

BREASTFEEDING POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 NHS 24 aims to promote the benefits of breastfeeding and encourage employees to make use of the facilities provided. The benefits to both mother and baby of breastfeeding for the first 4-6 months have been widely accepted and NHS 24 is committed to encouraging mothers to continue breastfeeding on their return to work.
- 1.2 NHS 24 will offer adequate, comfortable facilities and provisions for breastfeeding and expressing milk during this period. Relevant information will be provided to pregnant employees at the earliest opportunity to allow them to consider using the facilities on offer or their return to work.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all female employees regardless of grade, length of service or hours worked. Female employees will be allowed reasonable time off at their place of work to allow the provisions of this policy to be applied.

3. Principles

- 3.1 NHS 24 is committed to facilitating employee's return to work after maternity leave by supporting new mothers who wish to continue breastfeeding whilst at work. Evidence indicates that organisations which support breastfeeding mothers on their return to work, can benefit through reduced parental absence, higher rate of return to work following maternity leave, increased staff loyalty and improved staff continuity.

4. Procedure for Requesting Time Off

- 4.1 All reasonable requests for time off will normally be granted, giving access to facilities for the expressing and storage of breast milk. Employees should contact their team leader, line manager or Human Resources Department to discuss their requirements at least three weeks prior to their return to work, or the date from which they will require access to these facilities.

5. Provision of Facilities

- 5.1 In each of the NHS 24 sites, a medical room is designated for the use of returning mothers to express milk/breastfeed during their working time. The room is secure with arrangements in place for 24-hour access. Each room is private and comfortable, and is equipped with the following:
 - Comfortable chair, and where necessary, the facility to lie down.
 - Fridge for storing milk;

- Steam steriliser;
- Electric point for use of an electric pump if necessary;
- Wash hand basin, soap and hand towels;
- Information on breastfeeding, including telephone numbers of support groups.

6. Flexible Work Patterns

6.1 To support mothers returning to work who wish to continue breastfeeding, managers and employees may wish to consider the appropriateness of the following as possible methods of facilitating this:

6.2 Job sharing/returning to work on a part-time basis

- Temporarily changing the working conditions or hours of work may assist support continued breastfeeding (e.g. a job sharing agreement or a return to work on a part-time basis).

6.3 Granting of time off for breastfeeding or to express milk.

- Where practicable, returning mothers who wish to continue breastfeeding will be afforded reasonable time off during working hours to breastfeed, if their baby is being cared for nearby, or to express breast milk. Managers should provide the flexibility to incorporate such breaks as detailed above into the working patterns.

7. Information to Pregnant Employees

7.1 On submission of the application for maternity leave, employees will be sent information on the facilities available to allow employees to continue breastfeeding on their return to work. In addition, employees will receive a copy of "Breastfeeding Your Baby", which is published by UNICEF and outlines the benefits to mother and child as well as providing detailed advice on the practicalities of breastfeeding, expressing and storing milk.

7.2 Employees will discuss with their line manager the necessary arrangements which require to be put in place prior to the employee's return to work. This will enable any alternations/additions to be made, which may be necessary to meet the requirements of employees.

8. Review

The Policy will be reviewed in Partnership no later than on a two yearly basis.

March 2005