



**Workforce**

**Breastfeeding Policy: guide for  
managers**

This guide will help managers to understand the Breastfeeding Policy to support employees who wish to breastfeed or express milk in the workplace.

The following guide forms part of the standard for workforce policies. These policies apply to all eligible staff within NHSScotland, regardless of the Board they are employed by.

NHSScotland wants to create an inclusive workplace where employees can thrive and feel confident about balancing their personal and professional responsibilities.

It is recognised that policies to support this are particularly important in NHSScotland given the predominantly female workforce who largely take on primary caring roles within the family. The guide covers:

<b>What is the purpose of the Breastfeeding Policy? .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Who is covered by this policy?.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Manager’s responsibilities .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Initial discussions .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Risk assessment.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Time for breastfeeding .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Facilities .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Recording arrangements.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Resolution of disagreements .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Related policies.....</b>	<b>7</b>

# What is the purpose of the Breastfeeding Policy?

NHSScotland recognises the benefits of breastfeeding for both mum and baby. We take a positive attitude toward all our employees who wish to breastfeed or express milk.

The Breastfeeding Policy aims to support and encourage employees to continue to breastfeed in the workplace. Most people accessing this policy will be returning to work following a period of maternity leave. Staff starting a new NHS role or those expressing milk for donation may also access this policy.

## Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all employees who are breastfeeding, expressing milk for their own baby, or expressing milk to be donated.

Breastfeeding does not exclusively apply to employees who identify as a woman. Some employees may find the term chestfeeding more appropriate, and this policy applies to those employees.

## Manager's responsibilities

As a manager, you are asked to promote a supportive culture for breastfeeding in the workplace. You could also consider infant feeding training for your wider team to raise awareness and encourage support for breastfeeding colleagues.

When you are aware that a team member is having a baby, you should let them know about the support available. If breastfeeding their baby, they will be supported to continue breastfeeding when they return to work. You should advise the employee that they should give at least 4 weeks' notice of when they wish to return. It will allow you to make sure suitable arrangements are in place for them to continue breastfeeding at work.

You should make the employee aware of the facilities available to allow them to:

- breastfeed their baby on the premises
- express and safely store milk.

This also applies to staff joining your team after taking maternity leave. Providing this information and early support will allow them to make informed choices. The employee can then make the necessary arrangements when they are planning to return to work or start their new role.

## **Initial discussions**

When your staff member advises that they wish to breastfeed or express milk at work, you should meet with them. The meeting should take place 4 weeks before their planned return to work or start date.

At the meeting, you should discuss their working arrangements and agree on a plan to support them with breastfeeding or expressing milk. The plan should be flexible, meeting both the individual needs and the needs of the service. It should also recognise that the employee may occasionally need additional time. This plan constitutes an agreement between the service and the staff member. Any issues that arise should be discussed. The plan may also need to be reviewed to make sure it continues to meet the needs of the service and the employee.

You should also let the employee know what facilities are available to them to breastfeed their baby or express milk.

There is no statutory limit on the length of time an employee can maintain breastfeeding. It is important to regularly review any agreed arrangements so that they continue to meet the needs of both the employee and the service.

## **Risk assessment**

For staff members returning to their post following maternity leave, who wish to continue breastfeeding their baby or express milk, you should review their pregnant workers and new mothers risk assessment.

An individual pregnant workers and new mothers risk assessment should be completed for new employees joining the service.

This risk assessment should include a section on breastfeeding or expressing milk. It should also include information about facilities to allow employees to breastfeed or express milk in a private and comfortable space. For peripatetic staff, this space may be across different facilities depending on their work location during each shift.

It also provides an opportunity to think about some of the other health and safety factors, such as lone working and night shifts.

If the risk assessment or healthcare advice shows that the employee would find it difficult to breastfeed or express at work, you should consider the following:

- what difficulties their role presents
- whether you could make reasonable changes to their role to overcome these difficulties

Examples of changes you could consider include a temporary change to their working hours or working pattern or a change to their place of work. You could also consider a temporary amendment to some duties within the role. These arrangements should be reviewed regularly until the employee can undertake all the duties of their substantive role.

It may not be possible to make changes to allow the employee to return to their post and continue to breastfeed or express milk. Temporary redeployment to an alternative role could be considered. You must have the employee's agreement and follow your Board's redeployment policy. You should have a conversation with the employee to find a suitable redeployment option. The manager and employee must make every effort to agree on an alternative role.

The employee may not agree to temporary redeployment, or redeployment may not be possible. In either case, the employee should be medically excluded and paid as if at work for as long as necessary to avoid any health and safety risks identified through the risk assessment. In the event of medical exclusion, this should be discussed fully with the staff member and confirmed in writing. You must outline the terms of their exclusion and make sure regular meetings are held. This will help to keep the situation under review and allow the employee to return to work when they can safely do so.

## **Time for breastfeeding**

In addition to existing breaks, employees are entitled to reasonable paid time for breastfeeding or expressing milk during working hours. The additional time may be stand-alone or an extension to existing breaks.

Both you and the employee should be flexible when creating a plan. It should be regularly reviewed to make sure it continues to meet the needs of the individual and the service.

There may be other times when the employee needs additional time away, and you are asked to be as flexible as possible.

## **Facilities**

Health Boards are responsible for providing suitable facilities for breastfeeding employees to breastfeed, express milk and rest. As a manager, you may play a role in identifying suitable areas that are accessible to your staff. These facilities should be:

- separate from bathrooms and meeting rooms
- lockable from the inside or an arrangement to ensure privacy
- equipped with a low, comfortable chair and somewhere for the employee to lie down, electric plugs, a table, and a sink with safe drinking water
- cleaned and sanitised regularly

Facilities should also be available to allow employees to store breast milk safely. These facilities must provide the following:

- a clean area to store breastfeeding equipment
- dedicated and secure space for storing expressed milk at 2-4°C until the employee takes it home – this may be a fridge or a cool bag

Storage should be regularly checked to make sure it maintains the correct temperatures and should be regularly cleaned and sanitised.

## **Recording arrangements**

It is important that you make arrangements for the employee to notify someone when they:

- leave their work area to breastfeed or express milk
- return to their work area

It will ensure all employees' safety in the event of a fire or other significant incident.

If you have more than one team member breastfeeding or expressing milk, you may need a booking system to make sure there is fair access to the facilities.

Depending on the facilities available, you may agree that more than one person can access the facility at the same time. This must be with the prior consent of the employees and should take into account staffing levels and the needs of the service.

Every effort should be made to make sure employees are not disturbed whilst breastfeeding or expressing milk. If interruptions are unavoidable, the employee should be given additional time later in the shift.

## **Resolution of disagreements**

It is expected that other employees will be supportive of new mothers and the agreed arrangements for breastfeeding and expressing milk. If the breastfeeding employee experiences negative behaviours, this should be managed in line with the relevant policy:

- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Conduct Policy](#)

Employees who have complaints about the process or the facilities provided have the right to raise them under the Grievance Policy. Every effort should be made to resolve issues informally through early resolution where possible.

## **Related policies**

The following policy is related to the Breastfeeding Policy:

- [Maternity Policy](#)