

# NHS FORTH VALLEY

## BREASTFEEDING AT WORK POLICY



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<b>Group Committee –</b>	Area Partnership Forum	
<b>Final Approval</b>		

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## Management of Policies Procedure control sheet

(Non clinical documents only)

Name of document to be loaded	Breastfeeding At Work Policy			
Area to be added to	* see areas available on the policy web-page			
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12/05/2016	Staff Governance Team	Policy review and EQIA complete.	V2.06

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## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

In addition to its legal obligations as an employer, NHS Forth Valley acknowledges the health benefits to both mother and child which breast-feeding provides and the recommendation that infants receive exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. As such, NHS Forth Valley adopts the following code of practice in support of employees who are breastfeeding:

- Take positive and supportive attitudes to employees returning to work who are breastfeeding.
- Make information about breastfeeding available to all pregnant employees
- Wherever possible, allow appropriate flexibility in working hours, including regular breaks for employees who wish to breast-feed or express milk.
- Wherever possible and as necessary, make available rest areas, storage space and a dedicated refrigerator, for use by breastfeeding employees.

## 2. RATIONALE

It is well documented that breastfeeding has major health benefits for both mother and baby which include:

Reduced risk to babies of:

- Gastro-intestinal infections
- Chest Infections
- Urinary infections
- Ear infections
- Asthma
- Eczema
- Developing diabetes in childhood
- Obesity

Reduced risk to mothers who breastfeed of:

- Ovarian Cancer
- All breast cancers
- Hip fractures caused by osteoporosis

By having in place mechanisms and facilities which support breastfeeding NHS Forth Valley aims to assist employees to balance their working and personal lives. Supporting breastfeeding will also facilitate the benefits of reduced parental absence, higher return to work rate, increased staff loyalty and staff continuity.

Each mother and child will have different needs and the mother will also exercise personal choice. As such no specific time limit can be placed on how long a mother may choose to breast feed. However, it should be recognised that the longer the duration of breastfeeding the greater the health benefits to both mother and baby.

### **3. WORK PATTERNS**

As part of the Work - Life Balance Policies, NHS Forth Valley will facilitate flexible working patterns for breastfeeding women to either breastfeed their baby if it is cared for locally, or to express and store their milk. To support the employee, the working pattern may need to be changed e.g. temporarily changing hours of work or conditions. Breastfeeding employees should not be required to work shifts or attend training courses, which would mean that they have to work an excessively long day, which may be detrimental to breastfeeding.

### **4. INFORMATION FOR PREGNANT EMPLOYEES**

Information on NHS Forth Valley's Breastfeeding at Work Policy will be included in the Maternity Pack that is sent to all employees who notify NHS Forth Valley that they are pregnant.

### **5. BREASTFEEDING OR EXPRESSING MILK DURING WORKING HOURS**

While NHS Forth Valley cannot guarantee that it will be able to agree to every request for time off/flexibility in working hours, it will give favourable consideration to requests and endeavour, within reason, to accommodate employees' wishes bearing in mind the needs of the service. Managers must adopt a supportive approach to this and should ensure that the breastfeeding employee has access to suitable facilities. The average length of time required to feed a baby or to express milk varies from about 25 to 45 minutes.

### **6. FACILITIES FOR REST/EXPRESSING MILK**

NHS Forth Valley has a statutory obligation under the Workplace Health Safety and Welfare Regulations (1999) to provide appropriate rest facilities for a pregnant woman or new mother to rest. Ideally these should take the form of:

- Clean, warm room, with low comfortable chair and where necessary the facility to lie down.
- The area should either have a lock on the door or some other arrangement to ensure privacy.
- Hand Washing facilities should be available nearby.
- There should be an electricity point to allow use of an electric breast pump.

Managers should take due cognisance of these requirements and should include it, as part of the Risk Assessment required to be undertaken when the new mother returns to work and do all that is reasonable practicable to support and promote breast feeding.

For staff working at or near Forth Valley Royal Hospital, a specific rest room for breast feeding is available within the Occupational Health Service, which is open Monday to

Friday 0830-1700 (except Public Holidays). Contact can be made with the Occupational Health Service on 01324 566663.

