

6. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

6.7 Breastfeeding

This section presents information about the prevalence and duration of breastfeeding, which can make major contributions to infant health and development and is also associated with better health for the mother.

6.7.1 The importance of breastfeeding

Breastfeeding has clear health benefits for both mother and child. It reduces the risk of infections and Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy, and decreases the risk of developing obesity and diabetes in childhood. Breastfeeding increases the likelihood of the mother returning to their pre-pregnancy weight and reduces her risk of breast and ovarian cancer. It provides a unique opportunity for attachment between mother and baby and can protect the child from maternal neglect^{1,2}. Alongside improved maternal well-being, increased confidence, satisfaction and parent-infant relationships, attachment behaviours in these early years can also influence a child's future educational attainment, social skills, self-efficacy and self-worth^{3,4,5,6}.

Current UK policy is to promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.

6.7.2 Information on breastfeeding in Buckinghamshire

The following two sets of data are the main sources of information on breastfeeding:

- Initiation of breastfeeding at birth (usually recorded by the midwife shortly after delivery)
- Breastfeeding prevalence at six to eight weeks following birth (usually recorded at the baby's six to eight week GP check and Health Visitor visit)

Data can only be reported nationally once all the validation criteria have been met (for example, if it is recorded for enough mothers and babies to make the calculation of proportions valid). Unfortunately this has not been the case for some data as shown below.

Tables 1 and 2 show the available data for Buckinghamshire, the South East and England since 2010/11 when recording started. 2014/15 is the first year for which data are available for all the Districts in Buckinghamshire. Key findings are:

- In 2014/15 in Buckinghamshire, 76.3% of mothers (4,472) started breastfeeding at delivery; this ranged from 72.3% in Aylesbury Vale to 81.7% in South Bucks.

- Initiation of breastfeeding was significantly higher than England (74.3%) in all parts of Buckinghamshire except Aylesbury Vale, where it was significantly lower.
- Initiation of breastfeeding was significantly higher than the South East (78.0%) in South Bucks, and significantly lower than the South East in Aylesbury Vale and in Buckinghamshire as a whole.
- In 2014/15, 43.8% of babies in England were recorded as being breastfed at six to eight weeks. The equivalent data for Buckinghamshire has not been published for the last two years, but in 2012/13 55.8% of babies in Buckinghamshire were breastfed at six to eight weeks, significantly higher than England.

Table 1 Proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding, Buckinghamshire, South East and England

	2010/11	2013/14	2014/15
Aylesbury Vale	*	*	72.3%
Chiltern	*	*	80.4%
South Bucks	*	79.8%	81.7%
Wycombe	*	*	76.7%
Buckinghamshire	80.1%	76.5%	76.3%
South East	78.0%	77.0%	78.0%
England	73.7%	74.0%	74.3%

*Data not available for these areas/time periods, or for any area in Bucks during 2011/12 or 2012/13

KEY Significantly better than England Significantly worse than England

Source: PHOF

Table 2 Proportion of babies being breastfed at 6-8 weeks, Buckinghamshire, South East and England

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Buckinghamshire	57.8%	56.5%	55.8%	*	*
South East	48.4%	50.9%	50.1%	*	*
England	46.1%	47.2%	47.2%	45.8%	43.8%

*Data not available for these areas/time periods

KEY Significantly better than England

Source: PHOF

Trends

In Buckinghamshire, the proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding at delivery has decreased from 80.1% to 76.3% between 2010/11 and 2014/15. Over the same time period, the proportion in England increased from 73.7% to 74.3%, and the proportion in the South East remained the same at about 78%.

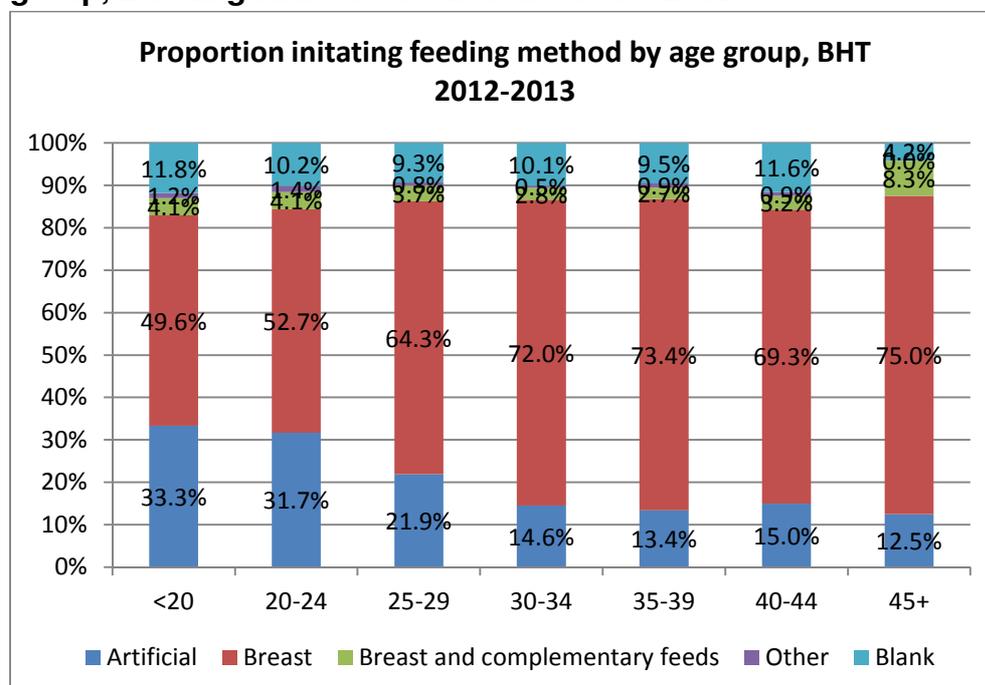
The proportion of babies who were breastfed at six to eight weeks fell nationally between 2010/11 to 2014/15 from 46.1% to 43.8%. In Buckinghamshire, for the three years data were available (2010/11 to 2012/13), the proportion declined from 57.8% to 55.8%.

