

Breastfeed anytime, anywhere.

The Breastfeeding Friendly
Employer Scheme





Returning to work



Returning to work after having a baby can be tough, juggling the challenges of a newborn and a job. One of the key issues faced by employees is the continuation of breastfeeding, with many feeling that a return to work marks the end of their breastfeeding journey.

Contents

There are steps that you can take to support your employee's return to work while they continue to breastfeed their child. This short document will provide information on:

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Please note that this document seeks to be fully inclusive, incorporating but not limited to individuals identifying as she/her/trans and non-binary, engaging in breast milk expressing, chest or breast feeding. Terms can be used interchangeably throughout.



The benefits of **Breastfeeding**

How parents and carers choose to feed their baby is their decision. Yet evidence tells us that breastmilk offers newborns the perfect start to life. Tailor made for each child, breastmilk is filled with nutrients & antibodies that ensure the health and wellbeing of an infant through to adulthood. If we continue to scale up breastfeeding in the UK, it is estimated that we could reduce the number of common childhood illnesses while saving the NHS £50 million per year (UNICEF).

In addition to nutritional value, breast or chest feeding yields enormous benefits for baby and the feeding individual. Evidence points to widespread improvements in maternal mental health, relationship building, the environment and cost savings (UNICEF).

“Tailor made for each child, breastmilk is filled with nutrients and antibodies”





International health agencies including the WHO and UNICEF, recommend feeding an infant breastmilk until they are at least six months of age. Furthermore, the WHO recommends the continuation of breastmilk until a child has reached their second birthday, combining this with the introduction of solid foods. Parents may choose to feed their infants breastmilk directly from the breast, or via a bottle following expressing.

Therefore, parents and employees will make different decisions regarding the length of time and mode of feeding. It is important that employers recognise these differences and endeavour to support employees accordingly.

“It is important that employers recognise differences and endeavour to support employees accordingly.”



Becoming a Breastfeeding

Friendly Employer

What is the Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Scheme?

This scheme is aimed at organisations interested in supporting staff members to return to the workplace, whilst breastfeeding or expressing.

This initiative is led by the Children and Young People's Public Health team at Barnsley Council, and we are working across the borough to increase & promote breastfeeding.

To engage in the scheme, you need to recognise and embrace the value of breastfeeding employees, then action the simple steps outlined below.

85%

We asked breastfeeding individuals whether they worried about breastfeeding and returning to work. 85% said yes.

"Awareness, time, space, facilities."

– A response from one woman when asked what an employer could have done to support her return to work whilst breastfeeding.



Why sign up? The benefits to your organisation

Supporting your employees in breastfeeding is equally beneficially for your organisation.

By supporting breastfeeding it can:

- Reduce staff turnover and retain workers
- Reduce leave associated with illness & maternity absenteeism
- Increase job satisfaction, morale and staff loyalty
- Improve the corporate image of your business, through the demonstration of compassion and investment in staff health and wellbeing.

Simple steps to ensure that you are a Breast feeding Friendly Employer

To achieve a breastfeeding friendly workspace, we suggest that organisations:

- 1) Engage with returning employees** prior to their return to work, asking them if they plan to continue breastfeeding
- 2) Conduct a risk assessment** prior to the employee's return, to assess risks and facilitate their safe return and continued breastfeeding (HSE). The risk assessment may include possible threats to breastfeeding, such as:
 - a. Certain processes
 - b. Working conditions
- 3) Develop a breastfeeding friendly space.** This can be achieved through actioning the following:
 - a. Offer a flexible approach to breaks or reduction in hours** to facilitate feeding or expressing when required, in line with UK legislation Article 10 of the [Maternity Protection Convention](#)
 - b. Consider developing a breastfeeding or lactation policy.** This can be a standalone policy or sat within a general maternity policy. Further information is outlined below
 - c. Identify a private breast feeding room** within your workplace that can be used for breastfeeding or expressing. This is not a legal requirement but it can be deemed unlawful if there is room available in the workplace, but there is not an appropriate space identified for staff to breastfeed (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2024). More information on private rooms can be found on the next page.

It is important to bear in mind that support needs for employees may differ depending on the age of their infant. For example, an employee returning to work after six months of maternity leave may have differing feeding needs to someone returning after a twelve-month period of leave. It is therefore important to acknowledge differing needs, through open and honest conversation with employees.





Breastfeeding rooms

The private breast feeding room should meet several criteria:

- The room **must be private** but can be co-opted for other purposes. However, it must be accessible for feeding or expressing when required.
- The room **cannot be a bathroom**. This is not hygienic for expressing or feeding.
- Consider installing a **small fridge and comfortable chair** in the breastfeeding space. This will enable the individual to store milk and sit comfortably. The chair should be wipeable to maintain hygiene. The fridge can however be in a separate room but ensure there are processes in place for labelling and identifying milk.
- If the room has space consider including a desk to enable staff to continue their work whilst feeding or expressing.
- Consider a manual **locking mechanism** inside the room and an occupied sign to ensure privacy.
- Consider establishing some **cleaning guidance** to users to ensure that the space remains clean for multiple employees throughout the day.