## **7. FACILITIES FOR STORING BREAST MILK**

A clean area should be made available where the mother can store any equipment required.

Dedicated fridge for the storage of breast milk only are available on loan from the Occupational Health Service to the area where the new mother is working until the milk can be taken home. The responsibility for the cleaning and monitoring of the fridge temperatures will be with the mother.

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENTS**

Further to the Pregnancy Risk Assessments undertaken in the antenatal period, Managers are accountable for ensuring that a risk assessment is undertaken when a new mother returns to the workplace. This should include, how best to support the employee who wishes to breastfeed and any risks to her doing so from the working environment. In undertaking the risk assessment managers need to take due cognisance of the need for a lactating mother to be able to express her milk when her breast are full as this will help reduce the risk to her of engorgement, mastitis and a reduction in milk supply. Please see the New and Expecting Mothers Guidance for further information.

## **9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **9.1 Directors, Heads of Service**

Directors and Heads of Service have the overall responsibilities for ensuring that NHS Forth Valley meets its statutory requirements for new mothers and enable all staff to be able to continue to breast feed on returning to work by ensuring access to suitable and appropriate facilities to do so.

### **9.2 Line Managers**

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- all staff who advise them that they will be taking Maternity Leave can access the Breast Feeding at Work Policy.
- suitable facilities are available for the mother to breast feed or express and store milk i.e. toilets and changing rooms are not appropriate
- a risk assessment is undertaken when the new mother returns to work
- support is given to any requests for flexible working arrangements to facilitate breastfeeding when the mother returns to work, for example a temporary change in shift patterns
- it is acknowledged that the breast feeding mother may require longer or additional breaks to express and store her milk

- any temporary changes to the employees normal hours of duty or normal shift pattern are agreed in writing, with date for review and that a Change Form is completed if applicable
- discuss and agree all arrangements with employee at least two weeks before they return to duty.

### **9.3 The Employee**

The employee is responsible for advising their manager in writing that they wish to use the policy to continue to breastfeed on their return to work. This should be done as soon as is reasonably possible, but at least four weeks prior to returning to work. The employee is required to take all reasonable care to ensure her own and others health and safety. This will include taking an active part in the risk assessment for her return to work, taking due cognisance of the infection control issues associated with breast milk, keeping the breast feeding or expressing area clean and tidy and storing breast milk appropriately. The employee can request a loan of a breast milk fridge through the Occupational Health Service. The employee will be responsible for monitoring the temperature of the breast fridge, which should be between 2 and 4 degrees centigrade, cleaning the breast milk fridge after use and only using it to store breast milk. Occupational Health should be notified when the fridge is no longer required. The fridges must be returned to Occupational Health and should not under any circumstances be passed on to another employee to use. Occupational Health can be contacted on 01324 566663.

### **9.4 The Estates Department**

Dedicated breast milk fridges, available to all NHS Forth Valley staff, these are maintained by NHS FV Estates Department (agreement has been reached with SERCO in relation to their use on FVRH site) and are stored within the Occupational Health Service who will keep a register of where and to whom the fridges have been loaned.

### **9.5 The Occupational Health Service**

The OHS will provide support and advice to managers and mothers to help facilitate breast feeding at work. In particular the OHS will:

- assist new mothers and managers with aspects of the risk assessment where the manager and new mother require further assistance.
- enable the mother to use the rest facilities within OH to express milk
- Sign post the new mother to support and advice on breastfeeding and returning to work.

### **9.6 Human Resources**

In liaison with payroll will ensure that all expectant mothers receive a copy of the Breast Feeding at Work Policy as part of their Maternity Pack.

## **10. Policy Review**

This policy and procedure has been updated as part of the harmonisation of staff terms and conditions within NHS Forth Valley in partnership with Service Managers and staff representatives through a partnership working group. This policy will be formally reviewed in 3 years by the HR Policy Steering Group or as requested by the Area Partnership Forum/Staff Governance Committee.

### **Publications in Alternative Formats**

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