



Who these guidelines are for:

The guidelines below are intended to support new parents to breastfeed or express breastmilk at work. They provide helpful guidance both to staff and to line managers, and signpost to further resources. Some parents may not want, or may be unable, to breastfeed for a variety of personal reasons, which they may not wish to discuss, and this is respected.

Our University's commitment to supporting breastfeeding/expressing:

- The University recognises the importance of supporting staff to express or breastfeed at work where the staff member has chosen to do so.
- Enabling breastfeeding/expressing to take place in the workplace provides the opportunity for parents to follow World Health Organisation advice¹. It can support wellbeing by helping the returning employee to avoid health problems such as mastitis and other related issues.
- It supports new parents to return to work and enables our University to retain their skills and valuable individual contribution.
- It can also enable more choices about return dates and make it easier for parents to share leave in their child's first year, if that is what they want to do which can help to increase flexibility around the amount and timing of leave taken by parents.

Accommodating arrangements for breastfeeding or expressing is normally simple, inexpensive and is temporary. The University aims to take a positive approach to breastfeeding and expressing. This guidance is written to take into account relevant Health & Safety legislation, The Equality Act 2010, ACAS advice, feedback from Athena SWAN Focus Groups and good practice guidance.

It is expected that line managers would be supportive of, and positive towards, individuals who wish to continue to breastfeed.

What breastfeeding/expressing at work may mean:

- Many parenting employees will express milk, which they then store in a fridge and use later to feed the baby from a bottle. It is vital that the employee has access to clean, hygienic facilities to express milk.
- The breastfeeding parent has very limited control, if any, over the length and frequency of feeds/expressing sessions. When babies are smaller, they feed little and often, and the number of feeds decrease as they get older. Over a working day, around 3-4 breastfeeding or expressing sessions would be usual for a baby 6 weeks to 6 months old; 2-3 sessions for a baby 6-12 months; and 1-2 sessions for a baby older than 12 months². It may be expected to take between 20 minutes and 45 minutes to express milk or breastfeed². However, this would be indicative only; every individual will have a different need.

¹ "Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended up to 6 months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond." World Health Organisation
<http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/>

² Maternity Action Guidance for Employers "Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work"

- The breastfeeding parent also has very limited control, if any, over the total period during which baby will have breastmilk. There is no fixed-time span for breastfeeding and it may vary considerably.
- Rather than expressing, some employees may wish to arrange for a relative or child minder to bring the child to the workplace to be breastfed.

Considerations in breastfeeding/expressing at work:

- **Risk Assessment**

- During breastfeeding, the new parent must not be exposed to risks that could adversely affect their health or that of the baby.
- The new parent should let their line manager know, as early as possible, that they plan to continue breastfeeding when they return to work.
- The line manager should carry out a risk assessment. This can be downloaded from the University Safety Office web pages at: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/pregnancy-form.docx>
- The risks depend on the working conditions, but could include working with organic mercury, working with radioactive materials, and exposure to lead. More information on the risk to breastfeeding parents is given in the publications listed below:
 - i. University Safety Office guidance “New and expectant mothers at work” at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/pregnancy.pdf>
 - ii. Health & Safety Executive Leaflet “New and expectant mothers who work: A brief guide to your health and safety”: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg373.pdf>

- **Agreeing arrangements**

- The new parent should discuss their requirements with their line manager, explaining the arrangements they would like to make and how they feel this would best be accommodated.
- Managers should be aware that this is a confidential matter and might be a sensitive discussion for a parent to hold. Managers should be alert to this and ensure they handle the situation sensitively and if relevant/possible offer for a female manager to discuss the arrangements with the returning parent.
- As this will be a temporary change to working arrangements, there is no need to make a ‘formal’ flexible working request.
- Consideration must be given to the location and type of work that the new parent undertakes to ensure that any agreed arrangements are safe and appropriate for them and their baby.
- Practicable arrangements to express or breastfeed should be agreed. Simply arranging appropriate breaks may be a workable approach, trying to fit in expressing/breastfeeding before/after work or during breaks wherever possible.
- This guidance indicates the needs that generally would be expected to be accommodated, and while there may be some exceptions, within these parameters managers should be flexible to support expressing/breastfeeding.
- Good times to talk over what would enable the new parent to continue expressing/breastfeeding while at work would include:
 - i. Informal discussion before going on leave
 - ii. During leave eg on a KIT day
 - iii. As part of the employees return to work
- The line manager should:
 - i. Recognise that the expressing times and length of time over which the new parent needs to express may not be within their control.