The room could also include the following:

-  Power sockets
-  Good ventilation
-  Hand washing facilities
-  A bin

UNICEF offer comprehensive guidance on designing and setting up a breastfeeding room:
<https://tinyurl.com/2s3zeczyn>

Breastfeeding Friendly Policies

A breastfeeding policy could be either a standalone policy or a component of a wider general maternity policy. This decision can be made by you, the organisation.

The policy must clearly state **organisational responsibilities**, for example the provision of flexible break patterns, a private room, employee support and/or any other offers made to breastfeeding staff.

The policy must clearly state **the employee's responsibilities**, for example that any breastfeeding or expressing equipment such as a breast pump, are the responsibility of the employee and/or the item(s) owner.

The policy should include direction on:



- Communication with line manager
- Appropriate milk storage, including clear labelling and transportation
- Proposed plan if multiple employees require access to a dedicated breastfeeding room. This could include a sign in process or booking system.

“The policy must clearly state the organisational responsibilities”

Resources to support the creation of a breastfeeding policy can be found here:

Acas: Maternity leave & pay (returning to work):



Equality and Human Rights Commission: Pregnancy, adoption and maternity (returning to work):



Employee Responsibilities

The employee & feeding individual must also assume responsibilities, including:

- Appropriate labelling and storage of breastmilk in sealed containers
- Effective and honest communication with their manager
- Engaging in effective handwashing, hygiene and cleanliness of the room
- Care of the infant, if they are brought onto work premises by another carer/parent for the purposes of breastfeeding
- Responsible decision making should an infant be unwell; making the decision not to bring the child into work premises
- Vacating the private breastfeeding room when no longer required.



41%

When asked if it was easy to speak to their employer about feeding plans and returning to work, 41% said this wasn't easy.



How to sign up and what happens next:

You can download and complete the application form and submit this to PublicHealthCYP@barnsley.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can contact us to arrange a visit where we will complete the form with you. To join the scheme, we ask that you pledge to developing a breastfeeding friendly environment for employees, taking into consideration various/all suggested steps outlined in the scheme document. We will review your Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Scheme status every three years

Date of application:

Name of organisation:

Type of organisation:

Number of employees:

Contact name:

Contact address:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Website/Social media:

Please tick to agree that by signing up to be part of the Barnsley Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Scheme, you are agreeing with your organisation's name being placed on Barnsley Council's website and social media sites.



Once your application form is submitted and approved, we will arrange to send or deliver your welcome pack. This will include a certificate for your venue along with promotional material including the 'breastfeeding welcome here' signs, window stickers for you to display, and some leaflets on the breastfeeding support offer for Barnsley. These can be displayed in your breastfeeding space(s).

We will add your details to the Barnsley Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Scheme register, which can be found at barnsley.gov.uk/InfantFeeding.

We will signpost all families to this webpage, and we will also arrange photos for promotion on our social media channels.

If you have any questions or anything you wish to discuss further, you can contact Children and Young Peoples Public Health Team:
PublicHealthCYP@barnsley.gov.uk



Links and further reading

Acas: Maternity leave & pay
<https://tinyurl.com/2p9jazp9>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Pregnancy, adoption and maternity
<https://tinyurl.com/5b864ry3>

Health and Safety Executive: Protecting new & expectant mothers at work
www.hse.gov.uk/mothers

International Labour Organisation: Maternity Protection Convention
<https://tinyurl.com/y4hf46e6>

La Leche League GB: Mother's legal rights when returning to paid employment
<https://tinyurl.com/77ew2snp>

Maternity Action: Child-friendly working hours
<https://tinyurl.com/j2abn4rz>

Maternity Action: Breastfeeding when you return to work
<https://tinyurl.com/y82twfxc>

Maternity Action: Health and safety during pregnancy and on return to work
<https://tinyurl.com/2d62xpzd>

National Childbirth Trust (NCT): Breastfeeding & returning to work
<https://tinyurl.com/rbx5cu67>

NHS – Better Start for Life: Breastfeeding & returning to work
<https://tinyurl.com/ytye39p8>

The Breastfeeding Network: More information for employers
<https://tinyurl.com/yyw8r775>

UNICEF: Breastfeeding in the UK
<https://tinyurl.com/5an92766>

UNICEF: Breastfeeding support in the workplace, a guide for employers
<https://tinyurl.com/yx2ryc97>

UNICEF: Research on breastfeeding and climate change
<https://tinyurl.com/jx377pjb>

WHO: Breastfeeding
<https://tinyurl.com/tn2fuocr>



Contact us

Barnsley Council's Public Health team have resources available to support your organisation, and can answer any questions or concerns.

Contact us at:

PublicHealthCYP@barnsley.gov.uk



Find out more about our
breastfeeding support



Family
HUBS
and Start for Life