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Part One — Why?

What's in it for you?

Businesses and community venues that are already welcoming breastfeeding mothers to their premises tell us that they have found four main benefits to being **breastfeeding welcome**:

1. It makes a real improvement to customer/client service

Training staff to be welcoming and helpful to breastfeeding mothers encourages them to be more welcoming, supporting of and considerate to all customers. The boost to customer satisfaction and loyalty this creates can only be good for business.

2. It can attract a new customer/client base

New mothers commonly make special efforts to get to know other women in their situation. When they find a place that welcomes them to feed their babies, they pass on the good news and customer numbers grow as a result. Not only that, but their visits tend not to coincide with the busiest times of day, so they bring new custom at what have previously been quiet times.

When venues such as community centres make efforts to welcome breastfeeding mothers, they see an increase in numbers of people using the other services they provide. **Breastfeeding welcome** businesses and venues both report a good level of customer/visitor return rates. Polls have shown that 85% of adults have no problem with seeing women breastfeeding in public.

3. It can improve your image and get you free publicity

When businesses choose to welcome breastfeeding mothers, they are making a positive contribution to public health — as well as demonstrating that they are not motivated solely by profits. Businesses that become **breastfeeding welcome** will get publicity from being listed on our website, and also from word-of-mouth recommendations between families.

4. You can get these benefits without having to spend a lot of money

Many of the things that breastfeeding mothers say they appreciate most about **breastfeeding welcome** venues cost very little to provide. The two most important factors are a welcoming atmosphere and friendly, supportive staff.

For example, it costs very little to arrange furniture to provide a little privacy, say, or to write up a policy for your staff to follow. There is more information about how easy it is to become **breastfeeding welcome** in Part Three.



“It’s nice to have a place for breastfeeding. But if the baby cries I should be able to feed her anywhere.”

– mother of 1 year old girl

What’s in it for babies?

Experts, including the World Health Organization, strongly recommend that babies be fed exclusively on breastmilk for at least their first six months of life.

The UN convention on the right of the child recognises the fundamental role that breastfeeding plays in fulfilling the right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health.

Breastmilk is the perfect food for human babies. Among many other health-giving properties, breastmilk contains nutrients that promote the healthy growth of nerves, brains and gut — nutrients that are not found in any other type of milk.

But breastmilk is much more than just food. In addition to providing the absolute best in nutrition for a baby, breastmilk supplies the factors needed to ensure the development of a strong immune system to protect the baby against diseases in later life. Breastfeeding for as long as possible is the most important thing a mother can do to improve the lifelong health of her child.

In the UK, more than three-quarters of new mothers start by breastfeeding. However, fewer than half of all babies are still receiving breastmilk by the time they are six weeks old. And three-quarters of six-week-old babies are receiving formula milk, either exclusively or in addition to breastmilk. This is despite the fact that the best health outcomes for babies result from feeding them only breastmilk for the first six months of life, followed by the gradual introduction of solid foods alongside continued breastfeeding.

Breastfed babies have:

- less risk of gastro-intestinal or ear infections;
- less risk of developing allergies, asthma or childhood cancers;
- higher average scores in childhood intelligence tests; and
- lower levels of obesity, high blood pressure and heart disease in later life.

“You need somewhere to sit down really. Somewhere quiet where you can have something to eat or drink.”

– mother of 11 month old twins

“Anywhere publicly funded should have a breastfeeding area, or family area.”

– mother of girl 15 months old

What’s in it for mothers?

Most mothers stop breastfeeding before they want or intend to. There are many reasons for this. For instance, some mothers have returned to work by the time their baby is six months old, and can then find it difficult to maintain breastfeeding. Another reason women give for stopping is that they didn’t receive enough accurate information, help and support to establish or continue breastfeeding successfully.

