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Communications Department

Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230

Media Release

RUHcommunications@nhs.net

www.ruh.nhs.uk

RUH Maternity is officially 'Baby Friendly'

The Maternity Service at the Royal United Hospital has received accreditation from UNICEF'S Baby Friendly Initiative.

Set up in partnership with the World Health Organisation, the Baby Friendly Initiative aims to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding and to strengthen mother-baby and family relationships – and works with UK public services to achieve this goal.

Strict criteria need to be met in order for UNICEF'S prestigious Baby Friendly status to be granted, so the accreditation is a real achievement for RUH Maternity Services and the Dyson Centre for Neonatal Care.

Ingrid Henderson, the Infant Feeding Specialist Midwife at the RUH is thrilled with the accreditation and is a passionate advocate for breastfeeding. She said: "Breast-milk is almost magical in its health-giving properties – especially the very early breast-milk, colostrum. It doesn't just protect a baby's immunity or help the baby to develop, it can also help prevent major chronic illness from developing later in life; diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and even cancer. Breast-milk can't be replicated because it relates to the DNA of the mother and is therefore unique. It is quite literally tailored not just to a baby's needs, but to the needs of the individual baby.

"Though a high percentage of women will start breastfeeding, the drop-off rates in the UK are still too high. This is why providing the very best breastfeeding support for mothers is essential. Breastfeeding doesn't come naturally to all women and, if not given the right support, a woman struggling to breastfeed can end up feeling isolated or that they have failed in some way. By supporting women through any difficulties they may be experiencing, we can significantly increase the likelihood that they will stick at it.

"One of the ways in which we provide support for breastfeeding women is through our peer support service. Mothers who have previously breastfed for at least three months themselves offer support, encouragement and advice to new mothers. Peer support can be a reassuring and very positive experience for a new mother.

"The way we see it, breastfeeding is an investment not only in the lives of the woman and her child, but also in helping to ease the burden on our health service of the future."

For more information on the Baby Friendly Initiative and the breastfeeding groups in your area visit unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly

Note to editors: Though the accreditation is specifically for the maternity service and the Dyson Neonatal Care Unit, the RUH is a breastfeeding-friendly hospital and women are welcome to breastfeed anywhere on the hospital site.

Ends



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