



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

**Official Statistics**  
**Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks**  
**after birth (Experimental Statistics)**  
Quarter 1 2018/19 Statistical  
Commentary (October 2018 release)

## 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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# Contents

About Public Health England	2
Main findings	4
Data Collection Method	5
Data Quality Findings	5
Stage 1 Validation	6
Stage 2 Validation	6
Stage 3 Validation	7
Passed all validation	9
Data Quality Notes	11

## Main findings

The aggregate breastfeeding rate for England for Quarter 1 2018/19 (April to June 2018) is 44.4% (with confidence intervals of 44.2 – 44.7%) . This is based on 143 out of 146 reporting local authorities submitting a return and passing initial validation.

This is higher than the aggregate breastfeeding rate of 41.6% for Quarter 1 2017/18, based on the final figures published in October 2018.

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

Breastfeeding prevalence can be published for 72 local authorities (passing all 3 stages of validation) and percentages range from 19.6% to 93.4%.

This statistical commentary should be considered alongside the 2018/19 Quarter 1 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 1 of 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 1 data was 6 August to 14 September 2018.

To support local authorities in submitting data, detailed guidance was circulated to explain how analysts and commissioners in local authorities should submit health visiting indicators. A dedicated mailbox ([interimreporting@phe.gov.uk](mailto: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 1 2018/19.

146 reporting local authorities submitted a return for the interim reporting collection for Quarter 1 2018/19. The four local authorities that did not submit data are Blackburn with Darwen, Cheshire East, Cumbria, and Solihull.

A set of three 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.*

143 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 three local authorities that failed stage 1 validation are:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Enfield	London
Hounslow	London
Wandsworth	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 143 submissions that passed stage 1 validation, 140 went on to pass stage 2.

The three areas that failed stage 2 validation are:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Gateshead	North East
Hackney and City of London*	London
Torbay	South West

\* 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 140 submissions passing stage 1 and stage 2 validation, 72 went on to pass stage 3.

The 68 local authorities that failed stage 3 validation are:

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Hartlepool	North East
North Tyneside	North East
Stockton on Tees	North East
Sunderland	North East
Blackpool	North West
Lancashire	North West
Rochdale	North West
St Helens	North West
Barnsley	Yorkshire and The Humber
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber
Kirklees	Yorkshire and The Humber
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber
York	Yorkshire and The Humber
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

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

Local Authority	PHE Centre
Brent	London
Bromley	London
Camden	London
Croydon	London
Ealing	London
Greenwich	London
Hammersmith and Fulham	London
Haringey	London
Harrow	London
Havering	London
Hillingdon	London
Islington	London
Kensington and Chelsea	London
Lambeth	London
Merton	London
Newham	London
Richmond upon Thames	London
Southwark	London
Sutton	London
Waltham Forest	London
Westminster	London
Buckinghamshire	South East
Kent	South East
Medway	South East
Portsmouth	South East
Slough	South East
Surrey	South East
West Berkshire	South East
West Sussex	South East
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East
Bristol	South West
Devon	South West
Dorset	South West
North Somerset	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 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>) for 72 local authorities that passed all validation:

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 West and Chester	North West
Halton	North West
Knowsley	North West
Liverpool	North West
Manchester	North West
Oldham	North West
Salford	North West
Sefton	North West
Stockport	North West
Tameside	North West
Trafford	North West
Warrington	North West
Wigan	North West
Wirral	North West
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Kingston upon Hull	Yorkshire and The Humber
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber
Wakefield	Yorkshire and The Humber
Derby	East Midlands
Derbyshire	East Midlands
Leicester	East Midlands
Leicestershire	East Midlands
Lincolnshire	East Midlands
Northamptonshire	East Midlands

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth

Nottingham	East Midlands
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands
Coventry	West Midlands
Herefordshire	West Midlands
Sandwell	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
Redbridge	London
Tower Hamlets	London
Bracknell Forest	South East
Brighton and Hove	South East
East Sussex	South East
Hampshire	South East
Isle of Wight	South East
Oxfordshire	South East
Reading	South East
Southampton	South East
Wokingham	South East
Bath and North East Somerset	South West
Bournemouth	South West
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly*	South West
Gloucestershire	South West
Plymouth	South West
Poole	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 1 submission comments were received from 5 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.

Hounslow, Lancashire and Wolverhampton were identified as having reported combined totals for Quarter 1 2018/19.

5 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.