



# Healthwatch Warwickshire

Infant Feeding Engagement South Warwickshire  
November 2023

**healthwatch**  
Warwickshire

# Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding Strategy

- **Healthwatch Warwickshire are part of the steering group for the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System's new Breastfeeding and infant feeding strategy.**
- We promoted a Coventry and Warwickshire wide survey to capture feedback from new parents throughout the area.
- We conducted targeted engagement in South Warwickshire due to the differences in provision of infant feeding services in that area.
- We presented our finding to the steering group to inform the strategy, Warwick hospital maternity and health visiting leads.

# Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding Strategy

- **The steering group's Gap Analysis Report identified unequal provision across Coventry and Warwickshire.**

**Coventry, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton, Bedworth and Rugby** have an infant feeding specialist service, with staff comprising of health visiting, children's nursing and midwifery. Infant feeding antenatal sessions and peer support is available to all. All mothers receive a phone call within 48 hours of discharge (excluding weekends). Support is available virtually, face-to-face in groups, or home visits if required. An online platform is shared with new parents, including numerous links to websites, YouTube videos and leaflets.

In **South Warwickshire**, infant feeding support is provided for 28 days by Warwick hospital, there is no community-based feeding support.

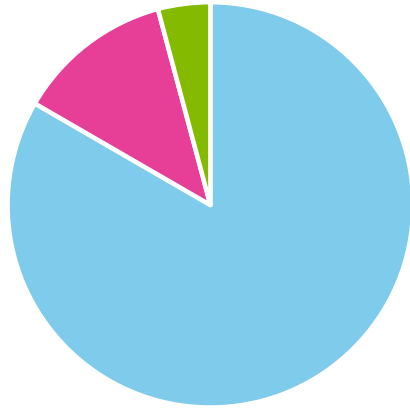
# South Warwickshire Engagement

- Healthwatch Warwickshire visited six baby groups and spoke to 66 new parents in South Warwickshire to hear feedback.
- We invited people to share their experience of infant feeding support and received comments from 48 new parents, including one Dad and two parents of twins. Everyone we spoke to had a baby less than a year old.

<b>Date of visit</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Count of feedback</b>
<b>12/10/2023</b>	Baby Group	Stratford upon Avon	12
<b>24/10/2023</b>	Play Group	Leamington Spa	5
<b>24/10/2023</b>	Baby Group	Lighthorne Heath	9
<b>25/10/2023</b>	HV clinic	Lillington	7
<b>08/11/2023</b>	HV clinic	Southam	5
<b>22/11/2023</b>	HV clinic	Kenilworth	10

# 46 People told us how they fed their baby

## Feeding method at Birth



■ Breastmilk ■ Formula milk

- 87% (40) of those who told us how they fed their baby at birth, gave breastmilk. The national average is 73%.
- 13% (6) gave their baby formula, compared to the national average of 27%.

- **72% of the people who told us how they fed their baby, had breastfed their baby at birth and were still doing so. The national prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8weeks is less than 50%. We asked for feedback on infant feeding so expected a higher-than-average response rate from breastfeeding parents.**

# Tongue Tie

- **A quarter of the people (12) we heard from had received a diagnosis of tongue tie for their baby. Support for tongue tie diagnosis and division is offered up to 8 weeks old at Warwick hospital for residents of South Warwickshire.**

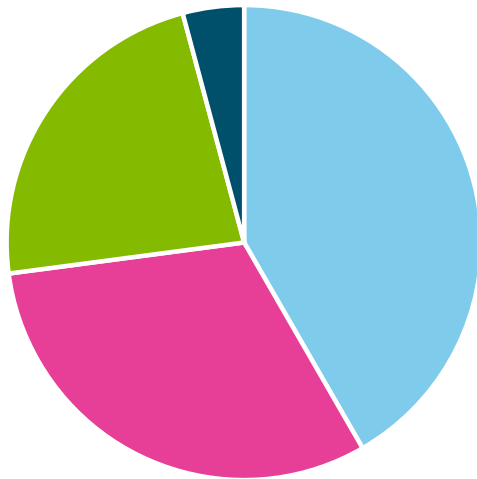
It is estimated that around 1 in 10 babies will have a tongue tie, when the frenulum attaching the tongue to the bottom of the mouth is too short. This can restrict movement of the baby's tongue, hindering their ability to transfer milk during breastfeeding and can result in poor weight gain. It can cause pain or nipple damage to the mother. Identifying whether there is a tongue tie, and whether it is impacting on breastfeeding, is an expert-level skill.



