

HELPING FAMILIES WHO REQUEST INFANT FORMULA

Guidance for food & baby banks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

As Local Authorities and Health Boards work towards the development of an emergency infant formula provision pathway, as outlined in the Scottish Government Infant Food Insecurity Toolkit and in line with UNICEF UK guidance, these guidelines provide an interim measure to support food banks, baby banks and other third sector charitable food organisations to help families who request infant formula. They are underpinned by Feed Policy on Supporting Families with infants.

CAN FOOD AND BABY BANKS PROVIDE INFANT FORMULA?



Food and baby banks can accept and provide formula to families in need

The laws governing infant formula recognise, and include allowances for the provision of infant formula to formula fed babies.

Consider a cash first approach

In line with best practice, third sector organisations should aim for a 'cash-first' approach. This means signposting people to any available crisis support provided in cash payments by local authorities, as well as ensuring parents and carers can access local advice and support to maximise income. To provide immediate help, if your constitution allows, offer money without receipt or grocery vouchers for participating stores to help families buy infant formula. You can also seek funding from grants and foundations to support the provision of cash payments and vouchers to families. When cash first options are not available, then first infant formula can be directly provided.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR INFANT FORMULA?

Babies up to one year of age

Babies who receive all or part of their nutrition from infant formula must have that need met up until the age of 1, when they can transition to full fat cows milk.



WHAT INFANT FORMULA TYPE CAN WE PROVIDE?

First infant milk is suitable for babies up to one year

First infant milk, or stage 1 infant formula, usually has a large number 1 on the box or tin. It is suitable for babies up to one year of age.

HOW CAN WE PROCURE INFANT FORMULA?

Encourage cash or voucher donations in lieu of formula donations



Encourage your supporters to donate money or supermarket gift cards in lieu of donating formula. This means you can provide cash payments or vouchers to families, or purchase first infant formula from local stores for families who need it. Where this is not possible, you can also accept donations of infant formula. Ensure a robust process to check packaging and sell-by dates prior to distribution.

WHAT INFANT FORMULA BRAND IS BEST?

All brands meet the same nutritional standards

All infant formula is subject to strict legal guidelines regarding the composition and manufacture. Therefore, all brands are required to meet the same nutritional standard. The least expensive brand available is nutritionally equivalent to the most expensive brand.

CAN BABIES SWITCH TO A DIFFERENT FORMULA?

Switching to a different formula brand is not harmful

While some babies may show a preference for a specific brand of first infant formula, switching to a different brand is not harmful as all first infant milks have very similar composition. Please ask if a parent has a specific preference and meet that, where possible. If a parent or carer has concerns they can speak to their health care provider.



WHAT IF A BABY NEEDS A SPECIAL INFANT FORMULA?

Refer the family to their healthcare provider

Some specialist infant formula are available on prescription while others can be purchased over the counter. If a family feels their baby needs such formula they should speak with their Midwife, Health Visitor or GP. You can offer a cash payment or grocery voucher to the family in an emergency but should not accept or provide prescription formula milks.



HOW DO YOU PREPARE INFANT FORMULA?

By following best practice guidelines from Public Health Scotland

The NHS Start4Life Guide to Bottle Feeding contains information on how to prepare and store infant formula, as well as handy tips on feeding, including responsive feeding. Keep these leaflets to hand to give to parents and carers of formula fed babies.



WHAT IF FUEL POVERTY IS A CONCERN?

Supply cold water sterilising tablets or ready to use formula

Offering washing up liquid and cold water sterilising tablets allows families to safely clean and sterilise feeding equipment without using fuel to boil water or run the microwave. Equally, ready to use formula does not require boiling water for preparation. Larger bottles of ready to feed formula require refrigeration after opening; if this is not possible then smaller, single use bottles can be provided.



HOW CAN WE SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING?

By supporting the breastfeeding Mum



Breastfeeding women living in food poverty are more likely to stop or reduce breastfeeding compared to food secure women, so should be referred to their Health Visitor for tailored feeding support. Additional foodstuffs should also be provided to breastfeeding Mums to help meet the calorie requirements of optimal milk production. You can also provide breastfeeding equipment such as breast pumps, nipple pads and creams, or signpost families to local support services for provision of these items.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT FAMILIES LIVING WITH HIV?

Contact your local HIV support service



It is recommended that parents living with HIV exclusively formula feed their infant, but some can struggle to afford infant formula. Connect with your local HIV support service and work with them to ensure Mums living with HIV can access key support services, including access to infant formula and feeding equipment where required.

HOW CAN WE FURTHER SUPPORT FAMILIES IN NEED?

Signpost families to additional support and income maximisation services

Tell families about the Healthy Start scheme as they may be eligible for further financial support to help with the families food costs. Signpost to local agencies who can help with income maximisation and access to benefits. Provide the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) 'Worrying About Money' leaflets; a great resource to help families to maximise income. You can also signpost families to their local infant feeding team or Health Visitor for further infant feeding support.



