

Sheffield City Council

Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. Ensuring Sheffield people will have good health is a priority for the Council as we tackle the underlying root causes of poor health and develop excellent public health services in the city. Sheffield is fully accredited with Unicef's Baby Friendly Initiative and as a Breastfeeding Friendly organisation, we want any woman to have the opportunity to sustain breastfeeding for as long as they choose to do so.
- 1.2. Sheffield City Council will take all reasonable measures to ensure that breastfeeding mothers returning to work are given the necessary support to enable them to continue to breastfeed. This also supports the City Wide Public Health Initiative to encourage breastfeeding to promote better Public Health and the World Health Organisation's view that Breastfeeding is the way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. We also recognize it encourages attachment and attunement between the mother and baby which leads to better health outcomes in later life.
- 1.3. This policy reflects the intention of the Council, its managers, employees and trade unions to protect the health and rights of its employees as set out in the Health and Wellbeing theme of the Great Start in Life strategy. This recognises that supporting women to sustain breastfeeding when returning to work has benefits for all parties involved:

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging women to continue breastfeeding on returning to work
- Managers having a discussion with employees about the option to continue breastfeeding.
- Ensuring that suitable provisions are made to allow women to continue to breastfeed and express milk when returning to work from maternity leave.
- Managers carrying out an assessment of the needs of the employee when returning to work.
- Identifying and implementing any adjustments needed following the assessment.
- Monitoring and reviewing any changing needs once she is back at work.
- Providing information on facilities and support available and flexible working arrangements available.
- Identifying a Breastfeeding Champion for each workplace who is trained in how to provide practical and moral support

- 1.4. The Council recognises that supporting women employees to breastfeed brings health benefits to the mother and her baby and could contribute to:
- Healthier children
 - Higher rates of parents returning to work
 - Increased staff loyalty and continuity.
 - A healthier, happier workforce with fewer absences
 - A reputation as a family friendly employer.
 - Demonstrating our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

2 Employers Legal Duty and responsibilities

2.1. In the UK breastfeeding mothers have some legal protection under Health & Safety and Equality legislation. Employers have legal obligations to provide:

- Health & Safety protection
- Flexible working arrangements
- Suitable facilities for a breastfeeding employee to rest which will most likely be a suitable place to breastfeed/express milk
- Protection from indirect sex discrimination
- Protection from harassment

2.2. Employers are legally required to provide somewhere for pregnant and breastfeeding employees to rest. It is not suitable for new mothers to use toilets for expressing milk. Employers may provide a private, healthy and safe environment for employees to express and store milk.

2.3. It would be prudent to make reasonable adjustments to the job in a similar way as for a disabled employee e.g. breastfeeding / expressing breaks, a shorter working day, and regular shifts. If the workplace is incompatible with breastfeeding e.g. because of extensive travel or a lack of suitable facilities, employees could be transferred to a different role or different worksite. Discussions about breastfeeding should be dealt with sensitively.

3 Contact during the Maternity leave period

3.1. An employee and manager are able to make reasonable contact with each other at regular intervals during the maternity leave period to discuss such issues as; return to work, significant workplace developments, flexible working arrangements, expressing milk arrangements and training opportunities. How and when contact is made should be agreed between employer and employee prior to the start of maternity leave.

4 Continuing breastfeeding when back at work

4.1. There are various ways in which a working mother can combine breastfeeding with going back to work. Expressing breast milk in the workplace will enable breastfeeding mothers to continue with this activity once back at work and can be done in a number of ways.

- A mother can also express milk in the workplace to give to the baby later in the day.
- A baby can be brought into the workplace for the mother to breastfeed
- If a mother has selected childcare close to the workplace this may enable her to visit her baby during the working day and breastfeed.

5 Employees Responsibility

5.1. Breastfeeding mothers returning to work must be made aware that they should give reasonable notice to their manager in advance of returning to work of their intention to continue to breastfeed and their need to express milk whilst at work. This discussion can take place during contact during the leave period. This will ensure that the appropriate facilities and arrangements are in place to enable this activity. It will be the mothers' responsibility to ensure the correct storage of their expressed breast milk and to provide any equipment necessary to carry out the activity of expressing milk. Family Centres across the City have Infant Feeding peer support workers who can provide information and support for women wanting to return to work and breastfeed.

6 Expressing Milk at Work

- 6.1. It is advisable for working mothers to practice expressing milk prior to returning to work as it can take a while to perfect this skill. Practical advice and support can be obtained prior to returning to work from Infant Feeding Support Workers in Family Centres or Health Visitors. Support in the workplace can be obtained from the Breastfeeding Champions, the Sheffield Council Infant Feeding peer support workers or other organisations like the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) and La Leche League GB (see links at the end).
- 6.2. The Risk Assessment will identify a suitable place to express milk and where the breast milk can be stored. Some buildings may have a Mother and Baby room, in other workplaces there may be a first aid room, spare office or any private room preferably with a lockable door. A room with a 'private' sign could be arranged for periodic use. We would hope that a fridge and sink would be available for staff use but it is the breastfeeding mother's responsibility to label

and store her milk appropriately. Some mothers find an insulated flask useful for storing and transporting milk.

- 6.3. For community based employees who do not have a fixed worksite, arrangements need to be discussed and agreed with their manager. There are Breastfeeding rooms and [Breastfeeding Friendly Venues](#) available throughout the City.

7 Flexible Working Arrangements

- 7.1. Arrangements to express breast milk will be in the workers own time however flexibility will be needed in terms of the actual time this happens. It may be possible to take breaks when needed, however an employee may have to fit around existing breaks or lunch hour to fit in with the demands of the job. Managers would be expected to handle this in a sensitive way to allow employees to manage their time flexibly. It is really important for a breastfeeding mother to express milk on a regular basis to ensure her milk supply is able to meet her baby's needs.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1. It is important for managers to carry out a risk assessment of the needs of the employee when returning to work. Further information to assist with this can be found in the [Health and Safety A – Z section](#) of the Intranet.

9 Protection from harassment and discrimination

- 9.1. Employees need to think carefully about the type of flexible working they want and how it fits in with the job. An employer has to seriously consider a request for flexible working arrangements, whilst the employee is breastfeeding. A refusal to a request for flexible working arrangements could be discriminatory unless there are good business reasons for refusing.
- 9.2. An employee is protected against sexual harassment on the grounds of breast feeding.

10 Monitor and review

- 10.1. We will continue to ensure the breastfeeding policy is fit for purpose.

11 Policy Review

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed to accommodate any changes in legislation or working practices.

Useful Contacts

[Sheffield City Council Infant Feeding Co-ordinator](#)

[Sheffield Family Centres](#)

[Breastfeeding friendly places in Sheffield](#)

[Sheffield Directory](#)

[Breastfeeding in Sheffield Facebook page](#)

[La Leche League GB](#)

[National Childbirth Trust](#)

[The Association of Breastfeeding Mothers](#)

[The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative](#)

[Working Families](#)

[NHS Expressing & Storing Milk](#)

[The Breastfeeding Network](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)