# Overall Feedback

- **Most feedback we heard about feeding support was positive, but many experiences were mixed due to people accessing different services.**

Overall feedback



■ Positive feedback

■ Negative feedback

■ Mixed feedback

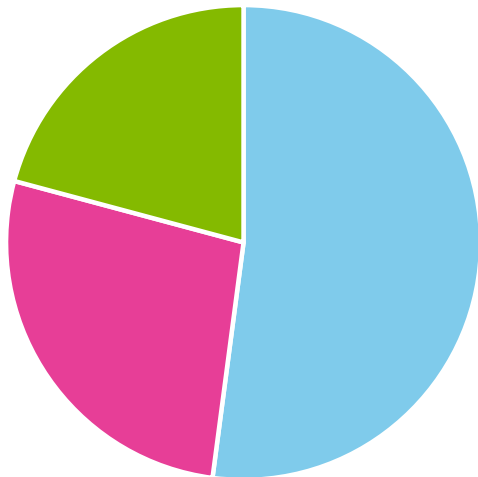
■ Not needed support

“My baby was in SCBU, and the experience was fantastic. The staff were keen to help us tube feed our baby and were really good. I didn’t breastfeed for long, and I don’t know of any local support.”

# Feeding Support in Hospital

- **38 people told us about their experience of feeding support in hospital, which includes midwives and Warwick hospital infant feeding team. We heard almost twice as many positive comments as negative.**

## Hospital Based Feedback



■ Positive

■ Negative

■ Not mentioned

“My experience of breastfeeding support was amazing. I had constant phone calls to the birth-centre, and they sent a midwife out to see me”

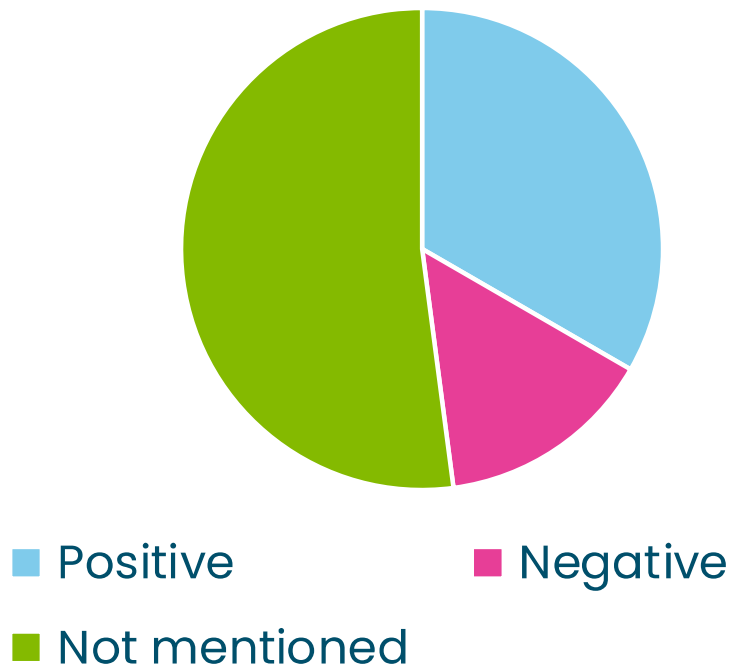
“I was given a lot of advice around feeding, it was overwhelming. My baby was not latching, and I was given different advice from different people.”



# Feeding Support from Health Visiting

- **23 People told us about their experience of feeding support from health visitors including baby clinics and weaning sessions. We heard over twice as much positive feedback than negative.**

Health Visiting Feedback



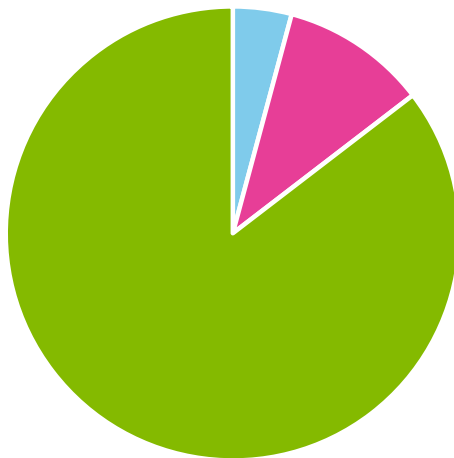
“My health visitor is really good, and they get back to me when I contact them.”

