



Steve McCabe MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

September 23rd 2019

Dear Mr McCabe

The Baby Feeding Law Group is an association of 27 organisations that work together for better protection of infant feeding in the UK. You can find out more about Baby Feeding Law Group UK at www.bflg-uk.org. Our ultimate goal is to see the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and all subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions ('the Code') incorporated into UK law. The Code is an internationally agreed voluntary code of practice, designed to protect breastfeeding by preventing inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes (which includes infant formula, follow-on formula, toddler milks, foods for babies under 6 months of age, feeding bottles and teats).

It has recently been brought to our attention that the Danone Nutricia funded Infant and Toddler Forum is planning on transitioning to become a Community Interest Company and will be celebrating this with an event at the House of Commons on October 9th, which you will host. We contacted Danone's PR company Say Communications to ask whether the funding for the Infant and Toddler Forum will still come from Danone Nutricia and were told that this information will only be publicly available at the time of the event. We find this lack of transparency disconcerting and as we believe it is highly likely that the Infant and Toddler Forum will remain Danone Nutricia funded, we wanted to write to you to share our concerns about this conflict of interest and to ask you to reconsider hosting the reception.

As outlined in the enclosed document '*Danone Nutricia: Why do they want to be your partner?*' Danone Nutricia activities violate the WHO Code and purposefully seek to undermine breastfeeding. It is important to note that staff working in Unicef UK Baby Friendly (BFI) accredited settings across the UK in both maternity and the community cannot use Infant and Toddler Forum resources as accreditation requires staff to work within the WHO Code. In the UK 63% of hospitals and 70% of health visiting services are BFI accredited (in Scotland and Northern Ireland this is 100%) and the majority of settings are on their journey to accreditation.

Baby Feeding Law Group UK Members:

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers (ABM), Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (AIMS), Baby Milk Action, Best Beginnings, Breastfeeding Network (BfN), Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA), Doula UK, Fatherhood Institute, First Steps Nutrition Trust, GP Infant Feeding Network (GPIFN), HENRY, Hospital Infant Feeding Network (HIFN), Human Milk Foundation, Institute of Health Visiting, Lactation Consultants GB (LCGB), La Leche League GB (LLLGB), Leicester Mammias, Local Infant Feeding Information Board (LIFIB), Make Birth Better, Midwives Information and Resource Service (MIDIRS), National Breastfeeding Helpline, NCT, Royal College of Midwives (RCM), UK Association of Milk Banking (UKAMB), Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative, Unison, World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative UK.
Secretariat 2019: vicky@firststepsnutrition.org



As highlighted in the invitation for the event, intervention in the early years is essential to prevent childhood overweight and obesity. It is widely accepted that breastfed babies are protected from becoming overweight whilst bottle-fed babies have a higher risk of gaining excess weight. Breastfeeding rates in the UK are extremely low and whilst a step change in efforts to improve breastfeeding support is needed this will be insufficient without strengthened legal protection against misleading marketing for both women who breastfeed and for parents and carers who use formula.

We would be more than happy to discuss this further with you and explain why resources produced by the Infant and Toddler forum can undermine UK public health messages.

Yours sincerely

Vicky Sibson

cc. Jon Ashworth, MP

cc. Sharon Hodgson, MP

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