All local areas should have an emergency infant feeding pathway



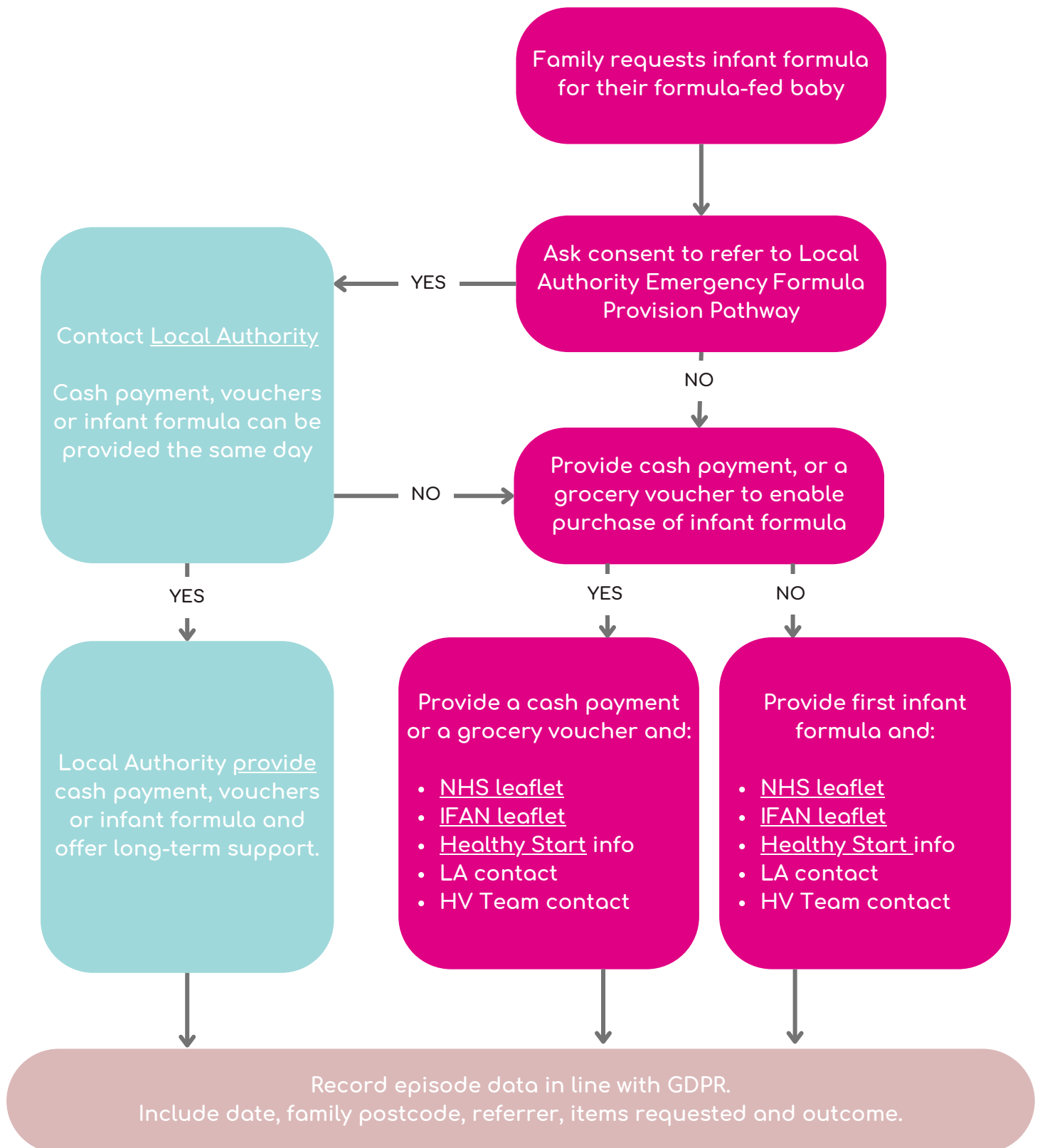
All local areas in the UK should have a pathway for the provision of infant formula milk to a formula fed infant in a crisis situation. Your service might be incorporated into or sit outside of this pathway. Best practice is to be aware of these provisions and work together with your Local Authority to support families in need. These measures will ensure that families can be assured of an ongoing supply of infant formula until they have the means to purchase it themselves.

Consider collecting data to evidence where resources need to be directed



In order to appropriately direct financial help, it is important to collect some data on the number and type of referrals. Feed offers a template to make data collection easier. Local authorities that have established pathways will also be collecting data and working collaboratively will ensure you can reflect the needs of your local community best.

PROCESS TO HELP FAMILIES WHO REQUEST INFANT FORMULA



For further information on supporting food insecure families with infants or to read our research on tackling infant food insecurity, see our website:

www.feeduk.org/infantfoodinsecurity

RESOURCES

- [Healthy Start Scheme](#). UK Government.
- [Worrying About Money? Cash First Guidance](#). Independent Food Aid Network.
- [A guide for Local Authorities and Health Boards supporting families with infants under 12 months experiencing food insecurity](#) (2022). UNICEF UK.
- [Benefits for Children and Families](#). UK Government.
- [Infant Feeding and Food Insecurity](#). Feed.
- [Infant Feeding Advice and Support for Parents](#). Feed.
- [Guide to Bottle Feeding](#). NHS Start 4 Life and UNICEF UK.
- [Breastfeeding Information and Support](#). NHS Start 4 Life.
- [Information on Types of Formula for Parents and Carers](#). NHS.
- [UK Food and Baby Bank Finder Map](#). Feed.

If you have any questions about our guidance, or if you are a local authority or health board and would like to adapt our guidance for your organisation, please [get in touch](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION

These guidelines were written by Feed in accordance with the [laws governing infant formula](#), the frameworks described by the [Royal College of Midwives](#) and the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#), [British HIV Association](#) and [National Aids Trust](#) recommendations, and as a response to the [APPGIFI inquiry](#) into infant formula costs which highlighted the issues facing formula feeding families living in the UK. They are informed by our [own research](#) into pathways of access to infant formula, and the outcome of our [public inquiry](#) into families and professionals lived experience of seeking emergency formula provision.

These guidelines have been reviewed, edited and endorsed by the [British Pregnancy Advisory Service](#), the [Independent Food Aid Network \(IFAN\)](#), the [National Aids Trust](#), [AberNecessities](#), [Glasgow North Baby Food Bank](#) and [Moray Baby Bank](#).

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