“More support would be good. Health visitors only have a short time, 5 mins, to evaluate situations and establish if there is a problem. They have a tight schedule. It would be good if a feeding specialist could come out”

# Feeding Support from GPs

- **7 People told us about their experience of feeding support from their GP. There were over twice as many negative comments as positive.**

GP Feedback



■ Positive

■ Negative

■ Not mentioned

“I gave up breastfeeding after 6 weeks as there was no support from the NHS – I did pay for some private support. At three weeks my baby had a rash and was not feeding well so I went to the GP, they didn’t take notice or care. “If it doesn’t work give a bottle,” “As long as your baby is fed” is what the GP told me.”

[Link to the GP infant feeding network can be found here](#)

# Other Feeding Support

- **8 People told us they had accessed support from the private or charity sector if they needed more support.**

“I hired a private lactation consultant to look at other options and they diagnosed a tongue tie which I then got checked at hospital. It would have been useful if someone NHS had spotted this as we were nearly too late to have it looked at.”

“I experienced some bottle refusal, called the lactation consultant and was told they could only offer support for the first 28 days after birth. I didn't know where to go after that although she did signpost me to follow someone on Instagram and the number of a breastfeeding counsellor. It would be good to have a clear contact point for support after 28 days.”

# Formula Feeding

- **6 people told us that their baby had been formula fed from birth and all but one of these told us about the lack of support for formula feeding.**

“I am a Dad who is not with the Mum of our baby. I have looked after our child on my own for days at a time since they were 4 days old. The baby has issues with reflux and allergies, and I have been left feeling very worried about the right sort of milk to give and food to introduce – there is no information for Dads.”

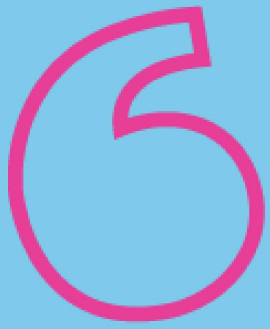
“I see that people can get help with breastfeeding but there is less support for bottle feeding. I struggled to breastfeed due to latching issues but now we have moved to the bottle I still struggle with latching. My baby was diagnosed with tongue tie and they said he had a high palate - it would be useful to get advice on how that effects bottle feeding, is there a particular teat I should use?”

# Assumptions

- **6 People felt that assumptions were made about their knowledge particularly as their experience may be very different if their previous baby was born during lockdown.**

“This is my second baby – I felt that people have assumed that I know what I am doing so have not had a lot of support. My first baby was hospitalised due to weight loss during covid so I planned to pump so I could keep track of how much milk was going in. I have been pumping for 4 months. I called the national breastfeeding help line for support”

“This is my second child and I felt there was an assumption made that I knew what I was doing, but I didn’t breastfeed my first”



## Challenges faced by South Warwickshire residents

“They felt short of staff. I had appointments with the infant feeding team, but they also felt stretched. It is difficult to start breastfeeding after a difficult birth when you are stressed and tired. Lots of people want to help but don’t have enough time.”

**“I live in Warwickshire and birthed in Coventry so fell between areas and didn’t get the right contacts or support with feeding – I had intended to breastfeed originally. I was not told about any support with feeding, it would have been less of an unknown.”**

At three weeks old I met a member of the infant feeding team socially who was really frustrated that no one had made a referral...They were able to see us, diagnose and divide the tongue tie. I had pain, damage to the nipples, a baby who was losing weight and this could have been avoided. The infant feeding team were excellent, they gave good follow up and I could contact them after the tongue tie division. My baby is feeding well now.”

**“I was given a lot of advice around feeding, it was overwhelming. My baby was not latching, and I was given different advice from different people.”**



# Suggestions from the Feedback

- **Signposting for all parents (regardless of gender, previous experience and method of feeding) to infant feeding support services.**
- **Clear referrals for tongue tie.**
- **Consistent advice to be given from health care professionals.**
- **Coventry and Warwickshire universal support.**

“This is my fourth child, but the first that I have breast fed. When I got home after birth, I could tell he hadn't fed well. I called the infant feeding team and spoke to an amazing lady who came over to my house within the hour. She helped with latching, and I knew that if I needed support, I was able to call them for the first month. My health visitor is fab.”

# Response to the Report

- “Really valuable information”
- “Super informative. This information will definitely help us form our strategy”.

[Read our report on Perinatal mental health](#)

[Read our information on support services for new parents](#)





# For more information

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