

The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
Leader, The Labour Party
39 Victoria
London,
SW1H 0HA

Tuesday, April 6, 2010



Dear Gordon Brown

What is your party's policy on the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations?

I am writing on behalf of the Baby Feeding Law Group (BFLG) and the Breastfeeding Manifesto Coalition (BMC) to request a statement from you setting out your party's policy on the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations.

BFLG and BMC represent the leading health professional organisations, mother-support groups and public service bodies in the UK and were united in calling on the Government to implement the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* and subsequent, relevant Resolutions when the Regulations were being drafted in 2006. These international minimum standards are intended to protect breastfeeding, to ensure breastmilk substitutes are used safely if needed and ensure that parents receive objective information free from commercial bias. The Government's own Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) recommended stronger measures than those proposed, including a ban on the advertising of follow-on formula alongside that on infant formula and a ban on nutrition and health claims. LACORS and Trading Standards explained the difficulty in enforcing regulations that treat infant formula and follow-on formula differently.

Despite claiming to endorse the International Code and WHA Resolutions, the Government has, as yet, failed to implement them fully and instead attempted to introduce stronger measures through Guidance Notes. These are not only inadequate but have also proven to be unenforceable. An Independent Review Panel (IRP) convened by the Government reviewed the operation of the Regulations, taking evidence from the enforcement authorities. It recommended in its report (published 11th March): "*The nature of the problems encountered when enforcing the Regulations should be characterised and steps taken to address these.*"

BFLG and BMC reiterate their call for the *International Code* and Resolutions to be introduced in their entirety to address the problems encountered with enforcing the Regulations. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has made the same recommendation, stating in its 2008 report on the UK that it was: "*concerned that implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes continues to be inadequate and that aggressive promotion of breastmilk substitutes remains common. The Committee recommends that the State party implement fully the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.*"

Will you undertake that after the election your party will ensure that steps are taken to address the problems with the Regulations and press for full implementation of the Code and Resolutions as called for by the BFLG, BMC and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, including a ban on follow-on formula advertising as called for by SACN, LACORS and Trading Standards?

Yours sincerely

Patti Rundall, OBE
Policy Director, Baby Milk Action

Member organisations: Association of Breastfeeding Mothers - Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services - Association of Radical Midwives - Baby Milk Action - Best Beginnings - Breastfeeding Community - Breastfeeding Network - Caroline Walker Trust - Community Practitioners and Health Visitors' Association - Heart of Mersey - Food Commission - Lactation Consultants of Great Britain - La Leche League (GB) - Little Angels - Midwives Information and Resource Service - National Childbirth Trust - Royal College of Midwives - Royal College of Nursing - Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health - The Baby Café - UK Association for Milk Banking - Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative - UNISON - Women's Environmental Network.
