



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Official Statistics

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth (Experimental Statistics)

Quarter 3 2018/19 Statistical
Commentary (April 2019)

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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Main findings

The aggregate breastfeeding rate for England for Quarter 3 2018/19 is 46.0% (with confidence intervals of 45.8-46.3%) . This is based on 141 out of 146 reporting local authorities submitting a return and passing initial validation.

This is higher than the aggregate breastfeeding rate of 43.4% for Quarter 3 2017/18, based on the final figures published in October 2018.

Breastfeeding prevalence at a PHE centre level can be published for 4 PHE Centres.

Breastfeeding prevalence can be published for 66 local authorities (passing all 3 stages of validation) and percentages range from 21.3% to 85.6%.

This statistical commentary should be considered alongside the Quarter 3 2018/19 Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth statistical release, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/breastfeeding-at-6-to-8-weeks-after-birth-2018-to-2019-quarterly-data>.

Please treat the figures with caution: where totals are presented for England and PHE centres, these are aggregate totals of the areas that submitted information and passed initial validation.

Background

In October 2015, the responsibility for commissioning children's public health for the 0-5 years' population transferred from NHS England to local authorities. To support this transfer Public Health England established an interim data collection for a number of key performance indicators associated with these services which it is critical to monitor and report.

The breastfeeding information within this publication has been obtained via the interim reporting system to collect health visiting activity at a local authority resident level. It was submitted to PHE by local authorities on a voluntary basis. It covers Quarter 3 2018/19. The full data publication can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/breastfeeding-at-6-to-8-weeks-after-birth-2018-to-2019-quarterly-data>.

The decision has been taken to publish this information as 'experimental statistics' on the basis that there has been a significant change to the reporting methods, both in units of collection and the mandatory/voluntary nature.

Data Collection Method

An interim reporting system is hosted on the Local Government Association (LGA) website to collect the data on health visiting indicators. The reporting window for Quarter 3 2018/19 data was 18 February to 15 March 2019.

To support local authorities in submitting data, detailed guidance was circulated to explain how analysts and commissioners in local authorities should submit data. This guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-public-health-0-to-5-years-national-reporting>.

A dedicated mailbox, Interimreporting@phe.gov.uk, was also in place to respond to questions and comments.

Once the collection window closes the data received is centrally collated, validated and reported. This process will be repeated quarterly.

Data Quality Findings

The following data relates to Quarter 3 2018/19.

146 reporting local authorities submitted a return for the interim reporting collection for Quarter 3 2018/19. The 4 local authorities that did not submit data are Salford, Wirral, Wakefield, and Newham.

A set of 3 validation rules was applied in order to calculate the breastfeeding measure.

Stage 1 Validation

Definition: Local authorities to submit integers for the 'number of infants totally breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks' and/or the 'number of infants partially breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks' and the combined total must be lower than or equal to the integer for the 'number of infants due a 6-8 week check'. If there are DK "Don't Knows" in the combined total or the denominator the area will automatically fail validation.

141 local authorities successfully passed stage 1 validation by providing information on the number of infants recorded as being totally or partially breastfed at 6-8 weeks after birth.

The 5 local authorities that failed stage 1 validation are:

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Blackburn with Darwen | North West |
| Lancashire | North West |
| Rochdale | North West |
| Trafford | North West |
| Enfield | London |

The values for areas that did not pass stage 1 validation are excluded from their respective PHE centre and the England aggregated calculations.

Stage 2 Validation

Definition: The value submitted for infants due a 6-8 week review must to be within 20% of the resident population of babies aged zero for that local authority. The annual figure is divided by four to provide a quarterly estimate. Any values within 20% tolerance of the mid-year population figure for the quarter will pass this check.

Of the 141 submissions that passed stage 1 validation, 139 went on to pass stage 2.

The 2 areas that failed stage 2 validation are:

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Hartlepool | North East |
| Hackney and City of London* | London |

* Joint submission

Please see the section 'Data Quality Notes' towards the end of this commentary which provides further details.

Stage 3 Validation

Definition: The percentage of infants whose breastfeeding status was recorded must meet the data quality standard of 95%, being between 95% and 100%. This means the sum of those infants totally breastfed, partially breastfed and not breastfed should be greater than or equal to 95% of the number of infants due a 6-8 week review.

The threshold of 95% coverage applies to local authorities and PHE centres, but for the aggregated England value the threshold is 85%.

Of the 139 submissions passing stage 1 and stage 2 validation, 66 went on to pass stage 3.

