



Workforce

Breastfeeding Policy: guide for employees

This guide will help employees 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 their ability to balance 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:

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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 who are starting a new NHS role or those who are expressing milk for donation may also access this policy.

Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to you if you are breastfeeding your baby, expressing milk for your baby, or expressing milk to be donated.

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

Initial discussions

You should let your manager know that you wish to breastfeed or express milk when you return to work from maternity leave or if you are joining a new team.

Your manager should arrange to meet with you 4 weeks before your planned return to work date or your start date. At the meeting, you and your manager should discuss your working arrangements and agree on a plan to support you with breastfeeding or expressing milk. This plan should be flexible, meeting both your individual needs and the needs of the service and should be reviewed regularly. The plan should also recognise that you may occasionally need additional time.

This plan constitutes an agreement between you and the service. If you have any issues or concerns, these should be discussed with your manager at the earliest opportunity.

Risk assessment

When you return to work following maternity leave, and you wish to continue to breastfeed your baby or express milk, your manager should review your pregnant workers and new mothers risk assessment.

If you are new to the service, an individual pregnant workers and new mothers risk assessment should be completed.

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

The risk assessment 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 you would find it difficult to breastfeed or express at work, you and your manager should consider the following:

- what difficulties your role presents
- whether reasonable changes could be made to your role to overcome these difficulties

Examples of changes include a temporary change to your working hours or working pattern, a change to your place of work or a temporary amendment to some duties within your role. These arrangements should be reviewed on a regular basis until you can undertake all the duties of your substantive role.

It may not be possible to make changes to allow you to return to your post and continue to breastfeed or express milk. In this case, with your agreement, temporary redeployment to an alternative role could be considered, in line with your local Redeployment Policy. You and your manager must make every effort to agree on an alternative role

If you do not agree to temporary redeployment, or redeployment is not possible, you will 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. If you are medically excluded, this would be agreed in discussion with your manager and would be confirmed in writing.

The written confirmation would outline the terms of your exclusion. This situation would be reviewed regularly to ensure you are able to return to work as soon as it is safe for you to do so.

Time for breastfeeding

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

Both you and your manager are asked to be as flexible as possible when agreeing on a plan. It should be regularly reviewed to make sure it continues to meet both your needs and the needs of the service.

Facilities

Health Boards have a responsibility to provide suitable facilities for breastfeeding employees to breastfeed, express milk and rest. Your manager should ensure you have access to suitable facilities for breastfeeding your baby or expressing milk. 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 you to lie down, electric plugs, a table, and a sink with safe drinking water
- cleaned and sanitised regularly

There should also be facilities available to allow you 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 you take 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.

Peripatetic employees

If you work across more than one work location, identified spaces for breastfeeding or expressing milk may be across different facilities depending on your location during each shift. You should discuss this with your manager to identify appropriate areas across your work locations.

Recording arrangements

It is important that you notify someone in your work area when you:

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

This is to ensure your safety in the event of a fire or other significant incident. Local reporting arrangements should be discussed and agreed upon with your manager.

There may be more than one team member in your area breastfeeding or expressing milk, in which case there may need to be a booking system in place to make sure there is fair access to the facilities. Depending on the facilities available, you may be asked whether you would be comfortable accessing the facility at the same time as other staff members who are breastfeeding or expressing milk. You would only be asked to share the facilities if you consented to share the facilities.

Every effort should be made to make sure you are not disturbed whilst breastfeeding or expressing milk, but there may be occasions where interruptions are unavoidable. In this case, you should be given additional time later in the shift.

Resolution of disagreements

It is expected that your colleagues will support the arrangements to allow you to continue to breastfeed or express milk. If you experience any negative behaviours, you should report it to your manager, who will manage your concerns in line with the relevant policy:

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

If you have any complaints or concerns about the process or the facilities provided, you have the right to raise them under the [Grievance Policy](#).

Related policies

The following policy is related to the Breastfeeding Policy:

- [Maternity Policy](#)