

# Supporting your breastfeeding staff

Businesses have an important role in supporting breastfeeding mothers (clients, colleagues and staff).

- It makes good business sense
- There are legal requirements

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) state that it is for women to decide how long they wish to breastfeed; returning to work does not mean women have to stop breastfeeding.

Women make up nearly half the workforce in the UK.

More than 80% will become mothers during their working life.



## The business case

Supporting mothers to continue breastfeeding makes economic sense:

- Breastfeeding reduces the frequency and severity of a range of childhood illnesses. UK research found bottle-fed infants were at five times the risk of developing gastrointestinal illness. Australian research found introduction of milk other than breastmilk before 4 months of age was a significant risk factor for asthma
  - Parents are likely to need less time off for their ill children
  - Increased staff morale and loyalty
  - Higher rate of return to work
- ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk); UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative)

## Information a pregnant or breastfeeding working mother might need

- Sensitive discussion about breastfeeding as part of her maternity and back to work plan
- Let employees know about the policy before they go on maternity leave.
- Provision for private milk expression
- Safe storage of breastmilk
- Appropriate time to express
- Signposting to support services for help with expressing and expressing

A baby's health may be at risk if a mother is prevented from providing breastmilk

Consider what might be needed for a risk assessment for a breastfeeding mother

Do you have a policy?

## Why is expressing milk important?

- Maintains mother's milk supply
- Enables the baby to receive her milk
- Helps prevent problems eg mastitis which may cause her to need time off
- Most mothers will need to express around every three hours (UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative)

## Relevant legislation

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW)
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (the Workplace Regulations)
- Equality Act 2010



[www.kentbabymatters.org](http://www.kentbabymatters.org)  
[www.maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.maternityaction.org.uk)  
[www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/)  
[www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/expressing-and-returning-to-work](http://www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/expressing-and-returning-to-work)

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