



## **Cuts to breastfeeding support in England**

The following table shows the cuts to breastfeeding support in areas across England. In some cases, just one local authority area is affected by the cuts described. In others, multiple areas are affected (e.g. because the county council is responsible for public health commissioning across multiple district council areas).

The information contained in the table is the result of detailed conversations over more than 2 years with local people who have intimate knowledge of service provision in their area. Each piece of information has been independently checked with another source. The table is not comprehensive - we have only listed cuts that have been reported to us and that we have been able to verify. It is also important to note that many areas in the country have never had any breastfeeding support beyond that provided by midwives and health visitors. Those places had nothing to cut in the first place so are not listed here. For example, in 2016 Cardiff University has calculated that only 56% of the UK had access to locally accessible peer support.<sup>1</sup>

The table shows that, in recent years, 142 out of 326 of local authorities in England (44%) have experienced cuts to breastfeeding support. In some cases an entire breastfeeding support service has been closed. In other areas the service has been reduced either in size or in the quality of support offered. In some areas public funding (council or NHS) for the service has ended but voluntary groups or charities have maintained a certain level of support.

This table is regularly updated. If you have any information to share that is not included here, please let us know [info@betterbreastfeeding.uk](mailto:info@betterbreastfeeding.uk).

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1. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jul/07/uk-survey-reveals-lack-of-breastfeeding-peer-support-for-millions-of-mothers>

| Area                           | Number of LAs affected | Cuts/reduction in service  |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Basildon, Brentwood & Thurrock | 3                      | Parenting support programme cut and breastfeeding peer supporters in children's centres cut (2015/16)  |
| Blackpool                      | 1                      | Highly acclaimed breastfeeding peer support service closed and infant feeding lead post cut. No specific breastfeeding support currently in place (2017)   |
| Bournemouth and Poole          | 2                      | Specialist home-visiting support provided by lactation consultants and breastfeeding counsellors replaced with volunteer peer supporters at drop-in groups only (2016)   |
| Brent                          | 1                      | Borough-wide peer support ended (2015)   |
| Brighton and Hove              | 1                      | Targeted home visiting breastfeeding support service in deprived area of East Brighton cut (2016) and then in West Brighton (2017)   |
| Bromley                        | 1                      | Training for peer support ended along with coordinator role. Phone calls from peer support ended. Breastfeeding drop-ins down to 3 from 5  |
| Buckinghamshire                | 4                      | Peer support training ended (2014). Reduced number of breastfeeding support clinics across county.   |
| Cambridgeshire                 | 5                      | All breastfeeding support groups funded by children's centres were closed. Several health visitor-run groups also closed (2015)  |
| Cheshire                       | 4                      | Service restructured leading to loss of dedicated breastfeeding support workers who were able to do home visits. Loss of peer support coordinator and reduced number of peer support groups in part of the county (2018)       |
| Croydon                        | 1                      | Peer support service suspended (2018)  |
| Derbyshire                     | 8                      | Home visits from breastfeeding peer supporters replaced with appointments at breastfeeding groups at 21 days (2016)  |
| Enfield                        | 1                      | NCT peer support training ended (2015). Down to just 1 volunteer-run drop-in per week for whole borough.   |
| Essex                          | 10                     | County-wide peer support services closed (2016)  |
| Exmouth                        | 1                      | Funding for Bosom Buddies breastfeeding support service ended (2018)   |
| Gateshead                      | 1                      | Infant feeding coordinator post cut. Training for peer supporters ended. (2016)  |
| Gloucestershire                | 6                      | 30 out of 46 children's centres closed, leading to closure of breastfeeding drop-ins at those centres (2016)   |
| Greenwich                      | 1                      | NCT breastfeeding support ended (2015)   |
| Hackney                        | 1                      | Funding for peer support project, including calls to new mothers, ended (2018)   |
| Hampshire                      | 11                     | County council funding for 23 support groups run by trained breastfeeding counsellors ended. Replaced by health visitor support only (2016)  |
| Havering                       | 1                      | 5 breastfeeding groups cut to 2 following closure of children's centres (2015). Currently, 3 volunteer-run groups operating.   |
| Kenilworth                     | 1                      | NCT breastfeeding drop-ins closed (2015)   |
| Kent                           | 12                     | Specialist drop-in clinics run by lactation consultants and breastfeeding counsellors reduced from 17 to 4 (appointment-only) health-visitor led clinics. Number of locations at which peer support available reduced.         |
| Lambeth and Southwark          | 2                      | 7 specialist midwives reduced to 3 (2015) and about to reduce to 2 (2018). Number of breastfeeding groups will reduce and will be run by health visitors and peer supporters. Specialist service will be referral only (2018). |
| Leicestershire                 | 6                      | Most of the 24 children's centres are under threat of closure.   |

