



Hospital Services

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10 May 2019



Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Infant feeding policies and practices

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received Monday 29 April seeking the following of Waitemata District Health Board (DHB):

Please send through any complaints that have been made to the Waitemata DHB regarding breastfeeding and formula feeding policies or practice in hospitals/birthing centres in the last 18 months.

I understand the importance of patient privacy and am more interested in the complaints made - rather than who wrote the complaint.

Waitemata DHB cares for the largest patient population of any DHB in New Zealand, currently standing at just over 630,000 people and operates two maternity facilities – one at North Shore Hospital and one at Waitakere Hospital. There are three primary birthing units in Waitemata DHB at Helensville, Warkworth and Wellsford.

Waitemata DHB operates one of the largest maternity services in the country. In 2018 there were 6,604 babies born in our hospitals and the incidence of complaints relating to breastfeeding and formula feeding is very low.

There have been just three complaints in the last 18 months that related to breastfeeding and formula feeding practices. When a complaint is received, we work closely with the mother and her whanau, where appropriate, to understand the issues from their perspective. We are always open to feedback and discussion about how we can improve our services. We aim to achieve amicable resolution of any complaints and generally find that listening and open communication is the most effective way of resolving any issues.

As the complaints are direct correspondence from consumers and cover a range of issues, I am not in a position to share the whole correspondence. However, I have summarised the issues related to feeding practices:

October 2018 – Complaint by a mother that staff had been unsupportive of her attempts to breastfeed and that her baby had lost weight.

January 2019 – Complaint from a woman about her experience in the breastfeeding education class where she felt her questions were not respected and she felt embarrassed by the educator.

March 2019 – Complaint about Waitemata DHB's response to parent's request for formula.

I trust that this information meets your requirements. Waitemata DHB, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's understanding of how we are delivering publicly-funded healthcare.

This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cath', written in a cursive style.

Cath Cronin
Director Hospital Services
Waitemata District Health Board