

## SSPARC

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#### Presentation

Bottle feeding amongst the breast bullies

#### Speakers

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#### Abstract

Drawing upon guidelines from the World Health Organisation, current UK advice on infant feeding is to exclusively breastfeed for six months and to combine with solids beyond this point. The impetus comes from claims that breastfeeding offers a range of purported benefits, including protection from a range of diseases and improved bonding with the mother (NHS Choices 2014).

In line with this, health professionals are strongly encouraged to promote breastfeeding and this official policy is supported by childcare 'experts' via range of websites, parenting magazines, newspaper articles and childcare manuals. Alongside this is a general silence regarding formula feeding, including from health visitors and midwives. Nonetheless, figures show that breastfeeding is still a minority behaviour in the UK – at six weeks just 19 per cent of babies are being exclusively breastfed and by six months, the figure is just one per cent (National Statistics 2012).

This paper examines the experiences of women who formula feed in this context. It joins others in arguing that the current approach overstates the advantages of breastfeeding, leaves parents ill-informed about the challenges of breastfeeding and also ill-prepared for the safe adoption of formula feeding, all of which has significant consequences. It also overlooks the positive role that formula feeding can play, instead locating it as a position of failure and ignorance. This paper draws attention to the emotional impact of the moralising undertones of the current focus on breastfeeding and the negative consequences of this approach.

National Statistics (2012) [Infant Feeding Survey - UK, 2010 \[INS\]](#)

NHS Choices (2014) [Why Breastfeed?](#)