

BREASTIVAL MANIFESTO

#AE2022

“The success or failure of breastfeeding should not be seen solely as the responsibility of the woman. Her ability to breastfeed is very much shaped by the support and the environment in which she lives. There is a broader responsibility of governments and society to support women through policies and programmes in the community.”

-Professor Amy Brown.

Despite the majority of the population knowing the benefits, breastfeeding is no longer a norm in many communities. Northern Ireland has the lowest breastfeeding rates in the UK and shares the title of lowest breastfeeding rates in the World with the Republic of Ireland.

Although our numbers of initiating breastfeeding in Northern Ireland have increased by 5% in the past 5 years with 61.2% attempting breastfeeding, our maintaining of a breastfeeding journey has remained stagnant with breastfeeding at discharge from hospital dropping to 47% and down to 37% between 10 - 14days,

The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding until six months. In 2017, Northern Ireland saw its number of ANY breastfeeding at six months, whether exclusive or combined at 17.1%.

What you can do as a Candidate for Election

- Review the Breastival Advocacy Toolkit to inform yourself on the importance of breastfeeding and legislation.
- Pledge to protect and promote breastfeeding, and support breastfeeding mothers. You can do this using our Pledge Card to share your agreement to this undertaking.
- Update your knowledge on the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes with our Guide.

What you can do as an elected MLA

- Join the NI Assembly's All Party Groups on Women's Health and Children and Young People

Our key asks from our response to the Programme for Government are:

We call on the NI Executive to recognise the benefits of breastfeeding in improving the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies; giving them the best opportunity to live healthier lives.

· We call on the next Minister for Health to honour previous Executive commitment to take forward legislation to promote, protect and support breastfeeding and to include the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. Taking this legislation forward to strengthen support for breastfeeding, will help breastfeeding mothers to feed in public and as a result will help normalise and promote breastfeeding.

· We call for the reinstatement of the Infant Feeding Survey to provide better estimates on the incidence, prevalence, and duration of breastfeeding and other feeding practices adopted by mothers in the first eight to 10 months after their baby was born. It is hugely important information for anyone needing to develop policies or do research on infant feeding in the UK, as well as providing an update on how policies and the state of the UK are impacting on infant feeding.

· We call for universal, high quality, accessible, specialist breastfeeding support and additional support (both practical and financial) for marginalised families to improve the accessibility of universal services.