

BREASTFEEDING IN THE WORKPLACE CHECKLIST

Introduction

Perth & Kinross Council is committed to providing employees with the ability to balance their working lives with their personal lives including supporting employees with child care responsibilities. The Council recognises the health benefits to both mother and child that breastfeeding provides and is committed to making provision for female employees who wish to continue breastfeeding after their return to work following maternity leave.

The Council believes that by ensuring appropriate provisions are in place both the employee and the Council will benefit. These benefits may include reduced absence throughout the organisation, higher rates of women returning to work after giving birth and to enable women to make important choices for their families

The aim of this guidance is to provide the support that is necessary to enable female employees returning to work, while their baby is either at home or in nursery, following maternity leave to continue breastfeeding for as long as they deem appropriate. The guidance applies to all employee groups.

Legislation

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Employment Rights Act 2002, ensures the Council has a duty to consider whether or not the mother's working conditions are a risk to her health or the health of her baby. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 state that employers must provide 'suitable facilities' for breastfeeding employees 'to rest'. These facilities should be conveniently situated close to toilet/washing facilities and there should be somewhere for mothers to lie down if necessary.

The EU Council Pregnant Workers Directive 92/85/EEC states that if an employee's work affects her ability to breastfeed, an employer must temporarily alter her working conditions and/or hours or give alternative work to allow her to continue breastfeeding. This will require employers to be flexible about breaks and other working conditions.

Process

This guidance applies to all female employees who make a request in writing 28 days before their return to work, to their line manager to provide support/facilities to enable her to continue breastfeeding upon her return to work. The line manager must acknowledge the request in writing and carry out a risk assessment, before the employee returns to work.

It is the duty of the line manager to ascertain what the practical arrangements will be in agreement with the employee. This will depend on hours worked, service provision, the ability to use flexi-time.

Time off Arrangements

The Council recognises that all women and children are different and require different arrangements to meet their needs. Women typically require up to 2 or 3 milk express sessions lasting approximately 15 minutes each working day (not counting time to go to and from the location room).

The line manager and employee should complete a risk assessment and discuss the practical arrangements of their requirements before the employee returns to work; where possible this should be completed a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the employee returning to work.

Areas for discussion will include working time, flexible working hours, times and arrangements for breaks for feeding/expressing milk, facilities etc.

Reasonable time will be allowed during working hours to express milk. This in practice could mean agreeing an extended meal break or designated time for milk expression sessions during the working day.

Starting slightly later in the morning or leaving early in the evening to allow breastfeeding to take place is also an option, depending on service provision and within the context of the flexible working options. If this option is utilised, flexi time would only be credited when the employee is actually in the workplace. Where employees are not on flexi time, employees will require a temporary change in hours or pattern of work.

While it is the employee's own decision as to how long she will breastfeed, it is important also to agree a review date at this initial meeting to evaluate the practical implications and if necessary amend the previously agreed arrangements.

There are a wide range of flexible working arrangements for consideration to help mothers continue breastfeeding while at work. This may involve a temporary change to the duties, where this can be accommodated; the employee carries out in her daily work for health and safety reasons, or a temporary change to the routine of the working day. This can be agreed through the use of appropriate flexible working options, such as the Flexible Working Policy.

Practical Arrangements

Where an employee wishes to express milk at work the Council ideally should provide the following facilities:

- A warm clean room (this can be a designated First Aid Room)
- A facility to lie down and/or a low comfortable chair
- A lock or privacy sign for that room
- Electric sockets
- Hand-washing facilities in the room or near by
- A hygienic place to clean pumps and store sterilising equipment
- A fridge/mini fridge for storing milk at the appropriate temperature

Review Period

Following discussion with the employee, consideration should be given to any necessary arrangements prior to their return to work and regular review periods agreed. This could be, for example, every month or every 3 months.

Further guidance is available from the Human Resources.

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Name of Employee

Designation

Service

Date/Time of appointment

Arrangements to consider between Line Manager and Employee -

- Contact made with Line Manager and appointment arranged
- Availability of the room with key to lock the door checked and booking confirmed
- Employee advised of date and time of the room to express milk
- Employee advised when appointment arranged by Line Manager to bring their own sterilisation tablets, a plastic container, and own expressing equipment
- Room arrangements to be explained to employee including if using the First Aid Room and a First Aid incident occurs, this takes priority
- Fridge – current fridge or newly purchased mini fridge (for breast milk storage only) - hygiene explained including labels for the bottle(s) and equipment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S)

Q1 - As a Manager, do I have to buy a fridge for expressed milk storage?

A You would only have to purchase a fridge if there is not already one available or if other employees were uncomfortable sharing their milk and other foodstuffs with a clearly labelled container of expressed milk.

Q2 – Can the employee bring the child into the workplace for feeding purposes?

A – No, this is not practical, however the employee can express milk during work time, stored at work and then it can be used to feed their child at home.

Q3 – Should there be a designated staff room to express milk?

A – Not necessarily, as long as there is a room that can be locked and utilised for the employee to express their milk when required for this purpose. The room can be multi-functional and can be used for milk expression at designated times.

Q4 – Should I put a sign on the door of the room to be used for expressing milk?

A – You can designate a specific room for the employee, however it is not compulsory to use a privacy sign as long as others using the room are aware it is being used for expressing milk purposes at specific times.