6.7.3 Breastfeeding in different population groups

6.7.3.1 Age

Breastfeeding rates tend to be higher in older mothers. An analysis of maternity data from Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust (BHT) where around two-thirds of Buckinghamshire mothers deliver their babies found that only around half of teenage mothers initiated breastfeeding, while over three-quarters of those aged over 30 did so (figure 1) ⁷.

Figure 1 Proportion of mothers initiating different feeding methods, by age group, Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust 2012/13



Source: PHAST: Buckinghamshire maternity needs assessment

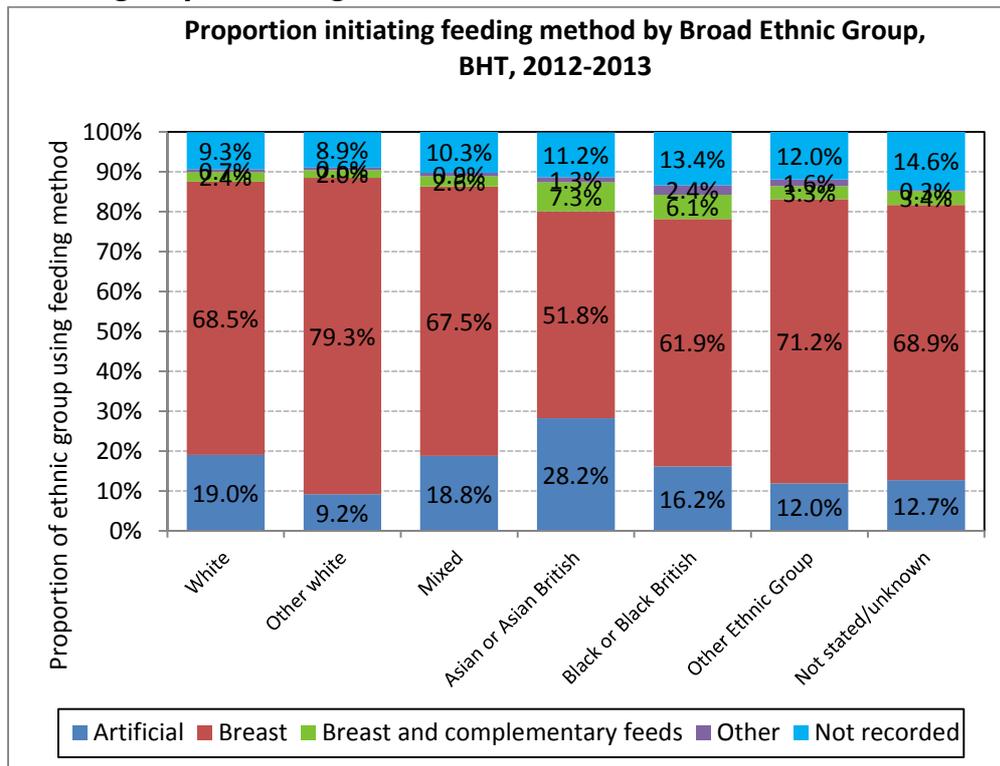
6.7.3.2 Ethnicity

Rates of breastfeeding also vary by mother's ethnic group. Breastfeeding initiation was lowest among mothers from Asian or Asian British ethnic groups at BHT (figure 2)⁷.

6.7.3.3 Socioeconomic differences

Nationally breastfeeding rates are higher in women from managerial and professional groups than in those from routine and manual worker groups⁷.

