

Annex1: Infant feeding

1. Background

- 1.1 'Breastfeeding is a highly emotive subject in the UK because so many families have not breastfed or have experienced the trauma of trying very hard to breastfeed and not succeeded. The pain felt by so many parents at any implication that they have not done the best for their child can close down conversation.'¹
- 1.2 Evidence advises that milk provides the nutrition for babies for the first six months of life. Infants may be exclusively breast fed, receive mixed feeding of breast and formula milk or formula milk only.
- 1.3 Pregnant women will be asked by the maternity service at antenatal appointments about their decision to feed baby and will be encouraged to consider breastfeeding specifically to offer colostrum which helps provides protection against infection in the first six months of life. Many but not all babies have a period, approximately an hour, following birth of being very alert and this is an ideal time to let the baby lie against the mums breast and attempt to find the breast and feed.

2. BFI accreditation

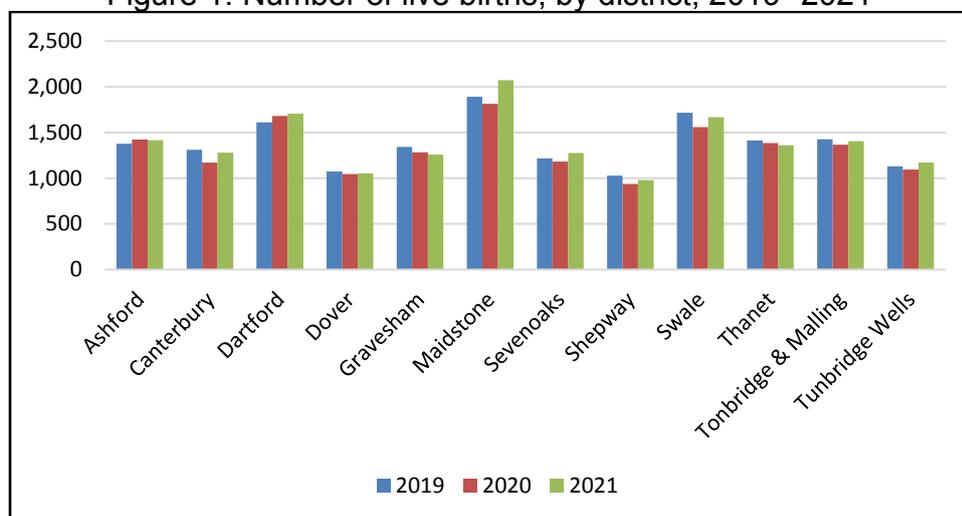
- 2.1 The UNICEF Baby Friendly initiative [BFI] is well recognised and recommended across various government policy documentation including the NHS plan. The national programme supports organisations such as maternity services, neonatal care, health visiting services and children's centres to transform their care, as set out in a series of standards.
- 2.2 An organisation can apply to be assessed against the standards from BFI level 1 to gold standard. The health visiting service are working with the children's centres in Kent to achieve gold standard by February 2024.

¹ UNICEF BFI <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/about/breastfeeding-in-the-uk/>

3. Population and infant feeding

3.1 The population in Kent is changing and this is also seen in the annual number of births. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Number of live births, by district, 2019 -2021



Data Source: [ONS Dataset: Births in England and Wales](#)

3.2 The following table provides presentation of babies who have had a first feed of breast milk. This could be maternal or donor breast milk.

Table 1: Percentage of babies first feed breast milk, Kent and England 2018/19 -2021/22.

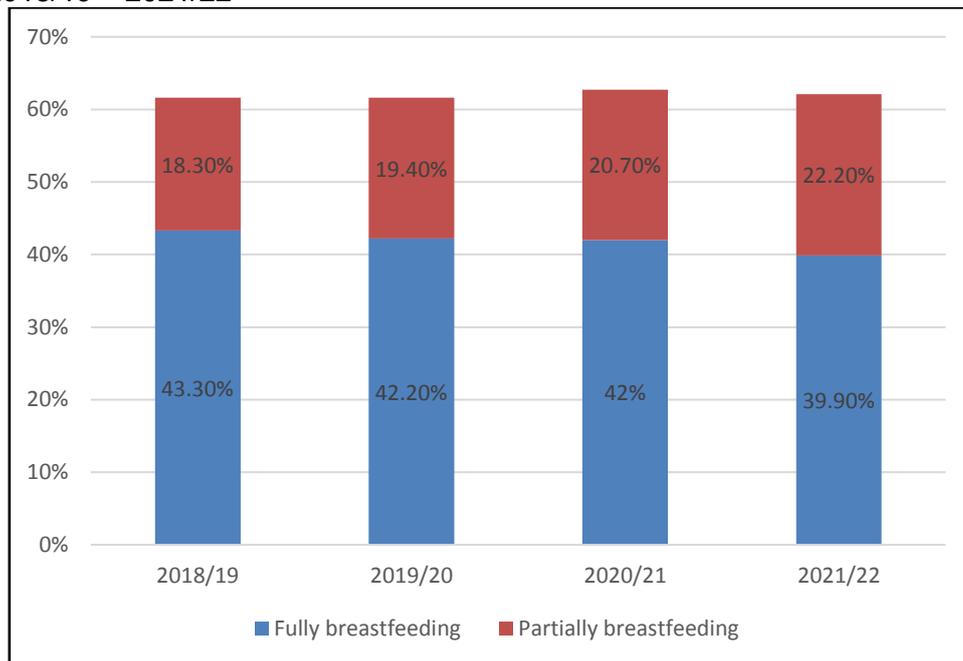
	2018/19	2019/20*	2020/21	2021/22
England	67%	60%	61.70%	73.1%
Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust	66%		66%	70.14%
East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust	59%		65.60%	61.28%
Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust	72%		74%	77.99%
Medway Foundation NHS Trust	71%		33%**	66.52%

