

# Policy Implications Paper: Women's experiences of breastfeeding support during the Covid-19 pandemic in England

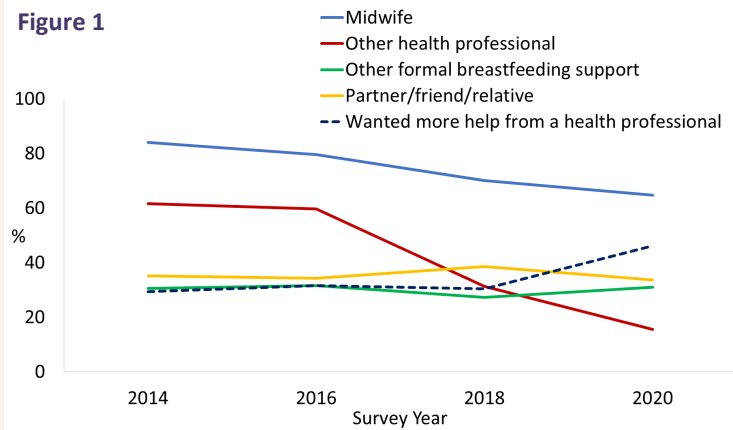
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## Policy implications

- Planning for a future emergency needs to include adequate provision of breastfeeding support, particularly if staff are redeployed into other roles.
- The factors associated with breastfeeding support from different sources and modes can inform service planning and delivery

## Key findings

- During 2014-2020, breastfeeding support from midwives and other health professionals declined whereas other formal breastfeeding support and informal support from partners, friends or relatives remained constant (Figure 1).



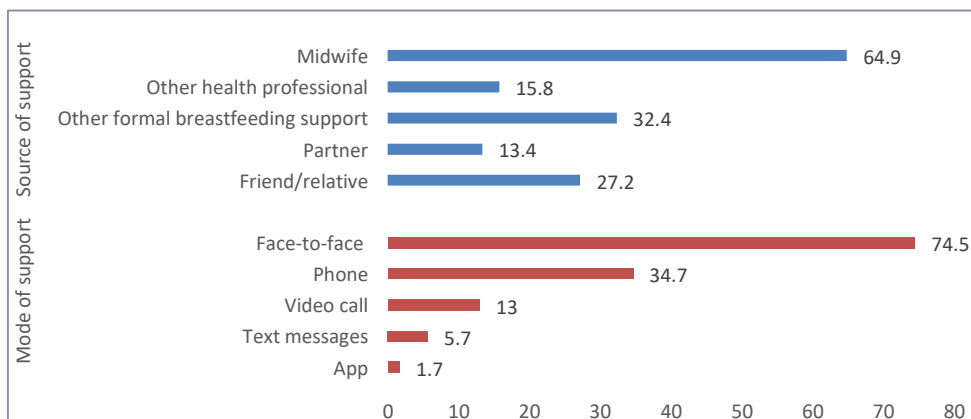
## How we did the research

We did a survey of 4,611 women who had given birth in England during the pandemic in May 2020. We asked the women who helped or advised them with breastfeeding their baby (source of support) and how this help was given (mode of support).

Data on source of support were compared with data from previous surveys from 2014, 2016 and 2018.

- In 2020 (see Figure 2):
  - Nearly 2 out of 3 women received help with breastfeeding from a midwife.
  - One in three women received other formal breastfeeding support e.g. from a breastfeeding specialist, support group, or peer supporter.
  - Some women received help from their partner (13%) or a friend or relative (27%).
  - 1 in 4 women did not receive any face-to-face breastfeeding support.

**Figure 2**



Other formal breastfeeding support included breastfeeding specialist, support group, peer supporter  
\* Women could select multiple sources and modes

- Nearly half the women (46%) wanted more help with breastfeeding from a health professional. This was a big increase compared with in our pre-pandemic surveys (30%) (see Figure 1).
- The women most likely to want more help with breastfeeding from a health professional were:
  - First-time mums
  - Younger mums (aged <25 years)
  - Mums of Pakistani ethnicity

## Further information

Quigley MA, Harrison S, Levene I, Buchanan P, McLeish J, Alderdice F (2024) Breastfeeding support during the Covid-19 pandemic in England: analysis of a national survey. BMC Public Health. 2024;24:3284.

<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-024-20618-2>

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