

UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

STATEMENT ON BABY FRIENDLY ASSESSMENTS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK



Updated 28 April 2021

Introduction

Given the ongoing uncertainty about how the pandemic will progress and the potential for further waves of infection, we anticipate that Baby Friendly assessments carried out on-site are unlikely to be possible in the forthcoming months. We are therefore continuing to provide remote-based assessments.

We recognise that these challenging times continue for all services and that each service will therefore require an individual and flexible approach. If you have an assessment due, please contact us to discuss any queries and to make plans.

Preparing for assessments

Assessments which have been postponed or are due to be scheduled can be booked once the service is ready to proceed. To aid decision making, you should consider your service's:

- Ability to meet all the required standards: We recognise that some care is being delivered in alternative ways whilst still meeting Baby Friendly standards. However, we are also aware that some services continue to struggle to meet the standards in full. If that is the case, you are encouraged to have a conversation with the Baby Friendly team before proceeding with an assessment.
- Audit results: Carrying out an effective audit will help you to decide whether the service is likely to meet the necessary standards. If some of the standards are not being met, then we again encourage you to discuss your issues and needs with the Baby Friendly team.

Assessment stages

Below is a summary of how we are carrying out each type of assessment. More information is provided in the relevant guidance documents.

Mother interviews are carried out by phone. Staff interviews are conducted using video-enabled platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, Zoom etc.

Planning days

- Planning meetings are carried out remotely by video call. We show a PowerPoint presentation to all staff who are able to attend, followed by a meeting with a smaller group to review the action plan.

Stage 1 assessments

- These are carried out remotely and will continue in that way.

Stage 2 assessments

- These are carried out remotely. Please refer to the updated guidance documents to check what is needed.
- Stage 2 assessments are typically due two years following Stage 1 accreditation. We support services to progress to assessment once audit results demonstrate readiness.

Stage 3 assessments

- These are carried out remotely. Please refer to the updated guidance documents to check what is needed.
- Stage 3 assessments are typically due a year following Stage 2 accreditation. We support services to progress to assessment once audit results demonstrate readiness.

Re-assessments and follow-up assessments

- These are carried out remotely. Please refer to the updated guidance documents to check what is needed.

Gold assessments and re-validations

- Gold assessments are carried out remotely.
- We appreciate that there may be a need to slightly adjust the re-validation timescale, however, we would aim to carry out Gold re-validations within three months of the planned date. We can be very flexible about the timing of senior staff interviews.

Annual audits

- We recognise that it may still be difficult to carry out internal audits at this time. If you wish to delay submitting your annual audits, please email the Baby Friendly office. However, where possible, we do recommend that audits continue in order to establish the impact of any changes to the service.

Booking assessments

There is a high demand for assessment bookings in 2021 and we expect this to continue into 2022. Therefore, if you anticipate that your service will be ready for an assessment, we suggest that you consider making a booking in order to secure a preferred date. As usual, it will be possible to re-schedule without charge with three months' notice.

Assessment costings

Our experience of assessments has shown us that doing assessments remotely takes more assessor time. However, as we are not incurring costs for hotel accommodation and travel, we have adjusted assessment costs accordingly.

Contact us

Please contact the Baby Friendly office by email with any queries at bfi@unicef.org.uk