

We're still here! Islington breastfeeding support during COVID-19

It's a crazy time for everyone, let alone new parents, and we know breastfeeding is probably even more important to you than normal. We've had to make some changes to our service to fit with centre closures, infection control and sensible distancing precautions, but there's still lots of support we can offer you. Here's what you can expect from us over the coming weeks:

At any time (before or after birth)

Call us on **020 3316 8439** and leave your details – we'll keep our answerphone updated with any changes in service, and we'll call you back as soon as we can (during office hours). Out of hours there's the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212, 9.30-9.30 every day of the year (subject to volunteer availability). You can also message us on Facebook ([facebook.com/breastfeedingislington](https://www.facebook.com/breastfeedingislington)) or get in touch by email at whh-tr.IslingtonBreastfeedingPeerSupport@nhs.net

In hospital

Our breastfeeding peer supporters still aim to be on the wards at UCLH and Whittington every day. They'll wear their purple t-shirts like a uniform, so this is the only place you'll see those now, to limit spread of infection. As well as answering your own questions, they'll be talking to everyone about hand expressing colostrum (and eventually milk), and we'd really encourage you to give this a go, even if you don't feel you need to at the time, so you know what to do. It may take longer than usual to get the support you need if your baby has any difficulties with feeding once you get home, and knowing how to hand express will mean you have options other than formula (which may be harder to get at short notice) if your baby needs a little extra. There's a great video at youtu.be/axQi5PqRZ0M too (also available in other languages at globalhealthmedia.org/breastfeeding)

After discharge

We'll call you a day or two after you get home to see how you're getting on with feeding and whether you need any support. You don't have to wait for us to call though - if you haven't heard from us and you've got questions you can call us on 020 3316 8439, message us on Facebook or email us (see above). We'll be picking up and returning messages as often as possible, at least several times a day, but if it's out of hours or you just can't wait there's also the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212, open (subject to volunteer availability) 9.30-9.30 every day of the year. There's a great video to help you learn what to look for to know your baby's getting enough milk at youtu.be/LX1f8NtTuw and lots of useful info on getting breastfeeding started in this leaflet [unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2010/11/otbs_leaflet.pdf](https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2010/11/otbs_leaflet.pdf)

Video calling

If you're having any difficulties with feeding, like pain, difficulties getting baby to take the breast, or worries about how much or how often baby is drinking, our first step will be to offer you a video call by **Skype** or **WhatsApp**. It's better if this can be done using a computer, but phones and tablets work too. It's a good idea to download the apps you'll need in advance if you can, make sure you know how they work, where the best place in your home is for a good wifi connection, and have a quick check of camera angles and lighting. If there are particular things you want to show us, like baby behaviours or positioning at the breast, taking a video and sending it to us before the call will make sure we can see what you mean - babies don't always perform on cue! Make a list of things you want to talk about too; it's easy to get sidetracked. Changing the angle of the camera/device to give us a particular view can be tricky when you've got your hands full with baby, so if you can have a helper with you that's great.

Home visits

If you've had a video call and it's not been possible to fully explore your issue, if you're just not able to make any of the technology work for you, or if we all feel things are urgent enough to need face to face support, we can still offer home visits where these are really needed. We'll ask you to confirm that nobody in your household has symptoms (a new continuous cough, high temperature or difficulty breathing) when we arrange this visit, and again when we arrive – and we promise that our staff won't be coming if they have any symptoms either.

Appointment clinics

We can see you for one to one support at **Hungerford Children's Centre** on Tuesday afternoons, or at **Bingfield Primary Care Centre** on Wednesday mornings. We're taking every precaution we can to make sure these contacts are as safe as possible but if you have any concerns please talk to us and we'll do whatever we can to reassure you. Again, we ask you not to come if anyone in your household has symptoms, to keep our staff, other staff and other centre users safe. Call, message or email us (see above) if you'd like an appointment. We may also be able to offer appointments at other locations if there's enough demand.

Online groups

We know that our breastfeeding groups aren't just about having problems - sometimes just a chat with someone else who understands how you're feeling can help you make sense of all the highs and lows of caring for and feeding a new baby. It's even more important than usual for all of us to stay connected, so we're trialling running one of our regular breastfeeding groups online, via **Zoom** – Sherridan will be hosting her usual Ambler group this way on Fridays from 13.00-15.00. If you'd like to join her, call, message or email us and we'll send you the link. We'll also be using this platform for our new Mums Meetup group on the first Thursday of the month, which is all about mums of all kinds just getting together over a cuppa and chatting. We'll try to extend this to other groups soon too, so you can stay in touch with some friendly and supportive faces whatever's happening in the outside world.

What about coronavirus?

If you've got any worries about how COVID-19 (coronavirus) might affect you, your baby and your breastfeeding, there's lots of useful info at breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus/ – if that doesn't answer your questions get in touch and we'll do our best to find the right information for you. If you need medical advice contact **111** or talk to your midwife, GP or health visitor.