

Caroline Flint MP,  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health  
Department of Health,  
79 Whitehall  
London, SW1 2NS

16th January 2006



Dear Caroline,

**Re: Department of Health support for Breastfeeding and the Infant Feeding Advisor post.**

On behalf of the Baby Feeding Law Group, I am writing to express our concern at the news that after more than 12 years, the post of National Infant Feeding Adviser may be ended.

We have been very pleased to see the lead taken by the Department of Health (England) and the Food Standards Agency in the negotiations over the recasting of the European Directive on Infant Formula, and the indication that it is also exploring the extent to which UK legislation can be strengthened to bring it into line with the *WHO International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* and subsequent relevant WHA resolutions. This would also help the UK meet its obligations under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *WHO Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding* (2002), the *Innocenti Declaration* (1990) and the commitments made in the *Choosing Health* White Paper. A key element in improving public health is to enable breastfeeding rates to increase. But this requires effective support and promotion as well as protection via the UK Law. Recent unpublished research from Dundee indicates that the health benefits of breastfeeding can be sufficient to counteract many of the health risks of socio-economic disadvantage, so breastfeeding has the potential to be a powerful tool in tackling inequalities.

We are encouraged that the National Service Framework for Children includes the marker of good practice that all women and their babies receive treatment from healthcare professionals competent in providing breastfeeding support. However, there is much to be done if the NHS is to provide the skilled help that is needed to achieve this. According to the European *Blueprint for Action* (2004), concerted and coordinated action is needed to improve the initiation and duration of breastfeeding and the operational targets of both the *Innocenti Declaration* and the *Global Strategy* include the appointing of a national breastfeeding coordinator and establishment of a national breastfeeding committee.

We therefore wonder how the Department of Health plans to fulfil its responsibilities and commitments to all these national and international strategies without the post of National Infant Feeding Adviser. As long as breastfeeding is inadequately supported the future health of British babies is being jeopardised.

We look forward to receiving your response and hope very much that a satisfactory solution can be found

Yours sincerely,

Patti Rundall,  
on behalf of the Baby Feeding Law Group

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**Member organisations:** Association of Breastfeeding Mothers - Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services - Association of Radical Midwives - Baby Milk Action - Breastfeeding Network - Food Commission - Community Practitioners and Health Visitors' Association - Lactation Consultants of Great Britain - La Leche League (GB) - Midwives Information and Resource Service - National Childbirth Trust - Royal College of Midwives - Royal College of Nursing - Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health - Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative.

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## Baby Feeding Law Group Members. January 2006

- 1 **The Association of Breastfeeding Mothers (ABM)** is a membership-based Charity, founded in 1979, with 400 breastfeeding counsellors providing mother-to-mother support to women. ABM takes no money from infant feeding companies.
- 2 **The Association for Improvement in the Maternity Services (AIMS)** is a pressure group, with 730 members which was founded in 1960. AIMS gives information and advice about all aspects of maternity care, including parents' rights, choices, technological interventions, normal childbirth and complaints procedures.
- 3 **The Association of Radical Midwives (ARM)** is a charity which provides a support for its 1,400 members who are midwives, student midwives and others in the UK committed to improving the maternity care provided by the NHS and who believe that all women have the right to a service tailored more closely to their needs. The ARM is funded by membership fees and takes no money from the baby feeding industry.
- 4 **Baby Milk Action** is a membership-based organization of over 2000 members which aims to save lives and to end the avoidable suffering caused by inappropriate infant feeding. It works within the European and global network, the International Baby Food Action Network, to strengthen independent, transparent and effective controls on the marketing of the baby feeding industry. IBFAN has over 200 citizens groups in more than 100 countries, including nearly all EU Member states. It takes no money from the infant feeding industry.
- 5 **The Breastfeeding Network (BFN)** is a mother-to-mother support and membership organisation with 725 members. BFN takes no money from the infant feeding industry.
- 6 **The Food Commission** is an independent national non-profit organization, campaigning for the right to safe, wholesome food. It is largely funded by public subscriptions and donations and takes no subsidy from the government or food industry. Its flagship publication, The Food Magazine, has a readership of 10,000.
- 7 **The Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA)** represents its 21,000 members who are community health professionals.
- 8 **Lactation Consultants of Great Britain (LCGB)** represents over 100 Lactation consultants in Great Britain.
- 9 **La Leche League GB** is part of an international organisation that provides information and support to breastfeeding mothers, through mother-to-mother support. LLL GB has 749 mothering members, 1242 peer counsellor members and 97 health professional members. LLLGB does not accept funding from producers of infant formula or any other product or service which might undermine breastfeeding or devalue the importance of nurturing.
- 10 **Midwives Information and Resource Service (MIDIRS)** is an educational charity set up in 1985 which in 2004, distributed 54,000 copies of its Midwifery Digest to midwives and other health professionals, giving an overview of key midwifery and medical research. Its Enquiry Service provides access to the MIDIRS database of over 110,000 articles, with over 500 new references added each month to this valuable resource. Currently MIDIRS processes over 750,000 enquiry requests per annum from health professionals wishing to gain access to this information. The MIDIRS Informed Choice Initiative was launched in 1996 and to date over 1.4 million leaflets have been used by health professionals and prospective parents.
- 11 **The National Childbirth Trust (NCT)** is a membership-based charity, established 49 years ago, and with currently over 64,000 members in the UK and a network of over 350 local branches. NCT provides a range of services for parents including antenatal classes, postnatal discussion groups, breastfeeding counselling which are available to members and non-members alike. The NCT takes no funding from formula companies.
- 12 **The Royal College of Midwives (RCM)** is the only trade union and professional organisation run by midwives for midwives. It is the voice of midwifery, providing excellence in professional leadership, education, influence and representation for and on behalf of midwives. The RCM has a membership of 37,000.
- 13 **The Royal College of Nursing and the RCN Midwifery Society** is the leading professional union for nursing, safeguarding the interests of patients and nursing by lobbying government and other professional bodies to ensure that the views of the profession are heard where it counts. The RCN is a member-led organisation of around 370,000 nurses and midwives and is signatory to WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Standards.'
- 14 **The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)** has about 7,000 members. The College aims to advance the art and science of paediatrics, improve standards of medical care to children, and to educate and examine doctors in paediatrics. The College also provides information to the public on children's health care.
- 15 **The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFHI)** is a global programme of UNICEF and the World Health Organisation which works with the health services to improve practice in the support of breastfeeding. In the UK, the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative is commissioned by various parts of the health service to provide advice, support, education, networking, assessment and accreditation.

