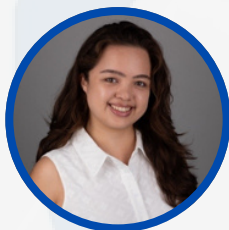


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Co-developing a holistic infant feeding system

In Newham, significant disparities in breastfeeding rates persist across maternal age, ethnicity, and deprivation levels. Data shows a marked decline in exclusive breastfeeding from initiation to hospital discharge, and further between the 10–14 day and 6–8 week health visits. To address these inequities, Newham Council has co-developed a holistic infant feeding system through consultation and coproduction with parents, health professionals, and community partners. This initiative mapped existing services, identified gaps, and gathered insights to inform a culturally sensitive, systems-wide approach. Outcomes include improved breastfeeding support across hospital and community settings, recruitment of dedicated infant feeding professionals, and the commissioning of a peer support service. Feedback highlights high satisfaction rates and positive parental experiences. To bridge health research, policy, and practice, Newham is also collaborating with Masters students from Queen Mary University of London through the provision of dissertation supervision. This partnership strengthens the evidence base and supports the development of sustainable, community-informed interventions based on the policy recommendations from this work. Recently, the excellent standard of infant feeding support across Health Visiting, Children's Centres and Family Hubs has been recognized by UNICEF as the community based services progress towards UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative Stage 3 Accreditation. Next steps include developing Newham's Infant Feeding Strategy, launching a borough-wide Breastfeeding Welcome scheme, and continuing leadership through the Infant Feeding Steering Group—contributing to Newham's ambition to give children the best start in life.

Keywords

maternity, breastfeeding, infant feeding, Family Hubs, commissioning, policy

Biography

Kiana Bowden is a Public Health Strategist at Newham Council, working on the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) and Early Years portfolio. Through her studies of medicine, global health and social medicine, she developed a strong foundation in interdisciplinary approaches to health systems and policy. Kiana brings a wealth of experience from roles at the General Medical Council (GMC), Civil Service, and Southwark Council, where she contributed to public health and regulatory initiatives. Her work is driven by a commitment to reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for children and families across London.