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|  |               | Most Baby Cafes are run out of these centres   |
| Lewisham   | 1             | Commissioned BfN service ended 2017. Funding reduced and peer support moved in house. Now health visitor run with loss of expertise.   |
| Lincolnshire   | 7             | Paid peer support ended (2015)   |
| Middlesbrough  | 1             | Peer support volunteers cut (2016)   |
| Milton Keynes  | 1             | Funding for Breastfeeding Cafes ended (2017)   |
| Merton   | 1             | All breastfeeding drop-ins closed (2017)   |
| Northamptonshire   | 7             | Baby Cafes closed (2016)   |
| North East Lincolnshire  | 1             | Funding for peer support reduced (2018)  |
| North Lancashire   | 3             | Significant cuts to peer support groups (2015)   |
| North West Leicestershire  | 1             | All funding for training and reimbursing breastfeeding volunteers cut (2016)   |
| North Tyneside   | 1             | Infant feeding coordinator post cut and training for peer supporters ended.  |
| Oxfordshire  | 5             | Funding cut for 8 Baby Cafes, and 44 children's centres closed (2016). Service now entirely reliant on voluntary funding.  |
| Oldham and Rochdale  | 2             | Infant feeding coordinator post cut and training for peer supporters ended. Reduced number of antenatal sessions and led by staff not trained in breastfeeding (2016). New IFC in post for 2018. |
| Purbeck and Wimborne   | 2             | NCT-trained breastfeeding counsellors replaced with volunteer peer supporters at breastfeeding groups (2016)   |
| Reading and West Berkshire   | 2             | Funding for peer support service, including phone service, drop-in groups, home visits and hospital support, ended in Reading. Reduced service will operate in West Berkshire (2018)             |
| Redbridge  | 1             | 3 infant feeding advisor roles cut. Remaining staff hours and training reduced. Helpline closed. (2017)  |
| Salford  | 1             | NCT peer support training ended (2015)   |
| Sefton, Merseyside   | 1             | Peer support service terminated (2016)   |
| Somerset   | 5             | All funding for paid peer supporters ended. Infant feeding advisor roles reduced (2016)  |
| South Gloucestershire  | 1             | 1-to-1 help from paid peer supporters from antenatal to 3 weeks postnatal, including home visits, ended. Support now available in groups only (2018)   |
| Stoke-on-Trent   | 1             | 24-hour phone support reduced by 75%   |
| Suffolk  | 7             | Countywide peer support reduced to a few areas, paid roles became voluntary, then ended altogether (2017)  |
| Sunderland   | 1             | Paid peer supporter posts reduced from 10 to 5   |
| Tamworth, Staffordshire  | 1             | Peer support home visits cut (2015)  |
| Walsall  | 1             | Integrated peer support and specialist service significantly reduced (2017)  |
| Wirral   | 1             | Antenatal support to be cut and no peer support visits until day 10 (2017)   |
| Wrexham  | 1             | All funding for training and reimbursing breastfeeding volunteers cut (2016)   |
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| <b>Total areas with cuts</b>   | <b>142</b>    |  |
| <b>Total number of LAs in England</b>                                    | <b>326</b>    |  |
| <b>Percentage of LA areas experiencing cuts to breastfeeding support</b> | <b>43.56%</b> |  |