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- ii. Consider any short break from work reasonably and objectively against the likely impact it might have on University business. Consider the possibility of the employee extending any normal breaks or leaving earlier in the day.
 - iii. Recognise that, while a date may be set to review how the arrangements are working, it would not be appropriate to try to set a time limit. A number of circumstances, which the new parent may have limited control over, could impact on how long breastfeeding/expressing takes place for eg physiological problems make it difficult to continue, baby may not take to formula feeding easily, or the new parent may change their mind about how long they want to breastfeed/express for. The additional stress for the employee created by a fixed-time limit imposed by a line manager may outweigh any benefit to either one of them.
- The University would expect that such requests would generally be able to be accommodated. If, after discussion, a line manager has to turn down a request for adjustments to enable a parent to continue breastfeeding/expressing, they should explain the business reasons to them, having considered the request objectively, sought advice from the HR Employment Relations Team (tel: 0115 951 5209 (ext 15209) or email: hrer@nottingham.ac.uk) discussed options with the parent, and identified an unacceptable business impact. The impact on the parent should be given due consideration, recognising that the inability to express breastmilk mimics the effect of baby naturally reducing feeds over time, and therefore may cause the body to stop producing breastmilk.
- The line manager must keep a short note of any request and the arrangement arrived at.
- **Communicating with colleagues**
 - In discussion with the new parent, the line manager should make colleagues aware of the arrangements which will be implemented, **as far as is necessary and appropriate** to the circumstances.
 - Some colleagues may find it a challenge to adjust to the temporary arrangements, and may feel a sense of unfairness. Additionally, at this important time of transition, the new parent might well be finding it hard to cope with baby, the expressing/breastfeeding routine, and returning to work in combination. Breastfeeding takes place for a relatively short period, and feeds reduce as baby grows. Temporary changes to working patterns take place for a variety of reasons, and line managers are asked to strike a balance between any concerns that colleagues may have and the needs of the breastfeeding employee. To maintain a positive work environment, based on dignity and respect, the line manager may raise awareness of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour where this is relevant.

An Example:

Brigit has just returned from maternity leave. She and her line manager have agreed some additional breaks to express breast-milk in appropriate facilities within the office. The team is aware of this and covers her phone calls whilst she is away from her desk. Jack starts to make jokes in the office and in particular, around the pump that Brigit takes with her. Although these jokes are meant to be amusing, Jack persists in making a comment every time and the line manager can see this is beginning to have an effect on Brigit, who tries to slip out of the room unnoticed. The line manager decides to act quickly to prevent this from becoming a problem and has a word privately with Jack. The joking stops and Brigit seems relieved and more open about her short absences. The line manager also ensures that all staff have received appropriate awareness training and reviews the Dignity at Nottingham Policy during a team meeting to reinforce the need to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Adapted from ACAS "Accommodating Breastfeeding Employees in the Workplace"

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- Both line manager and team members may find it helpful to refer to the publications listed below:
 - Equal Opportunities Policy: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/equalityanddiversitypolicies/documents/equalopportunitiespolicy.pdf>
 - Dignity at Nottingham Policy: [http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/complaintsgrievanceanddignity/dignity/documents/dignity-at-nottingham-policy-\(08-2014\).pdf](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/complaintsgrievanceanddignity/dignity/documents/dignity-at-nottingham-policy-(08-2014).pdf)
 - Contact details for the Dignity at Nottingham Network members: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/complaintsgrievanceanddignity/dignity/dignity-at-nottingham-network.aspx>

Space and facilities for expressing/breastfeeding:

- **The Athena SWAN Parenting Rooms**
 - The designated Athena SWAN Parenting Rooms are intended to provide a private, hygienic, safe and secure area for breastfeeding staff and students to express and store breastmilk or to feed their baby. Developed in response to Athena SWAN Focus Groups, the rooms are designated spaces for those who prefer to breastfeed or express breast milk in a private location. However, we want all parents to feel comfortable to breastfeed anywhere.
 - The room locations and how to access them is available at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/msplapsupport/maternity/athena-swan-parenting-rooms/>
- **Other options**
 - Parents do not need to use an Athena SWAN Parenting Room to express or breastfeed. They may prefer to use other spaces that suit their circumstances. For expressing breast milk, an office environment or a First Aid room is likely to be most suitable. Where a parent is considering expressing in a room used for clinical purposes, they must seek advice from their local School or Departmental Safety Officer, or from the University Safety Office, email: bb-safety-office@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk.
- **Storing expressed breast milk**
 - Shared kitchen areas usually contain a fridge. Parents could consider storing expressed milk there, perhaps secured in a re-sealable container for hygiene purposes. Labelling the milk to avoid confusion with other milk stored in the fridge for use in tea and coffee avoids any errors, confusion or anxiety for other fridge users. It is not necessary to say it is breast milk, but to make it clear that it is not for others to consume or remove from the fridge.

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