

Sample policy on supporting breastfeeding employees



Purpose

This policy has been developed in light of good practice guidelines from the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSE) and recognises the value of breastfeeding for mothers and babies.

Policy

[.....Insert name of organisation.....] subscribes to the following policy to provide a workplace environment that supports breastfeeding employees in continuing to breastfeed their infants following their return to work. This policy will be communicated to all current employees and will be included in new employee orientation/induction training and on application for maternity leave.

[.....Insert name of organisation.....] encourages employees and management to have a positive, accepting attitude toward working women who are breastfeeding and discrimination and harassment of breastfeeding mothers in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

This policy is effective from [..insert date and will be reviewed ...insert date]

Organisation's responsibilities

[Insert name of organisation] acknowledges that supporting breastfeeding has benefits to the organisation such as a reduction in absenteeism and staff turnover and important health benefits to mother and baby. Employees who wish to continue to breastfeed following return to work shall receive:

- **Breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk**

Breastfeeding employees are allowed to breastfeed or express milk during work hours using their normal breaks and as part of additional lactation breaks (usually 20 minutes once or twice a day) as agreed with their line manager.

If additional time is needed beyond the agreed set breaks and lactation breaks employees may use personal leave or may make up the time by coming into work earlier or leaving work later as appropriate to the needs of both the workplace and the employee.

- **A private place to express milk**

A private room (not a toilet) shall be available for employees to breastfeed or express milk. The room will be private, lockable and clean, located near a sink with running water for washing hands and rinsing out breast pump parts, and have an electrical outlet. If employees prefer, they may also breastfeed or express milk in their own private offices, or in other comfortable locations agreed upon in consultation with the employee's supervisor. Expressed milk should be stored in a personal cool bag or if available the cool bag can be placed in a designated refrigerator.

- **Breastfeeding equipment**

Each breastfeeding employee is responsible for purchasing and maintaining all her own breast pump equipment. Storage of milk and cleaning of breast equipment should be undertaken as recommended in the Public Health Agency booklet *Breastfeeding and returning to work*.

www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/breastfeeding-and-returning-work

Or [delete if not relevant]

As a large business/organisation that recognises the importance of breastfeeding, we will consider requests to provide a hospital grade breast pump. Provision will be subject to having a sufficiently large number of female employees of child bearing age. If an employee decides to use the workplace breast pump they must use and maintain their own separate milk collection kit and clean this equipment in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and the guidance detailed in the Public Health Agency booklet *Breastfeeding and returning to work*.

www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/breastfeeding-and-returning-work

- **Education**

The HR department will signpost pregnant employees and returning employees to available information and support on breastfeeding and returning to work. Information is available at www.breastfedbabies.org and leaflets can be viewed at www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications

All work colleagues and line managers are expected to be supportive and sensitive to the needs of breastfeeding mothers returning to work.

- **Staff support**

Line managers and HR departments are responsible for alerting pregnant and breastfeeding employees about the breastfeeding and working policy and for negotiating breaks and practices that will help facilitate each employee's infant feeding goals. It is expected that line managers and work colleagues will assist in providing a supportive and understanding approach to facilitating breastfeeding employees.

Employee's responsibilities

- **Communication with supervisors**

Employees who wish to breastfeed or express milk after their return to work shall keep supervisors informed of their needs so that appropriate accommodations can be made to satisfy the needs of both the employee and the workplace.

- **Maintenance of milk expression equipment**

Employees are responsible for leaving the designated milk expression area clean and tidy for the next user. All breast pump equipment must be cleaned in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and as recommended in the Public Health Agency booklet *Breastfeeding and Returning to Work*.

www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/breastfeeding-and-returning-work

- **Milk storage**

Employees should label all milk expressed with her name and the date collected so that it is not inadvertently confused with another employee's milk. Each employee is responsible for proper storage and transportation of her own milk, it is recommended that personal cool bags are used including within a designated refrigerator if this is available. If a refrigerator is not available breastmilk can be stored at room temperature or in a cool bag for 6 hours.

- **Use of break times to express milk**

If more than one breastfeeding employee needs to use the designated expressing room, employees can use a sign-in log provided in the room to negotiate milk expression times that are most convenient or best meet their needs.

Further information

- Health and Safety Executive NI (2014) *A Guide for new and expectant mothers who work.*
www.hseni.gov.uk/new_and_expectant_mothers.pdf
- Public Health Agency (2014) *Promoting breastfeeding for mothers returning to work: a guide for employers.*
www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/breastfeeding_and_returning_to_work_a_guide_for_employers.pdf