To establish and continue breastfeeding, women need the support and understanding not just of their partners and their families, but also of the wider community. Breastfed babies need to feed little and often. Mothers should not feel they must stay at home all the time in case their baby needs feeding. They must be able to participate in all aspects of society while continuing to breastfeed their babies. The more often we see mothers breastfeeding in public places, the more commonplace and unremarkable it will become for everyone.

Polls reveal that seeing a woman breastfeeding does not bother 85% of adults. Despite this, 63% of breastfeeding women report that they have been on the receiving end of unsupportive comments or behaviour while breastfeeding in a public place.

It’s not difficult to imagine how off-putting that would be, and it is unsurprising that half of new mothers report that they never attempted to breastfeed in public for the first few weeks of their babies’ lives. Furthermore, only 39% of breastfeeding women have fed their baby in public by the time it is 4-6 months old, compared to 67% of bottle-feeding women.

Mothers also report finding it hard to know whether they would be welcome to breastfeed in some places, and say they go to places they know they will be welcome so as to avoid the embarrassment of being asked to leave or being subjected to negative comments.

Many businesses and other venues have an open attitude to breastfeeding, but women had no way of knowing this. Becoming **breastfeeding welcome** and displaying the **breastfeeding welcome** signs and logos will let them know that they are welcome.

“I chose the places to avoid bad experiences.”

– mother of 9 week old girl

Part Two – Answers to some frequently asked questions

Q: What's all the fuss about? Do women really have problems breastfeeding when they are out and about?

A: Yes

Most women breastfeed their babies out and about without encountering problems. However, there are some people who find the sight of public breastfeeding uncomfortable. Their responses can make a woman feel vulnerable simply because she is breastfeeding her baby. Also, press coverage and difficult experiences have increased anxiety for mothers.

Mothers have told us that if venues displayed '**breastfeeding welcome here**' signs, they would be sure of this welcome and other customers or visitors would be aware that they might see a baby being breastfed.

This would make all women feel more relaxed about breastfeeding while out and about.

Sometimes, managers or owners of a venue express acceptance of breastfeeding, but mothers report that comments or attitudes from staff there have deterred them. It is important that all staff know when their employers are **breastfeeding welcome**.

Q: Will it cost a lot to become breastfeeding welcome?

A: No

There is no direct financial cost to joining the Scheme. However, you will be required to adopt the **breastfeeding welcome** policy (in this guide) as a minimum.

Mothers report two important things that make them feel comfortable breastfeeding out and about:

- A welcoming, helpful attitude from staff/employees.
- Other customers and visitors knowing and accepting that babies may be breastfed there.

Adopting this Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme, displaying the **breastfeeding welcome** logo and greeting mothers and babies with a smile and an offer of assistance won't cost you anything, but will have a powerful and positive impact on breastfeeding mothers and on your local reputation.



“I was so relieved to be able to feed my baby in a welcoming environment, where I felt relaxed.”

– mother of 18 month old girl

“When they are tiny and you are feeling vulnerable, you don’t feel like taking on the world because it’s not just you.”

– mother of 15 month old boy

Q: Will I have to adapt my premises to make breastfeeding mothers welcome?

A: No, not necessarily.

Many mothers are comfortable breastfeeding anywhere when out and about. Some mothers may choose to have a little privacy; a tucked away area, or just careful positioning of chairs is usually enough. It’s important that there is a range of areas where women feel comfortable to breastfeed. They can then choose the places that cater best for their needs.

The facilities women listed as most important were:

- easy access for, and safe place to park, a buggy;
- easy access to a clean place to change their baby’s nappy; and
- a comfortable chair with a back for support.

We know not all venues can provide all of these but there is nothing more important than being welcoming.

Q: Do I need to provide a separate room?

A: If possible, but not always

Most mothers do not want to go to a private room. They want to carry on their normal activities, talk to their friends or family and perhaps look after older children too, all while breastfeeding. However, if your venue can provide a private room, mothers should not be expected to use it unless they wish to.

