

Response ID ANON-CSJB-7YYG-J

Submitted to **Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s**

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Eating a healthy diet

How can we do more to support mothers to breastfeed?

Medium text box for you to answer the question **How can we design and implement health and social care policies that do this?:**

How mothers feed their babies is not simply a matter of individual choice. While most mothers want to breastfeed, the majority do not manage to do so for as long as they would have liked. A key reason is that multiple challenges stand in their way at a societal level. To improve breastfeeding rates there is a need to protect, as well as to promote and better support breastfeeding.

Inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes is currently commonplace, commercialising infant feeding and misleading parents and health care professionals, thereby undermining the ability of parents to make informed decisions on how they feed their babies, and ultimately discouraging breastfeeding.

To tackle this problem, at minimum, current laws regulating the marketing of infant formula and follow on formula need to be properly enforced. But ideally, legislation should be upgraded to reflect the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which includes all subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions (see www.bflg-uk.org for more information).

'The Code' considers breastmilk substitutes to include infant formula and any milks (or products that could be used to replace milks) that are specifically marketed for feeding infants and young children up to the age of 3 years, including follow-up milks, specialist milks and growing up milks. It also covers other foods and beverages promoted to be suitable for feeding a baby during the first 6 months of life when exclusive breastfeeding is recommended. The Code also covers bottles and teats.

How can we better support families with children aged 0 to 5 years to eat well?

Medium text box for you to answer the question **How can we better support families with children aged 0 to 5 years to eat well?:**

Focusing on infancy, eating optimally in the first 12 months involves exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, the introduction of appropriate foods at around six months of age and continued breastfeeding for at least the first 12 months (the WHO recommends to two years and beyond). To enable more mothers to meet these goals, should they wish, the legal protection for breastfeeding needs to be strengthened through active enforcement of laws regulating the marketing of infant formula and follow on formula and upgrading of existing laws to reflect the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and all subsequent WHA resolutions (see www.bflg-uk.org for more information). In addition, ACAS guidance should be made statutory, legally requiring all employers to conduct risk assessments, grant flexible working requests and provide a private space and paid breaks at work for employees to breastfed and/or express and safely store breastmilk.

Support for individuals to achieve and maintain a healthier weight

How else can we help people reach and stay at a healthier weight?

Medium text box for you to answer the question **How else can we help people reach and stay at a healthier weight?:**

The protective effect of breastfeeding against a baby becoming overweight or obesity, compared to bottle/formula feeding, is well documented. Added to which overweight/obesity in infancy/childhood tracks into later adolescence and adulthood. One means of preventing overweight/obesity is therefore to promote, and support breastfeeding and to provide better legal protection for breastfeeding, through active enforcement of current laws regulating the marketing of infant formula and follow on formula and upgrading this legislation to reflect the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and all subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions (see www.bflg-uk.org for more information).

Taking care of our mental health

There are many factors affecting people's mental health. How can we support the things that are good for mental health and prevent the things that are bad for mental health, in addition to the mental health actions in the green paper?

Medium text box for answering the question **How can we support the things that are good for mental health and prevent the things that are bad for mental health, in addition to the mental health actions in the Green Paper?:**

As many as one in five women suffer from mental illness during pregnancy or in the 12 months post-partum. While a mother's risk of postnatal depression can be lowered by successful breastfeeding, not being able to breastfeed can have a harmful effect on a woman's mental health if she had wanted to do so. Given that 80% of mothers stop breastfeeding before they want to, one means of supporting women's mental health is to improve breastfeeding support and protection. Legal protection of breastfeeding needs to encompass active enforcement of current laws regulating the marketing of infant formula and follow on formula and upgrading these laws to reflect the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and all subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions (see www.bflg-uk.org for more information).

Have you got examples or ideas about using technology to prevent mental ill-health, and promote good mental health and wellbeing?

Medium size text box for you to provide your answer to this question **Have you got examples or ideas about using technology to prevent mental ill-health, and promote good mental health and wellbeing?:**

Next steps

What other areas (in addition to those set out in this green paper) would you like future government policy on prevention to cover?

What other areas (in addition to those set out in this Green Paper) would you like future government policy on prevention to cover?:

The Government policy on prevention needs to acknowledge and be informed by the current climate and nature emergency which was announced by the Government this summer. This emergency provides another impetus to urgently increase support for breastfeeding, as outlined in detail by Joffe et al (2019) who highlight that formula milk contributes to environmental degradation and climate change (<https://www.bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l5646>). Because promotion and support alone will not enable improved breastfeeding rates, better protection of breastfeeding is also an environmental imperative. To achieve this Government and policy makers need to actively enforce current laws regulating the marketing of infant formula and follow on formula and upgrade these laws to reflect the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and all subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions (see www.bfng-uk.org for more information).

About you

What is your name?

First name:

Victoria

Surname:

Sibson

What is your email address?

Email:

vicky@firststepsnutrition.org

In what capacity are you responding?

Other

If other, please specify:

On behalf of a specific group of NGOs and public sector bodies

How did you hear about this consultation?

Word of mouth (family, friend or colleague)

If other, please specify:

Is it okay for the Department of Health and Social Care to contact you in relation to your consultation response?

Yes

Is it okay for the Department of Health and Social Care to use your email address to send you updates about other Department of Health and Social Care consultations?

Yes

How satisfied were you with using the digital online consultation form?

Satisfied

How could we improve this service?:

About you as an individual

What is your gender?

Not Answered

If other, please specify:

How old are you?

Not Answered

Where do you live?

Not Answered

If other, please specify:

Are you a parent or guardian for a child under the age of 16?

Not Answered

Number of children:

What is your ethnicity?

Not Answered

If other, please provide details of your ethnic background:

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Not Answered

Do you have a long term condition?

Not Answered

About you and your organisation

What is the name of your organisation

Name of organisation:

Baby Feeding Law Group UK

Type of business/organisation:

A group of NGOs and public sector bodies

What is your role

What is your role in your organisation:

Secretariat of the group, on behalf of the NGO First Steps Nutrition Trust

Where is your organisation based

Please enter the first part of your work post code :

SW8 5EL

The whole of the UK