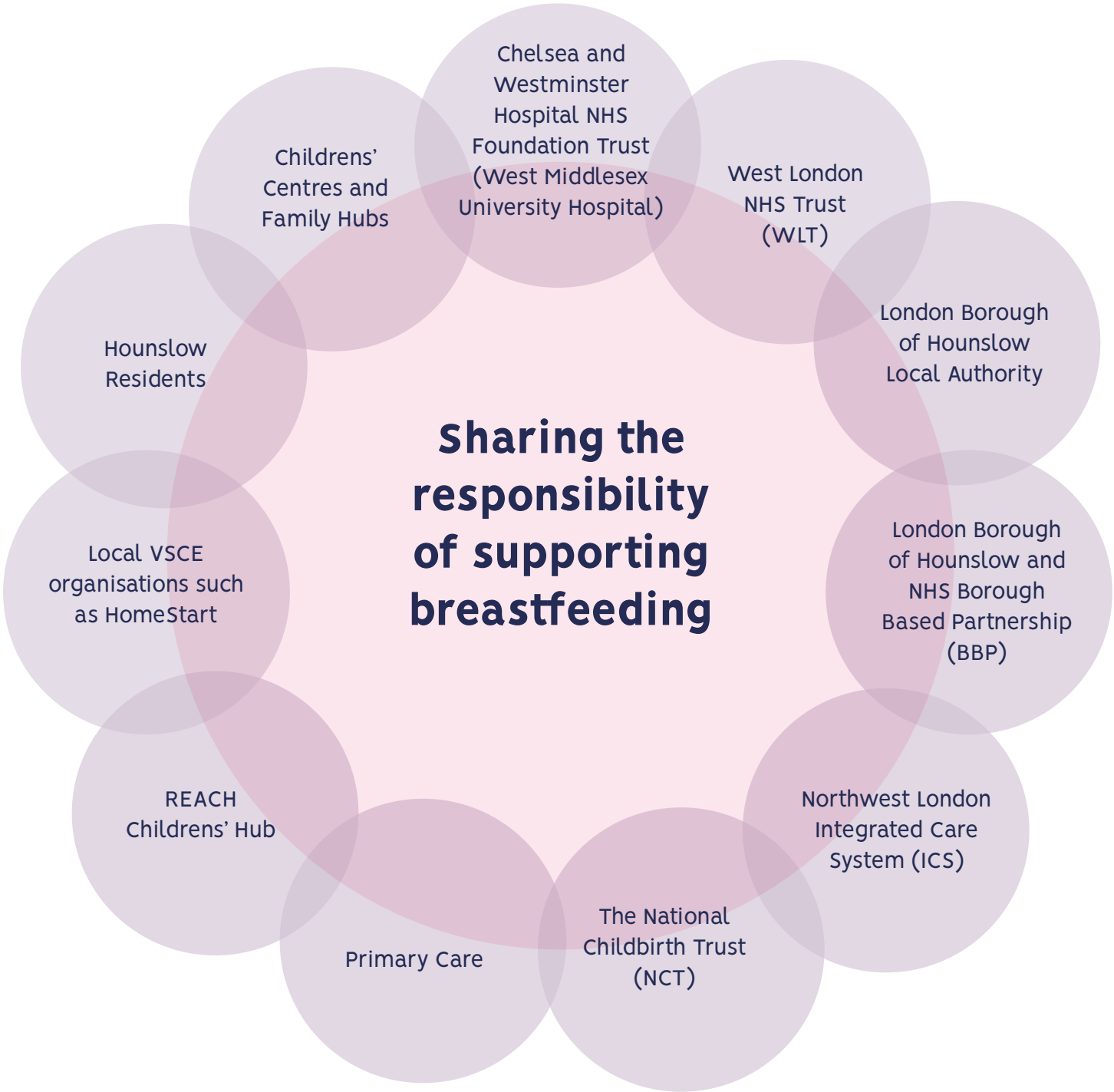
92%
of Hounslow mothers initiate breastfeeding
(higher than the national average of 73.8%)

61%
of mothers are continuing breastfeeding at 6–8 weeks
(above the national average of 52%)

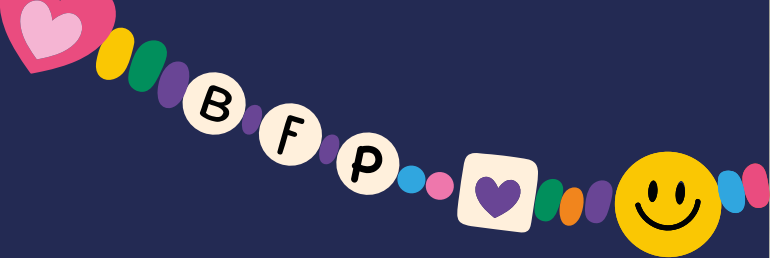
Breastfeeding rates are lower in more deprived areas

Despite the high breastfeeding initiation and breastfeeding at 6–8 weeks rates, there is a 30% decline between the two. This implies nearly a third of mums in Hounslow are experiencing barriers that prevent them from breastfeeding for as long as they want to.

