

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative Statement on the provision of Infant Formula at Food Banks

April 2014

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative has received a number of queries regarding the provision of infant formula to parents of babies when accessing food banks. After consultation with relevant experts and organisations the following statement has been prepared. Organisations are welcome to use this statement as the basis for their own policies and guidelines.

- Mothers, who are breastfeeding and access food banks, should be supported to continue to breastfeed. Food banks should not give out donations of formula milk to them.
- Staff/volunteers working at food banks should have access to local infant feeding support services and know how to refer women to them (see below).
- Food banks should offer mothers who are formula feeding their infant, food to the mother for herself and her family. Formula milk should **NOT** be given to the mother for her infant as it may not be the most appropriate type and may cause the baby harm.
- Pregnant women and families with children under four who are getting income based benefits and tax credits can apply for support from Healthy Start. The scheme provides vouchers that can be put towards the cost of milk, formula milk, fruit and vegetables. The Healthy Start Scheme is not an immediate response but mothers visiting the food banks may be eligible to apply (see below).
- Food Banks should not accept any donations of infant formula or distribute any formula products to mothers. In addition to the dangers to the infant, there is also the potential for changing the infant feeding context, culture and norm in the area, or region.

Help for parents who visit food banks

Infant Feeding Support

National Infant Feeding Network (NIFN) A network of 600 NHS infant feeding specialists who work to share evidence-based practice around infant feeding and very early childhood development in order to deliver optimum health and wellbeing outcomes for mothers and babies across England. www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/NIFN

National Breastfeeding Helpline Tel: 0300 100 0212 www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers www.abm.me.uk

The Breastfeeding Network www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

NCT Breastfeeding Line Tel: 0300 330 0771 www.nct.org.uk

La Leche League Tel: 0845 120 2918 www.laleche.org.uk

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative www.babyfriendly.org.uk

Healthy Start

Women who are at least 10 weeks pregnant and have children under four years old qualify for the scheme if they or their family get:

- Income Support, or
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or
- Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit unless the family is receiving Working Tax Credit run-on only*) **and** an annual family income of £16,190 or less (2014/15).

Women also qualify if they are under 18 and pregnant, even if they don't get any of the above benefits or tax credits.

The qualifying criteria will be legally extended in future to include Universal Credit with an earnings threshold. In the meantime, pregnant women and families getting Universal Credit should call the Healthy Start helpline on 0845 607 6823 for advice on any discretionary support that may be available.

*Working Tax Credit run-on is the Working Tax Credit a person receives in the 4 weeks immediately after you have stopped working for 16 hours or more per week (single adults) or 24 hours per week (couples).

Visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk or call the Healthy Start helpline on 0845 607 6823 for more information about the Healthy Start scheme.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

- Asylum seeking women are entitled to some additional payments during pregnancy and their child's early years. See the Maternity Action information sheet: [Maternity rights and benefits: Asylum seekers](#)
- Women whose asylum claim has been refused may be entitled to support during their pregnancy See the Maternity Action information sheet: [Maternity rights and benefits: Refused asylum seekers](#)
- Women who have refugee status are entitled to the same maternity benefits as any other UK resident.
- Women who are nationals of European Union or European Economic Area countries may be entitled to the same maternity benefits as any other UK resident, but this depends on their circumstances. See the Maternity Action information sheet: [Maternity rights and benefits: EU/EEA and Swiss nationals](#)
- Women who are migrants with 'no recourse to public funds' as a condition of their visa (e.g. work visa, spouse visa) may be entitled to some maternity benefits. See the Maternity Action information sheet: [Maternity rights and benefits: No recourse to public funds](#)
- Some women migrants are not entitled to any maternity benefits.

Asylum support <https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/overview>

Provides information on housing and money while waiting to find out if asylum has been granted. State school provision for children and healthcare from the National Health Service (NHS). Includes information on how to apply for short-term support if asylum has been refused.



UK Visas and Immigration Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 2235

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi> Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner Email: info@oisc.gov.uk Telephone: 0845 000 0046

The refugee council works with refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK offering practical support and advice throughout the UK. <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Policy Bulletins

78: Extra payments to pregnant women and children aged under 3

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extra-payments-to-pregnant-women-and-children-under-3-process>

37: Maternity Pay V3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-applications-for-maternity-payments-process>