

BREASTFEEDING AT WORK POLICY

Introduction and scope

The company acknowledges the health benefits to both you and your child that breastfeeding provides and the recommendation that infants receive exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. As such, the company adopts the following policy in support of you, should you wish to continue breastfeeding:

- Take a positive and supportive attitude to you when returning to work if breastfeeding
- Wherever possible, allow appropriate flexibility in your working hours, including regular breaks if you wish to breastfeed or express milk
- Wherever possible and as necessary, make rest areas, storage space and refrigeration available for use when breastfeeding

According to the NHS, breastfeeding has major health benefits for both mother and baby, which include:

Reduced risk to babies of:

- Gastro-intestinal infections
- Chest Infections
- Urinary infections
- Ear infections
- Asthma
- Eczema
- Developing diabetes in childhood
- Obesity

Reduced risk to mothers who breastfeed of:

- Ovarian cancer
- All breast cancers
- Hip fractures caused by osteoporosis

By having in place mechanisms and facilities that support breastfeeding, the company aims to assist you in balancing your working and personal life.

Supporting breastfeeding will also facilitate the benefits of reduced parental absence, higher return to work rates, increased loyalty and improved retention. Each mother and child will have different needs, and you will also be able to exercise personal choice. As such, no specific time limit will be placed on how long you may choose to breastfeed. However, it is recognised that the longer the duration of breastfeeding, the greater the health benefits to both you and your baby.

Work patterns

As part of its family-friendly policies, the company will wherever possible facilitate flexible working patterns for you when breastfeeding, to enable you to either leave the workplace to breastfeed your baby if it is cared for locally, or to express and store your milk at the workplace in a comfortable and safe environment.

To support you, your working pattern may need to be changed e.g. you might need to temporarily change hours of work or conditions. When breastfeeding, you will not be required to work long shifts, travel excessively or attend training courses, as doing so would mean that you have to work an excessively long day, which may be detrimental to breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding or expressing milk during working hours

While the company cannot guarantee that it will be able to agree to every request for time off/flexibility in working hours, it will give favourable consideration to all requests and endeavour, within reason, to accommodate your wishes, bearing in mind the needs of the business.

Managers must adopt a supportive approach to this and should ensure that you have access to suitable facilities wherever possible. The average length of time required to feed a baby or to express milk varies from about 15 to 45 minutes.

Facilities for breastfeeding milk

The company has a statutory obligation under the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations (1999) to provide appropriate rest facilities for a pregnant colleague or new mother to rest. Ideally:

- There should be a clean, warm room, with a comfortable chair
- The area should either have a lock on the door or some other arrangement to ensure privacy
- Hand washing facilities should be available nearby
- There should be an electricity point to allow use of an electric breast pump

Managers should take due recognition of these requirements and should include them in the Risk Assessment required to be undertaken when the colleague returns to work and do all that is reasonably practicable to support and promote breastfeeding in the workplace.

Roles and responsibilities

- Directors and heads of departments have overall responsibility for ensuring that the company meets its statutory requirements for new mothers and ensuring that you are able to continue to breastfeed on returning to work by providing access to suitable and appropriate facilities to do so wherever possible.
- Line managers are responsible for ensuring that:
 - All colleagues who advise them that they will be taking maternity leave are made aware of the Breastfeeding at Work Policy
 - Suitable facilities are available for the mother to breastfeed or express and store milk
 - A risk assessment is undertaken when the new mother returns to work
 - Support is given to any requests for flexible working arrangements to facilitate breastfeeding when the mother returns to work, for example a temporary change in shift patterns

- It is acknowledged that the breastfeeding mother may require longer or additional breaks to express and store her milk
 - Any temporary changes to the colleague's normal hours of duty or normal shift pattern are agreed in writing, with date for review if applicable
 - All arrangements with the colleague are discussed and agreed at least two weeks before they return to work
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- You are responsible for advising your manager that you wish to use the policy to continue to breastfeed on your return to work. This should be done as soon as is reasonably possible, but at least four weeks prior to returning to work. You are required to take all reasonable care to ensure your own and others' health and safety. This will include taking an active part in the risk assessment for your return to work, taking due consideration of the infection control issues associated with breast milk, keeping the breastfeeding or expressing area clean and tidy and storing breast milk appropriately.

If you have any concerns regarding the expressing of milk, the facilities or the milk storage, you should contact the Human Resources department on 0121 568 2905 or email Sharedservices@afblakemore.co.uk.

Support available

Confidential Counselling Service (GroceryAid) – The company has set up a partnership with GroceryAid to provide you with access to a free and confidential counselling service along with a number of other free services. GroceryAid helps people, and their families, who are working in or who are retired from retail and associated businesses.

How can I contact GroceryAid?

- Online – www.groceryaid.org.uk
- Email – welfare@groceryaid.org.uk
- Free and confidential Helpline – available 24/7, 365 days a year on 08088 021 122

Human Resources advice and support

A.F. Blakemore Human Resources

Sharedservices@afblakemore.co.uk or 0121 568 2905

A.F. Blakemore Mental Health First Aider

reachout@afblakemore.co.uk