If you can provide a private room, it should:

- be appropriately signposted, clean, and comfortable;
- provide a chair with a back, a foot rest, a cushion, and access to water; and
- have easy access to baby changing facilities, but not be in the same room.

Q: Will other customers feel uncomfortable when a mother is breastfeeding?

A: This is unlikely

It is understandable that owners and managers want to consider the needs and comfort of all their customers/visitors. They may be concerned that people will be embarrassed or feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding. However, usually, there is nothing to be seen that ought to embarrass anyone. Many owners/managers of **breastfeeding welcome** venues have reported not even noticing when mothers were breastfeeding.

Part Three — Taking action

What do you need to do?

Of course, all mothers have the right to breastfeed anywhere. However, below is a short checklist of the basic things any business or venue needs in order to be more welcoming to breastfeeding mothers. When you can tick all the boxes, you can go to our website and tell us you are **breastfeeding welcome**. Then your venue can be added to the list for mothers looking for **breastfeeding welcome** venues in your area.

The breastfeeding welcome venue checklist

1. Babies can be breastfed in any public area in our venue
2. We have adopted the **breastfeeding welcome** sample breastfeeding policy as a minimum standard
3. Our staff are all aware how to implement our breastfeeding policy
4. We will display the charter and sticker that tells visitors we are **breastfeeding welcome**
5. We understand that some women prefer privacy when breastfeeding and we will do all we can to help them

Developing a breastfeeding policy

Having a written policy is an easy way to ensure that all staff know that their employer or manager supports breastfeeding on the premises.

A written policy can stand alone, or can be incorporated into existing written policies, such as health and safety or customer care/visitor care policies. The example policy below can be adapted for your use however you see fit.

The main things any policy needs are:

- To be in writing
- To state the venue is **breastfeeding welcome**
- To state the person responsible for implementing and updating the policy
- To state who complaints should be directed to and the procedure
- To state responsibilities of staff in welcoming mothers to breastfeed
- To state how it will be communicated to staff
- To provide a link to where to find out more information
- To be reviewed annually



Sample Breastfeeding Policy

This venue welcomes babies to be breastfed in any public area of these premises.

How we will make this happen

All our staff will support the needs and rights of mothers breastfeeding. If another customer/visitor to the premises objects to breastfeeding, they should be told management supports breastfeeding. If the situation cannot be resolved readily, junior staff should refer customers/visitors to senior management.

A copy of this policy should be issued to all new staff members and a copy should be displayed in _____

Distributing and updating this policy annually is the responsibility of _____ who will be glad to hear comments and reports of any incidents.

If a member of staff feels they need more guidance on this they should speak to _____

Our staff will:

- display stickers and appropriate signage
- make mothers and babies welcome
- display the **breastfeeding welcome** charter.

We are breastfeeding welcome:

- To support the needs of our customers, visitors or clients and be more family friendly.
- Babies need feeding when they ask for it. Their stomachs are very small and breastmilk is digested very quickly.
- Breastfeeding works best when mother and baby are both relaxed.
- Hungry, upset babies will generally be helped to calm down and become quiet when breastfeeding. This is good for all our customers, visitors or clients.

More information can be found at:

www.breastfeedingwelcomescheme.org.uk

Train and support your staff to create a welcoming atmosphere

You can easily adapt any existing staff training or induction programme concerning customer service to include the needs and rights of breastfeeding mothers. There are simple ways your staff can support breastfeeding mothers, including:

If they feel a mother would like it:

- Stop for a brief chat to make it clear that mothers are welcome to breastfeed
- Offer a chair, if one is available
- Ask if they would like any help
- Explain that you can make a private place available if she'd like, if possible
- Offer her a glass of water if you can
- If you work in a venue that serves food and drink, offer to bring her drink/food over to her, or go to her and take her order once she has settled her baby.

