



For immediate use



# Press Release

24 January 2012

## **NHS Borders shows its commitment to Borders' mothers and babies**

NHS Borders is showing its commitment to improving the care provided to women and babies living in the Borders.

The organisation has just signed up to the global UNICEF programme, Baby Friendly Initiative, to raise standards of maternity care and encourage breastfeeding. Breast feeding is well known to have health benefits both for babies who are breast fed and for their mothers. The programme will be driven forward in NHS Borders by Chief Executive, Calum Campbell, with support from the new Baby Friendly Initiative Lead Rachael Marples

Rachael said: "Research has shown that breastfed babies are less likely to get a variety of illnesses and infections including diabetes, childhood leukaemia and gastro-intestinal infection. Breastfed babies are less likely to die of sudden infant death syndrome and may have added protection against many other diseases.

"However breastfeeding is not only good for babies as women who breastfeed are at lower risk of rheumatoid arthritis, breast cancer, ovarian cancer and hip fractures."

The Baby Friendly Initiative is a worldwide programme of the World Health Organization and UNICEF. It was established in 1992 to encourage maternity hospitals to implement the *10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* and to practice in accordance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. Here in the Borders, along with many other Health Boards, we are also working to implement the Seven Point Plan for Sustaining Breastfeeding both in our Maternity Unit and in the community.

The Initiative works with the health-care system to ensure a high standard of care in relation to infant feeding for pregnant women and mothers and babies. Support is provided by UNICEF, with Scottish Government backing, for health-care facilities that are seeking to implement best practice. An assessment and accreditation process recognises those that have achieved the required standard.

About 60% of health boards in Scotland have achieved accreditation and now NHS Borders is taking the first steps towards the same goal.

Rachael said: "Breastfeeding figures for the Borders are higher than the national average but there is still more we can do to meet the standard set by the Government. With the exciting introduction of this Initiative, we hope that through improved information, advice and support, women will be better able to make an informed choice about breast feeding their baby.

"NHS Borders is also working closely with Scottish Borders Council, child care organisations and other community groups to look at how women can support each other with

breastfeeding. Partners will also seek to tackle some of the barriers that can make it uncomfortable or embarrassing for mothers to breast feed in public places. “

**ends**

**Please contact Public Involvement & Communications on 01896 825589 or 825520 for further information**