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Breastfeeding



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Introduction

Breastfeeding is good for babies and is recommended for about the first 6 months of a baby's life. The health benefits of breastfeeding babies are considered to be; reduced chance of diarrhoea and vomiting, fewer chest and ear infections, not as much chance of being constipated or developing eczema and less likelihood of becoming obese. The health benefits of breastfeeding babies for mothers are; reduced risk of developing certain ovarian and breast cancers, a lower risk of developing diabetes and hip problems in later life¹.

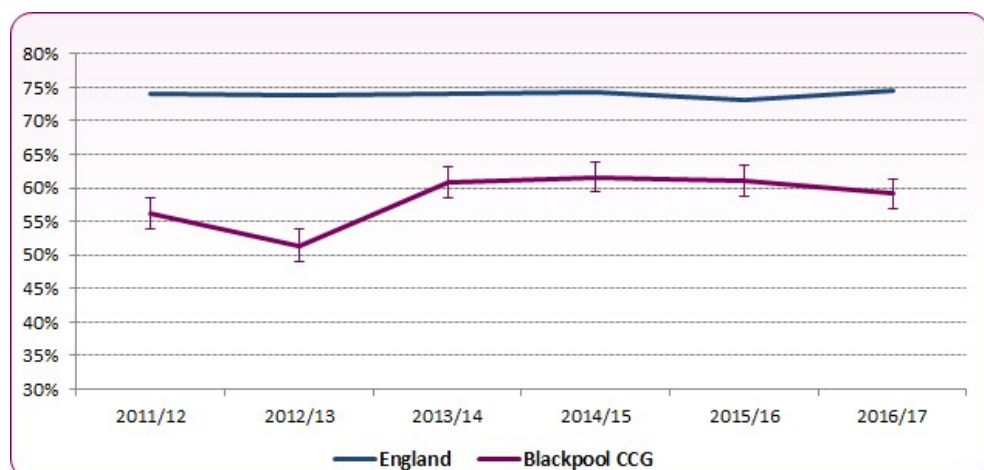
Mothers who are young, white, from routine and manual professions and who left education early are the least likely to breastfeed².

Facts and Figures

Breastfeeding Initiation

Figure 1 measures the percentage of mothers who give their babies' breast milk in the first 48 hours after delivery. The numerator is the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding and the denominator is the total number of maternities. The chart compares the rate of breastfeeding initiation in Blackpool and England. The breastfeeding initiation rate has been relatively stable over the last four years with a slight dip in 2016/17 as illustrated in the chart but remains significantly lower than the England rate. In Blackpool in 2016/17, 1,068 new mothers began breastfeeding, a rate of 59.1% compared to 74.6% across England as a whole.

Figure 1 - Breastfeeding Initiation 2011/12 - 2016/17

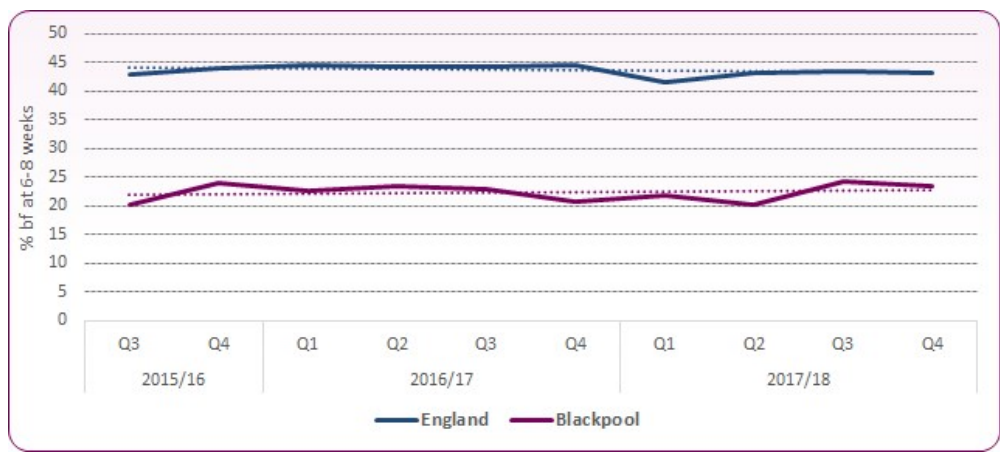


Source: NHS England, *Maternity and breastfeeding*

Breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks

This is the percentage of infants that are totally or partially breastfed at age 6-8 weeks. Totally breastfed is defined as infants who are exclusively receiving breast milk at 6-8 weeks of age - that is, they are not receiving formula milk, any other liquids or food. Partially breastfed is defined as infants who are currently receiving breast milk at 6-8 weeks of age and who are also receiving formula milk or other liquids or food. Figure 2 compares the rate of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks after birth in Blackpool with England. The rate is significantly lower than the England rate. In 2017/18 in Blackpool, just 354 (22.4%) mothers were still breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks compared to 42.9% in England as a whole.