Indicate that you're welcoming to breastfeeding families – use our signage

Mothers say that the best way for them to know they're welcome to breastfeed is if there are clear signs. Our Scheme provides stickers and signage you can put up in your venue to let all of your visitors, customers and clients know they are in a **breastfeeding welcome** venue.



“It’s great to know that I can go online and find places where I can feed my baby, even if I do not wish to buy a coffee. I might meet other breastfeeding mums, too!”

– mother of twins 11 months

Adapting your space

Though not all venues will have the space, if you are in a position to make a separate room available, it would give more mothers more choice and would be appreciated. This doesn’t mean every premises needs to have a separate room for breastfeeding. Many mothers will be happy with knowing that they can breastfeed in any public area of your venue.

In addition, there are lots of ways you can adapt spaces to accommodate the needs of breastfeeding mothers. Simply moving plants and furniture around or adding a screen can guarantee privacy in even the busiest of spaces — a library, say, or a doctor’s waiting room, a café or restaurant. Mothers with young babies can be directed to those areas if they wish to breastfeed, without feeling isolated.

If you are able to provide a separate room, it should be:

- **In a private area.** Mothers should be able to feed where nobody can see them. Space permitting, there should be room for women to feed completely in private, as well as for women to breastfeed together, so a room with a few comfortable chairs as well as one chair screened off from the others would be ideal.
- **Signposted.** Our Scheme provides stickers and signs for your use to indicate your breastfeeding room or area, for mothers who want it.
- **Clean and comfortable,** providing a chair, foot rest, cushion, and if possible access to a basin and water for hand washing.
- **Easy to get into** with a baby in a buggy – with a wide door and room to bring the buggy inside if possible.
- **Near, but not in, an area suitable for changing a baby.** Fathers may wish to use baby changing rooms, and mothers may prefer not to be disturbed. You can meet all of the criteria above without building a new room. Perhaps your venue has a small room or office already used for first aid or other uses. It could be easily adapted, by adding a comfortable chair and our sign.
- **Near, but not in a toilet.**

“What would be good would be a soft play area for children where you could just relax.”

– mother of 11 month old twins

Becoming a Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme venue

How do I join?

So, you have met all the criteria on the checklist, drawn up a policy, adapted your premises where necessary and trained your staff – now you are ready to JOIN US and to promote your venue as **breastfeeding welcome**.

If you'd like to join our national Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme please log on to www.breastfeedingwelcomescheme.org.uk and click on JOIN OUR SCHEME.

- Once it has been verified that you have complied with the checklist criteria, your venue will be awarded Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme status.
- You will receive a poster and 2 stickers to display on site. Only then will your venue be activated on the national Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme website, where mothers can search for **breastfeeding welcome** venues near them.
- If you would like to join the Scheme but do not have access to the internet you can send us a completed checklist. Once received, we will add your venue's details to the national website on your behalf. You will also be awarded a poster and 2 stickers to display on your premises. See local contact information on page 15.

If you have any questions about joining the Scheme, you can email the national Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme coordinator at: breastfeedingwelcomescheme@nct.org.uk or check page 15 for local contacts in your area.

Keeping your Breastfeeding Welcome Venue Status

We will be welcoming comments and feedback from those who access your venue to ensure that all the participants of the national Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme continue to meet all the requirements.



Part Four – Where to get more information

Breastfeeding support for families

Telephone helplines

The following helplines are answered by trained volunteers working in their own homes. Calls cost the same as calls to any phone number starting with 01 and 02 and price plans which offer inclusive minutes will include calls to 0300 numbers. This applies to calls made from mobile phones and landlines.

National Breastfeeding Helpline

Tel: 0300 100 0212

NCT Breastfeeding Line

Tel: 0300 330 0071

Breastfeeding Network Supporterline

Tel: 0300 100 0210

Breastfeeding support in Bengali/Sylhetti

Tel: 0300 456 2421

La Leche League

Tel: 0845 120 2918

NHS Breastfeeding Website

www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk

Please see page 15 for local information