Figure 2 Proportion of mothers initiating different feeding methods, by broad ethnic group, Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust 2012/13



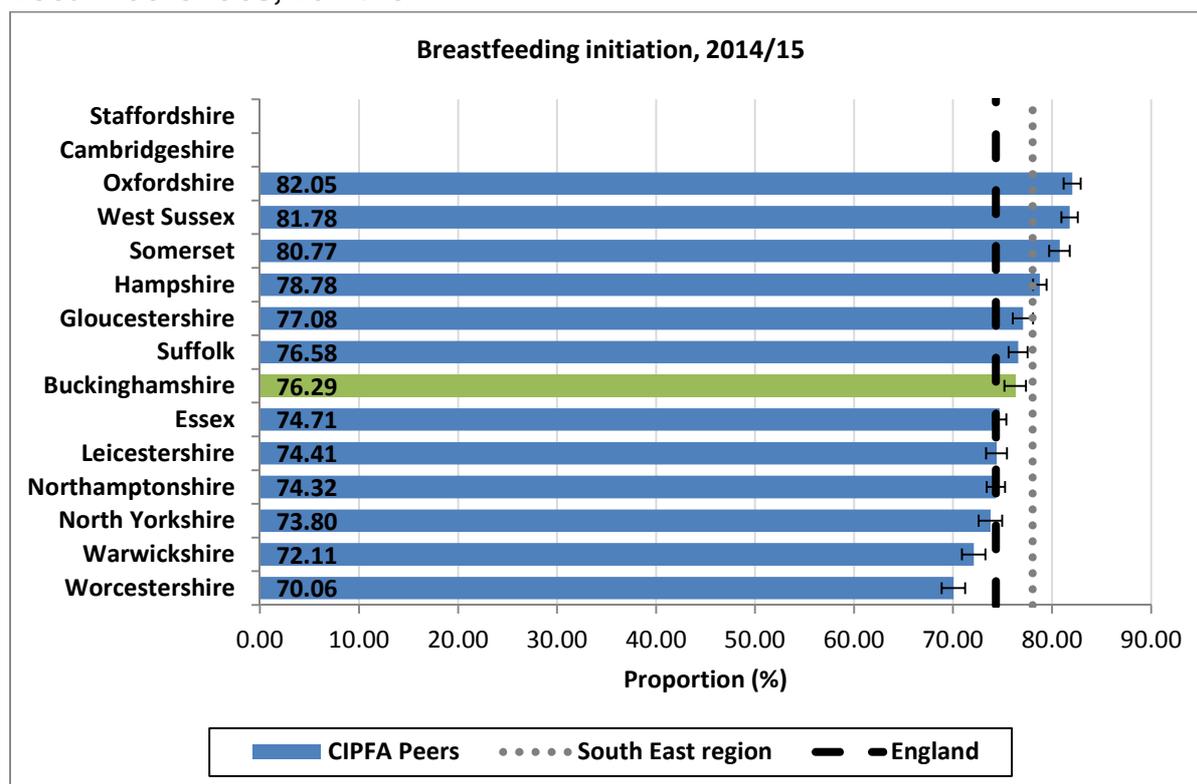
Source: PHAST: Buckinghamshire maternity needs assessment

6.7.4 Breastfeeding in different geographical areas

Figure 3 shows breastfeeding initiation in Buckinghamshire compared to 12 other local authorities in its CIPFA comparator group. Buckinghamshire was mid-way in the group, with significantly worse rates than 3 of the similar areas and the South East as a whole.

As shown above, within Buckinghamshire breastfeeding is significantly lower in Aylesbury Vale than other areas.

Figure 3 Breastfeeding initiation, Buckinghamshire and CIPFA comparator Local Authorities, 2014/15



Source: (PHOF Update Nov 2015)

6.7.5 Demand

There are approximately 6,000 live births in Buckinghamshire every year, clearly identifying a need for breastfeeding advice and support.

6.7.6 Horizon Scanning

Population modelling from ONS shows that the number of live births in Buckinghamshire increased 12.3% between 2001 and 2011, but it is expected that the annual number of births will decline by 13.6% between 2011 and 2025, so that the number of births in 2025 will be similar to that in 2001⁸.

6.7.7 Conclusions

Breastfeeding has clear physical and psychological health benefits for both mother and child. Just over three-quarters of mothers in Buckinghamshire initiated breastfeeding in 2014/15, but the rate was significantly lower in Aylesbury Vale than other areas. All areas apart from Aylesbury Vale were significantly better than

England and similar to the South East. There are no nationally validated recent data on the number of babies in Buckinghamshire who are still breastfed at six to eight weeks; the most recent figure available is 55.8% in 2012/13.

Breastfeeding is less common among younger mothers, those from certain ethnic groups, and women in more socioeconomically deprived areas. The proportion of babies in Buckinghamshire who are breastfed has declined over the last few years. This highlights the need to promote and support breastfeeding in Buckinghamshire. This should include promoting breastfeeding during antenatal care, and providing breastfeeding support postnatally and within the first ten days of a baby's life. Support to promote breastfeeding should also be provided in areas showing lower uptake than the rest of Buckinghamshire, such as Aylesbury, and with groups such as younger mothers and those from minority ethnic groups.

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