

Supporting Breastfeeding within Maternity Care

Achieving BFHI accreditation in 2025

Cook Islands Ministry of Health – Te Marae Ora

BFHI – Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative

- BFHI is a fundamental to delivering optimal breastfeeding support within maternity care
- It ensures a set of standards are adhered to, to Promote, Support and Protect breastfeeding
- It is based around the **10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding** and the WHO Code of Marketing

Undergoing an audit

- Rarotonga Maternity Unit have recently achieved BFHI accreditation. 2 auditors came over from NZ to do an initial BFHI audit.
- This was a big achievement, which we are very proud of
- We intend to continue with the standards and ensure the best outcomes possible for our mama and pepe

How was it achieved?

First step – have government support. Achieving BFHI accreditation was recognised by Cook Islands Ministry of Health - Te Marae Ora as a priority

A NZ specialist was bought in to help achieve this goal

The specialist worked with local staff and management, putting in place an Action Plan, helped develop policy and protocols, and delivered education to the staff. We all worked together as a team.

Team work is the Dream work!

NEW ZEALAND BREASTFEEDING ALLIANCE

New Zealand Auditors with NZ BFHI
consultants/Specialist



Cara Hafner and Carmen Timu-Parata



Cook Islands Ministry of Health launches Rarotonga Hospital Breastfeeding Policy under BFHI framework on 10 Dec 2024.



We worked through the Steps, making changes as needed

Step one – Policy

- Developed a Policy, consulting with many
- Records are kept of breastfeeding at discharge
- We uphold the standards for the Code of Marketing of breastmilk substitutes

Step two – Education

We ensure all our medical and nursing staff achieved the required education hours

Step three – Antenatal

We discuss breastfeeding with mama during her pregnancy and take a history of previous breastfeeding to help identify any potential challenges

Step 4 – Skin to Skin

We now ensure the golden hour comes first before anything else and we have changed practises in theatre

Step 5 – Supporting Postnatal mothers

We have strengthened support with early feeding and have developed protocols for small and early babies.

Step 6 – BFHI is about safe infant feeding. We now recognise the need to have some formula on hand for those babies who need extra nutrition.

SKIN TO SKIN AND SUPPORTING POSTNATAL MAMAS.



Steps 7 – 9 (rooming in, no bottles, cue based feeding)

Very few changes needed here

Step 10 – Community Support

We established a midwifery home visiting service seeing mama and pepe at home for the first 4-6 weeks.

Breastfeeding is supported and encouraged.

We are working towards mama continuing breastfeeding upon return to work.



Key Recommendations for Strengthening Breastfeeding Support

- Strengthen BFHI implementation and postnatal support : *integrating its “Ten Steps” into healthcare accreditation and everyday practice*
- Embed workplace and social support: *dedicated lactation facilities and flexible breaks, which boost breastfeeding duration and exclusivity.*
- Integrate cultural knowledge, family, and peer networks: *mother-to-mother support groups and culturally sensitive education—to foster enduring support.*
- Monitor, evaluate, and adapt initiatives: *including routine internal BFHI assessments and data tracking, for ongoing quality improvement*

Expected Outcomes & Long-Term Benefits

- Short term: improved breastfeeding rates, healthier early nutrition
- Long term: reduced obesity, better cognition, lower NCD prevalence

Conclusion & Call to Action

- Investing in breastfeeding during the first 1000 days is investing in the future
- Collaboration across health, policy, community, and cultural spheres is essential
- *breastfeeding support during the first 1000 days paves the way for lifelong health. Realizing this vision requires unified efforts from health systems, policymakers, communities, and families."*

