

**From: BROWN, Rosemary**

**To: SACN**

**Subject: Response to Draft Feeding in the first year of life report**

Dear SACN,

First of all, thank you very much for this monumental piece of work, which is so crucial and helpful for those of us involved in guiding parents day by day with feeding their children, as well as training staff. I work as Infant Feeding Coordinator for an inner London borough and have been very involved in training staff and preparing resources for staff and parents about starting babies on solid foods. Having an up-to-date and robust review of all the evidence is so important.

The question of what kind of complementary foods are given when starting on solids is a very significant bone of contention between health professionals/academics, as well as being a great source of confusion for parents. It also has enormous political and economic undertones, with the baby food industry understandably very keen to maintain their market of largely pureed foods. In view of this I do have a couple of comments to do with how the conclusions may be read:

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350 'Texture should be progressed from smooth to lumpy and more complex textures throughout the first months of complementary feeding, though there is insufficient evidence to give objective guidance on the speed of progression of solid food textures'

This sentence gives the impression that smooth textures, which could be interpreted as purees, should be given before offering any finger foods. This would seem to conflict with evidence such as that most babies at around 6 months are able to feed themselves (Wright et al 2011). It is also different from present DH advice which encourages offering finger foods from 6 months along with softer and/or mashed foods. To avoid confusion it would be really important to be more specific about what is meant by 'smooth' and also if a progression is being advised, rather than offering both soft and/or mashed foods on a spoon along with finger foods from the beginning when starting at around 6 months. Obviously if a baby is started earlier on solid foods, they will need food pureed, not having acquired the skills to cope with anything else.

351 'There is insufficient evidence at present to conclude that the BLW approach to complementary feeding achieves better infant outcomes than traditional feeding practices. This approach has not been tested in an RCT....'

I recognise that the BLISS study is still in progress, (though they have started to publish some results, which would be good to include) and we still need more RCT evidence for BLW approaches. However, I feel it is crucial to point out at the same time that we have NO RCTs and very little, if any, robust evidence about benefits, outcomes or suitability of 'traditional feeding practices'. Often it is assumed by both health professionals and the public that we have, and so BLW or other baby-led approaches are viewed suspiciously, as if it has been proven that traditional practices work and are

helpful. If this is not clarified, those with a vested interest in maintaining traditional practices will use this sentence to justify that approach, without robust evidence.

I hope that makes sense.

I did just notice one typo:

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164 'One American RCT has reported findings from a study in which....were randomised to receive to solid foods from three to four months or six months' – 'to' is not needed.

I am sure you are aware, but, just in case, I am listing some of the BLISS papers that have come out recently that don't seem to be in the report's reference list:

Pediatrics October 2016, VOLUME 138 / ISSUE 4

A Baby-Led Approach to Eating Solids and Risk of Choking

Louise J. Fangupo, Anne-Louise M. Heath, Sheila M. Williams, Liz W. Erickson Williams, Brittany J. Morison, Elizabeth A. Fleming, Barry J. Taylor, Benjamin J. Wheeler, Rachael W. Taylor

BMJ Open 2016;6:e010665.doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010665

How different are baby-led weaning and conventional complementary feeding? A cross-sectional study of infants aged 6–8 months

Morison BJ, Taylor RW, Haszard JJ, et al.

JAMA Pediatr. 2017 Jul 10. doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.1284. [Epub ahead of print]

Effect of a Baby-Led Approach to Complementary Feeding on Infant Growth and Overweight: A Randomized Clinical Trial.

Taylor RW1, Williams SM2, Fangupo LJ3, Wheeler BJ4, Taylor BJ5, Daniels L3, Fleming EA1, McArthur J1, Morison B3, Erickson LW3, Davies RS1, Bacchus S3, Cameron SL4, Heath AM3.

Best regards,

Rosemary

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