The 73 local authorities that failed stage 3 validation are:

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gateshead | North East |
| North Tyneside | North East |
| Stockton on Tees | North East |
| Sunderland | North East |
| Blackpool | North West |
| Cheshire West and Chester | North West |
| Cumbria | North West |
| Liverpool | North West |
| St Helens | North West |
| Stockport | North West |
| Barnsley | Yorkshire and The Humber |

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Calderdale | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Kirklees | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Leeds | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| North Yorkshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Rotherham | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| York | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Derbyshire | East Midlands |
| Leicester | East Midlands |
| Leicestershire | East Midlands |
| Rutland | East Midlands |
| Birmingham | West Midlands |
| Dudley | West Midlands |
| Shropshire | West Midlands |
| Staffordshire | West Midlands |
| Stoke on Trent | West Midlands |
| Telford and Wrekin | West Midlands |
| Walsall | West Midlands |
| Wolverhampton | West Midlands |
| Cambridgeshire | East of England |
| Hertfordshire | East of England |
| Milton Keynes | East of England |
| Norfolk | East of England |
| Barking and Dagenham | London |
| Barnet | London |
| Bexley | London |
| Brent | London |
| Bromley | London |
| Camden | London |
| Croydon | London |
| Ealing | London |
| Greenwich | London |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | London |
| Haringey | London |
| Harrow | London |
| Havering | London |
| Hillingdon | London |
| Hounslow | London |
| Islington | London |
| Kensington and Chelsea | London |
| Lambeth | London |
| Merton | London |
| Redbridge | London |
| Richmond upon Thames | London |
| Southwark | London |

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|------------------------|------------|
| Sutton | London |
| Waltham Forest | London |
| Wandsworth | London |
| Westminster | London |
| Hampshire | South East |
| Kent | South East |
| Medway | South East |
| Portsmouth | South East |
| Surrey | South East |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | South East |
| Wokingham | South East |
| Bristol | South West |
| Dorset | South West |
| North Somerset | South West |
| Poole | South West |
| Somerset | South West |
| South Gloucestershire | South West |
| Swindon | South West |

Each local authority has to pass all three stages of validation in order for its values to be shown.

Passed all validation

Full information for 66 local authorities that passed all validation is published in the statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/breastfeeding-at-6-to-8-weeks-after-birth-2018-to-2019-quarterly-data>:

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|----------------------|------------|
| County Durham | North East |
| Darlington | North East |
| Middlesbrough | North East |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | North East |
| Northumberland | North East |
| Redcar and Cleveland | North East |
| South Tyneside | North East |
| Bolton | North West |
| Bury | North West |
| Cheshire East | North West |
| Halton | North West |
| Knowsley | North West |
| Manchester | North West |

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Oldham | North West |
| Sefton | North West |
| Tameside | North West |
| Warrington | North West |
| Wigan | North West |
| Bradford | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Doncaster | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| East Riding of Yorkshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Kingston upon Hull | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| North East Lincolnshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| North Lincolnshire | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Sheffield | Yorkshire and The Humber |
| Derby | East Midlands |
| Lincolnshire | East Midlands |
| Northamptonshire | East Midlands |
| Nottingham | East Midlands |
| Nottinghamshire | East Midlands |
| Coventry | West Midlands |
| Herefordshire | West Midlands |
| Sandwell | West Midlands |
| Solihull | West Midlands |
| Warwickshire | West Midlands |
| Worcestershire | West Midlands |
| Bedford | East of England |
| Central Bedfordshire | East of England |
| Essex | East of England |
| Luton | East of England |
| Peterborough | East of England |
| Southend on Sea | East of England |
| Suffolk | East of England |
| Thurrock | East of England |
| Kingston upon Thames | London |
| Lewisham | London |
| Tower Hamlets | London |
| Bracknell Forest | South East |
| Brighton and Hove | South East |
| Buckinghamshire | South East |
| East Sussex | South East |
| Isle of Wight | South East |
| Oxfordshire | South East |
| Reading | South East |
| Slough | South East |

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

| Local Authority | PHE Centre |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Southampton | South East |
| West Berkshire | South East |
| West Sussex | South East |
| Bath and North East Somerset | South West |
| Bournemouth | South West |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly* | South West |
| Devon | South West |
| Gloucestershire | South West |
| Plymouth | South West |
| Torbay | South West |
| Wiltshire | South West |

* Joint submission

Data Quality Notes

When making a submission local authorities have the opportunity to enter comments in a free text box to explain any issues with reporting. During the Quarter 3 2018/19 submission comments were received from 3 local authorities related to breastfeeding data, of collective interest:

There has been an improvement in data quality with more areas passing validation.

Where areas are unable to separate out 'totally' and 'partially' breastfed (because of local processes or data collection), it is still extremely useful for them to report the combined total, as this forms the numerator of the breastfeeding prevalence indicator. A communication was issued asking areas to report the combined total in either the 'total' or 'partial' boxes. On review, the communication should have specified that the total be entered in the 'partial' box as it is known that these infants are at least partially breastfed. Therefore this change has been made prior to publication, and this affects the following areas. It can therefore be assumed that for the higher geographies, the aggregate value for 'totally breastfed' is slightly low (and the aggregate value for 'partially breastfed' is correspondingly slightly high), but this is judged to be the most accurate way of describing the situation as the combined percentage will be a true reflection of the submitted data.

Staffordshire was identified as having reported a combined total for Quarter 3 2018/19.

Two local authorities reported they knew, or suspected, that they had made an incomplete submission. This may include receiving confirmation of nil returns from neighbouring authorities.