

Sample Breastfeeding Policy

RETURNING TO WORK AND BREASTFEEDING POLICY

PURPOSE:

- To recognise the benefits of supporting members of staff who wish to continue breastfeeding on their return to work.
- To create an environment where more staff choose to breastfeed, and are supported to continue breastfeeding as long as they wish to.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES:

- Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)
- Pregnancy and Work: What you need to know as an employee (2011).
Department for Business Innovation and Skills
- Breastfeeding: Returning to work or study. NHS

PRINCIPLES:

This organisation / business believes that breastfeeding is the best way for a mother to feed her baby, and recognises the important health benefits known to exist for both mother and child.

The organisation / business respects an employee's right to continue breastfeeding when she returns to work, and every effort will be made to accommodate her needs. Time and suitable facilities will be provided for her to breastfeed or to express her milk (and store it), and managers have a responsibility to look at how they could accommodate a breastfeeding employee to express milk or breastfeed so that business operations can be planned around this. This policy will be widely circulated through various business communication channels (intranet, email, management structures).

AIMS

The policy aims to:

- Ensure that Managers recognise the benefits of supporting members of staff who wish to continue breastfeeding upon their return to work, inform them accordingly, and develop creative ways of working to enable this to happen.
- To create an environment where more female staff choose to breastfeed and are supported by the fellow colleagues.

As well as there being certain legal obligations, supporting breastfeeding also has 'business' benefits including:

- reduced absence from work due to child sickness
- increased staff morale and loyalty resulting in a higher return to work
- lower recruitment and training costs / higher staff retention
- an extra incentive to offer potential employees
- less sickness of female employees such as due to health gains of breastfeeding their babies i.e. reduced breast and ovarian cancer, and less risk of osteoporosis
- to act as a model employer

The policy requires all employees to respect a colleague's choice to breastfeed her baby and support her to manage this in her working hours.

IN SUPPORT OF THIS POLICY:

It is essential that all staff adhere to this policy to avoid conflict and discrimination. It should be implemented in conjunction with existing guidelines on maternity rights.

Pregnant employees will be provided with information during their pregnancy, in relation to their right to continue breastfeeding upon their return to work. Pregnant employees will receive this policy.

1. MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1.1 Communicate this policy to employees prior to the start of maternity leave.

1.2 The employee should be invited to a meeting to discuss her needs prior to her return to work. The employee may provide written notification of her intention to return to work as a breastfeeding mother.

1.3 The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the employees' needs and requirements such as if there is anything regarding her work which would affect or compromise her breastfeeding/expressing and how many times in the day she would anticipate needing to express milk. After which, arrangements should be made to implement the necessary actions. This may include looking at and re-thinking working patterns.

1.4 A risk assessment must be carried out to identify risks to the breastfeeding mother or her baby. If there are any risks, all reasonable steps must be taken to remove the risks or make alternative arrangements.

1.5 There may be a need to consider flexible working hours arranged around breastfeeding.

1.6 Employees who have a male manager and who may find it difficult to discuss her needs could discuss with a female member of the HR Team, who will then liaise with the manager of the employee.

2. BREASTFEEDING / EXPRESSING BREAKS:

2.1 If on return to work a woman is continuing to breastfeed, time will be available (in addition to meal breaks) either to feed her baby, if this is practicable, or to express her milk.

2.2 A breastfeeding employee will be allowed breaks at the same times of day that she would normally feed the baby at home, although needs of the service / business may sometimes have to take priority. If work needs are constantly taking priority, then the employee should arrange a meeting with her manager to resolve this promptly.

2.3 The number of breaks needed and their length are expected to vary over time.

3. WORK SCHEDULES:

3.1 The employee's needs as a breastfeeding mother will be taken into account when scheduling shifts or rotas, this includes night work. Managers should discuss the needs with the member of staff and seek to accommodate a change in working patterns if the current working pattern would have a detrimental effect on the staff member's ability to sustain breastfeeding or expressing of breast milk. There will be no amendments to the employee's salary if shifts are changed.

3.2 Employees will not be required to attend courses or meetings that will involve an excessively long working day or nights spent away from home.

3.3 Employers will support employees whilst they continue to breastfeed and arrangements to support the employee will be reviewed frequently during the first twelve months, ideally every 3 months. After this time, if breastfeeding continues, the employee will be required to discuss their needs with their manager. There will be no

limits suggested to employees regarding how long they should breastfeed for. It would be the responsibility of the member of staff to update their manager should their needs change prior to any scheduled review.

4. PROVISION OF PRIVATE ROOMS:

Once managers are aware that an employee will be returning to work whilst continuing to breastfeed he / she will ensure the following points are actioned according to the needs of the employee:

- An agreed warm, comfortable and private room is made available to the mother for either breastfeeding or expressing without interruptions. Managers will take responsibility for ensuring this room is made available
- An agreed time will be made for the employer to use the room during her working day.
- The employee should use her own expressing equipment which the employer is not responsible for.
- Agree a safe place to store any expressed breast milk. A fridge will need to be available which is in a safe place away from members of the public. The fridge should be cleaned on a regular basis.
- Any breast milk stored in the fridge should be double wrapped and well labelled. The fridge should run at 0 – 4 degrees Celsius and should house a fridge thermometer – the employee will be responsible for checking the temperature of the fridge. The employee is responsible for removing the breast milk at the end of her working day.
- Employers will take no responsibility for incorrect handling or labelling of expressed breast milk.

5. MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES

- Take note of this policy when supporting any employee who is returning to work as a breastfeeding mother
- Take note of the employees written notification that she intends to return to work as a breastfeeding mother
- Arrange a pre-return to work meeting to discuss her needs and requirements such as if there is anything regarding her work which would affect or compromise her breastfeeding / expressing and how many times in the day she would anticipate needing to express milk. Then make arrangements to implement the necessary actions. This may include looking at and re-thinking working patterns
- Conduct a risk assessment for the breastfeeding mother and her child – remove any risks you find
- Consider where you will find this employee somewhere to rest, express and store milk, or breastfeed her baby if this is a possibility
- Support the employee as she returns to work, checking that arrangements are suitable to her and that she is being supported to continue breastfeeding
- Ensure workplace colleagues are supportive of any staff wishing to continue to breastfeed