

Antony Higginbotham MP  
Member of Parliament for Burnley



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

15th June 2020

Dear Constituent

**Re: Importance of Breastfeeding**

Thank you for contacting me about infant feeding.

I believe breastfeeding is a personal choice for each woman to make and that not all mothers are able to or choose to breastfeed.

However it is widely agreed that breastfeeding can deliver significant health benefits to new-born babies, promoting strong bonds between a mother her baby and providing a perfect balance of vitamins and nutrients.

Breastfeeding rates vary nationally and I believe that it is important to offer all new mothers the best quality of care and advice when it comes to infant feeding. I'm pleased to see that there are now 2,000 more NHS midwives than in 2010, who provide valuable advice and support needed for women regarding breastfeeding.

You may be aware that in 2014, the Government established the National Infant Feeding Network with UNICEF UK, which promotes evidence-based practice on infant feeding and early childhood development to deliver improved outcomes for women and their babies. This is welcome news as all women should be supported to make informed decisions and to develop a close relationship with their babies soon after birth. Public Health England is also working with local services here in Burnley, including with midwives and health visitors to make this vision a reality.

One of the priorities of the NHS Long Term Plan is to make sure that everyone gets the best start in life and I believe this will be achieved through a well-supported maternity system, ensuring women and their families receive seamless care, including when moving between maternity or neonatal services or to other services such as primary care or health visiting. Having this continuity will help new mothers to have the right support around them when starting breastfeeding.

You may also be pleased to know that the Government has my support in implementing the recommendations from the Better Birth report, to improve maternity services in England. This includes the promotion of breastfeeding, as Public Health England and UNICEF UK commission evidence-based interventions to improve breastfeeding rates.

For those who choose not to breastfeed, the Government supports the safe use of infant formula, and I know that regulations are in place to ensure that all types of infant formula meet the nutritional needs of babies.

Unfortunately due to other Parliamentary duties I was unable to attend the meeting you referenced but thank you again for taking the time to contact me about infant feeding.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Higginbotham'.

**Antony Higginbotham MP**  
Member of Parliament for Burnley