

UNICEF UK INFOSHEET

WILL WORKING WITH A BREAST PUMP COMPANY AFFECT OUR BABY FRIENDLY STATUS?

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Introduction

Unicef UK receives many queries from concerned health professionals about whether or not it is acceptable to work with companies that sell breast pumps. The reason for this concern is that many of these companies also sell feeding bottles and teats, thereby bringing them within the scope of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code). This statement is designed to guide organisations and individual health professionals in their relations with breast pump companies.

Background

The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative requires that all facilities seeking Baby Friendly accreditation adhere to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. The scope of the Code includes any company that manufactures or sells formula milk, bottles, teats and dummies. It should be noted that the Code is stricter than the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations 2007 (the UK law) as it includes, bottles, teats and dummies, whereas the UK law does not. Feeding bottles and teats are included in the Code because promoting these products can undermine breastfeeding, lead to unsafe bottle feeding and reinforce formula feeding as the cultural norm.

Breast pump companies and the Code

Breast pumps do not come within the scope of the Code and so their marketing is not restricted by either UK law or international guidance. Therefore, a company can promote breast pumps without breaching the Code.

Bottles for the storage of breastmilk, which do not have the capacity to be turned into a feeding bottle by the addition of a teat, **do not** come within the scope of the Code and so can be promoted without breaching the Code.

Feeding bottles, teats and dummies **do** come within the scope of the Code and therefore any promotion of these products is in breach of the Code.

Promotion means any activity designed to increase sales and would include print or web based advertising, idealised pictures of babies being fed with the products, non-evidence based claims regarding the advantages of the product, free gifts to parents or health professionals and promotional deals such as discounting, 2 for 1 offers etc.

Companies can make bottles, teats and dummies available for sale without breaching the Code providing that they do not also promote the products. Therefore, having the product for sale on a website or in a shop is not a violation of the Code unless this also includes a promotional element.

Working with breast pump companies

Firstly, consider whether the company comes within the scope of the Code.

There are two types of companies that sell breast pumps:

- Manufacturers who both make and sell their own pumps
- Suppliers who sell breast pumps made by one or more manufacturers.

The company only comes within the scope of the Code if they also sell feeding bottles, teats and/or dummies. If the company **does not** sell these products then there is no issue and nothing further to consider in relation to adhering to Baby Friendly standards.

If the company **does** sell feeding bottles, teats and/or dummies then they come within the scope of the Code. However, this is only a potential problem if the company also breaches the Code:

- Consider whether or not the company promotes these products or just makes them available for sale (see definitions above and below).
- When considering suppliers, note what that company does, as the supplier may sell products that are promoted by other companies or by the manufacturers of that product without actually being involved in promotion themselves.
- If the company does not promote bottles, teats and/or dummies then they do not breach the Code and there is nothing further to consider in relation to adhering to Baby Friendly standards, apart from remaining vigilant to the possibility that the company may start promotional activity.

Working with companies that sell breast pumps and also sell and promote bottles and teats and/or dummies

When working with these companies, it is important to ensure that the relationship does not lead to Code violations. The main issues that may arise for both organisations and individuals are addressed in the Unicef UK publication, [A health professional's guide to working within the Code](#).

In addition the following points may be useful:

- Purchasing breast pumps for use in NHS facilities does not breach the Code. Health professionals are free to purchase whichever breast pumps are most suitable for the needs of mothers in their service.
- Whilst the promotion of breast pumps is not in breach of the Code, it is worth considering health professionals' duty to ensure that parents receive only accurate and effective information from their health services. For example, advertisements for breast pumps can imply that breast milk

feeding is as good as breastfeeding or that breast pumps are essential for successful breastfeeding. Vigilance is therefore recommended to ensure that any promotion allowed does not cause harm.

- Company representatives who visit an NHS facility to promote breast pumps or to support the use of breast pumps are not in breach of the Code unless they also use this time to promote bottles, teats and /or dummies. It is recommended that company representatives wishing to promote bottles and teats see the infant feeding specialist (or equivalently qualified member of staff) only and that this member of staff then passes on relevant information to other staff in a non-promotional format. Vigilance is recommended to ensure that parents and staff are not exposed to promotional activity.
- Gifts of bottles and teats are in breach of the Code.

Glossary

The Code – [International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#)

UK law – [Formula and Follow on Formula Regulations 2007](#)

Manufacturer – a company that manufactures breast-pumps, bottles and/or teats

Supplier – a company that sells breast-pumps, bottles and/or teats on behalf of a manufacturer

Marketing – all activity from manufacture to sale, including both supply and promotion of the product. For a definition of promotion, see below.

Promotion – any activity which is designed to sell more of the product, including but not exclusive to: paper or web based advertising, discounting, shelf positioning in shops, brand awareness raising, demonstrations by sale representatives, free gifts.

Available for sale – being able to buy the product (for example, in a shop or online)