Data Source: NHS Digital maternity statistics

* Trust level data was not available for 2019/20 ** Likely incomplete data submitted or data reporting issues

3.3 Infant feeding status is recorded by the health visiting service at the mandated newborn health and wellbeing review which is undertaken between day 10 and 14. The proportion of babies who are recorded as fully or partially breast feeding at this review are presented below.

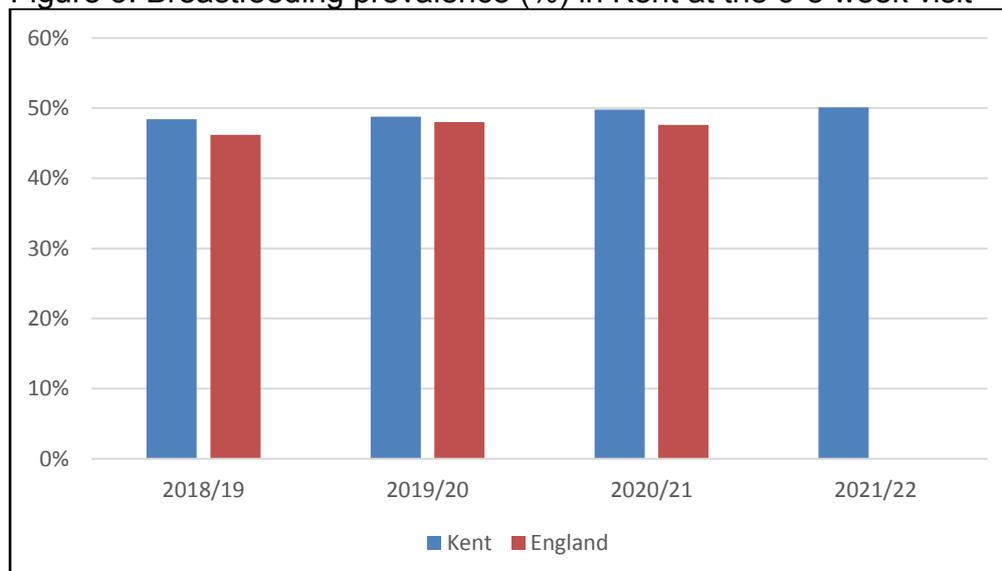
Figure 2: Breastfeeding prevalence (%) fully and partially at the New Birth Visit, Kent 2018/19 – 2021/22



Data Source: Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

3.4 The following measurement of breastfeeding prevalence is taken at the 6-8 week mandated health and wellbeing review. Overall, the numbers of infants breastfed at 6-8 weeks after birth in Kent has been slowly increasing over the past 4 years and is consistently just above the England average (Figure 3). The published England average in 2021/22 was 49.3%.

Figure 3: Breastfeeding prevalence (%) in Kent at the 6-8 week visit



Data Source: Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust and England data – [OHID Gov Breastfeeding Data](#)

4. Infant feeding support

- 4.1 The We Are Beside You website (www.wearebesideyou.co.uk) provides information for breastfeeding support across Kent and Medway. This can also be accessed via social media (#wearebesideyou) using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The Beside You campaign was launched by Medway Council in 2016 and expanded to be a Kent and Medway resource in 2020.
- 4.2 Pregnant and breastfeeding women and their families can access information about breastfeeding and where to find further support in their local area. This includes services provided by Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT), but also voluntary groups and national helplines.
- 4.3 The Health Visiting service runs a Duty Line during weekdays 9am-5pm, offering telephone and email support for professionals and directly to families needing advice.
- 4.4 Breastfeeding drop ins are accessible across the 12 districts in Kent and there are healthy child clinics where families have opportunity to weigh their infant and ask for support and guidance.
- 4.5 Families with a baby with two documented feeding assessments identified to have tongue tie, will be supported with feeding until a frenotomy procedure is completed and subsequently followed up post-surgical intervention.