Figure 2 - Breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks after birth 2015/16 - 2017/18

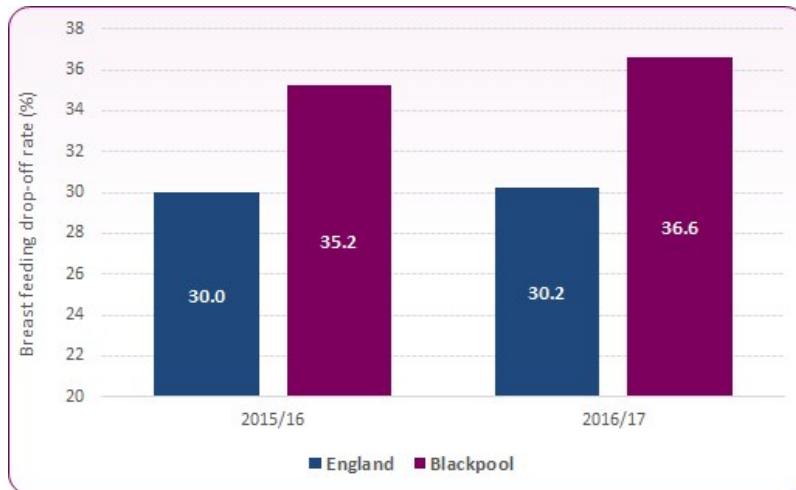


Source: PHE, *Breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks after birth*

Breastfeeding Drop-Off

The drop off rate is the difference between breastfeeding initiation from birth, and the number of mothers that continue to breastfeed at 6-8 weeks. Figure 3 shows that the 2016/17 breastfeeding drop-off rate for Blackpool mothers is 37% which is higher than the England rate of 30%.

Figure 3 - Breastfeeding drop-off rate, Blackpool and England, 2015/16 and 2016/17



Source: Calculated from NHS England and PHE breastfeeding data

Barriers to Breastfeeding

Public Health England and Unicef UK have developed guidance to support the commissioning of evidence-based interventions to improve breastfeeding rates. The guidance highlights reasons why mothers in England don't breastfeed.

Why mothers in England don't breastfeed

Only 36% of babies in England²⁰ are receiving some breastmilk at 6 months compared to 71% of Norwegian babies²¹

Eight out of ten women stop breastfeeding before they want to and could have continued with more support²²

Many English mothers feel unsupported and find breastfeeding

- very difficult
- not acceptable in public
- difficult to combine with work and lifestyles

Families live in a culture where formula feeding is seen as normal and nearly as good as breastfeeding

Source: PHE, *Commissioning infant feeding services: infographics*, July 2016

The US Surgeon General's report [Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding](#) also identifies a number of barriers to breastfeeding:

- Lack of knowledge
- Social norms
- Poor family and social support
- Embarrassment
- Lactation problems
- Employment and child care

National and local strategies

- [The Healthy Child Programme \(HCP\)](#) (Department of Health, 2009) - Aims to increased rates of breastfeeding initiation and continuation, which will contribute specifically to improving breastfeeding and obesity outcomes.
- NICE Guidance [PH11] [Maternal and child nutrition](#) (November 2014) covers advice and information regarding breastfeeding.
- The [NHS Long Term Plan](#) (January 2019) recommends Unicef UK Baby Friendly accreditation across all maternity services and includes a focus on improved support for families with infants in neonatal care.
- PHE, [Infant feeding: commissioning services](#). Evidence-based good practice prompts for planning local comprehensive breastfeeding support interventions. Public Health England and Unicef UK have developed the guidance to support the commissioning of interventions to improve breastfeeding rates across England. July 2016

[1] NHS, [Benefits of breastfeeding](#) [Accessed January 2019]

[2] Davies, S (2014) Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2014, [The Health of the 51%: Women](#), December 2015

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