Hounslow provides a broad breastfeeding support offer through maternity services, the health visiting team, Children’s Centres, Family Hubs, private and voluntary organisations. Services aim to support breastfeeding from pregnancy until mum wants to stop breastfeeding.



Gaps and Action Plan



Despite existing services, challenges remain in ensuring all parents receive the breastfeeding support they need. Through engagement with local mums and breastfeeding services, several gaps have been identified, including:

- Unequal access to support in certain areas, particularly the most deprived areas of the borough;
- Barriers faced by mothers from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds resulting in poorer outcomes;
- The need for improved public awareness and education on breastfeeding;
- Limited long-term feeding support beyond the initial weeks;

The Baby Feeding Plan outlines actions to address these gaps, ensuring breastfeeding support is equitable and accessible to all families.

I'm a Hounslow resident; how can I support breastfeeding?

Residents play a crucial role in creating a breastfeeding-friendly community. You can support breastfeeding by:

- Respecting breastfeeding mothers in public;
- Understanding that public breastfeeding is legally protected in the UK;
- Offering support to breastfeeding friends and family members.

Outcomes and Objectives



Be Accessible

Outcomes

- All mums, dads, parents, supporting partners, families, and wider family members can:
- access feeding support when and how they need it;
 - access feeding information in the language that is most comfortable for them;
 - access feeding support in their homes or within their locality;
 - have the right to feed their babies in public without fear of judgement or harassment;
 - benefit from Hounslow being a baby friendly borough;
 - access feeding information that is correct, clear, and consistent;
 - feel included in the baby feeding journey, where appropriate.

Objectives

- To meet these outcomes, we will:
- introduce breastfeeding friendly spaces in the borough through the Hounslow BFF (baby feeding friendly) Network;
 - cultivate a more social offer for mums to spend time with other mums and receive feeding peer support;
 - introduce a breastfeeding equipment loan scheme, such as breast pumps and slings, to support mums and families to continue breastfeeding;
 - ensure breastfeeding and baby information is available in all the languages spoken in Hounslow.

Be Encouraging

Outcomes

- All mums, dads, parents, supporting partners, families, and wider family members will:
- feel supported in their baby feeding journey, whatever the feeding method;
 - receive encouraging support when they need feeding help;
 - receive support from fully trained staff and services who are fully UNICEF BFI accredited and compliant with the UNICEF Code;
 - receive support from a workforce that is representative of the Hounslow population;
 - benefit from high-quality, joined-up communication between support services;
 - speak with other Hounslow mums about feeding their baby if they want to and all eligible families can access support from a specially trained baby feeding peer supporter.

Objectives

- To meet these outcomes, we will:
- introduce a peer support service serving the earliest days of parenthood to provide encouraging support to mums and families;
 - ensure baby feeding messaging, information, and advice is consistent and up to date;
 - ensure the breastfeeding and baby feeding services in Hounslow are fully UNICEF BFI accredited.

Be Connected

Outcomes

- All Hounslow baby feeding services are:
- integrated to provide a high quality, joined-up service;
 - united in a shared vision and goal.

Objectives

- To meet these outcomes, we will:
- work with Hounslow breastfeeding and baby feeding services and other healthcare services such as GPs (General Practitioner) and dentists to ensure joined-up and consistent breastfeeding messaging;
 - publish a baby feeding strategy to share the breastfeeding vision for the borough and bring everyone together to achieve it;
 - work across northwest London to share good practice and increase the breastfeeding rate across the region.

Be Well Informed

Outcomes

- All supporting service and staff have:
- access to up-to-date breastfeeding data;
 - up to date and timely training in breastfeeding and baby feeding to UNICEF BFI standards.

Objectives

- To meet these outcomes, we will:
- improve data collection and sharing between services to ensure a well-informed, joined-up service for families;
 - meet with mums and families in the borough to listen to what they want breastfeeding and baby feeding support to look like.

Conclusion

Supporting breastfeeding is a collective responsibility. This plan provides a structured approach to normalising breastfeeding, increasing breastfeeding rates, and addressing barriers across Hounslow. By working together, we can ensure that all families receive the guidance and support they need when feeding their baby.

References

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