**Breastfeeding**

The University is committed to providing support and facilities to employees who have returned to work after a period of maternity leave, including provision for women who are continuing to breastfeed. This document provides guidance to managers on their responsibilities, and provides answers to typical questions.

**Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of managers to check with the member of staff, prior to her return, if she plans to continue to breastfeed and if so what facilities or provisions are required. Where facilities are required, it is the responsibility of the manager to work with facilities and HR to ensure that they are ready for (and communicated to) the individual on her return to work.

Managers are also responsible for undertaking a [risk assessment](http://www.healthandsafety.manchester.ac.uk/toolkits/ra/).

Members of staff are responsible for communicating their needs to their manager. They are also responsible for ensuring any facilities used for breastfeeding are left clean and tidy for the next user.

**General Advice**

* Employers are required by law to provide suitable facilities for women who are breastfeeding to rest. Employers are also required to ensure that women who have recently given birth or who are breastfeeding are not required to perform any work could place their health and safety at risk. A risk assessment should be carried out before she returns to work.
* Employees who are breastfeeding should have access to a clean, lockable and private room that has an electrical socket. A fridge should also be provided for the storage of breast milk (this can be in a separate room).
* Provisions should be put in place before the member of staff returns to work, so that their return is effective immediately. The member of staff should be advised in advance of the relevant rooms that she can use and their location.
* Provisions for breastfeeding women may also be required during Keeping in Touch Days. When arranging such days, the manager should check if the individual has any such requirements.
* Breastfeeding members of staff will be able to express during their normal breaks – this may sometimes necessitate a change to the usual break time or splitting of breaks to allow for more than one per day. Where someone needs additional breaks they should agree this with their manager.
* It is good practice for the manager to have periodic reviews with the member of staff to check how the arrangements are working and if any changes need to be made.

There is a dedicated breastfeeding room at Jean McFarlane on campus. Keys are available from reception, where there is also a fridge to store milk. Departments and schools should also make their own local arrangements to support breastfeeding staff. There are also a range of quiet rooms and first aid rooms that can also be used for these purposes. A full list can be found on StaffNet.

**Temporary Flexible Working**

Formal flexible working requests are for permanent changes to terms and conditions. However, it may be that a member of staff wishes to make an informal request for flexibility for the duration of her breastfeeding. Flexibility could include hours of work, location of work or breaks.

Such requests should be made to the manager, clearly outlining the nature of the flexibility and its duration. Such requests will be dealt with promptly, in the spirit of our Flexible Working Policy. Flexible working for the purposes of breastfeeding will not be unreasonably withheld.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*Can an employee postpone her return to work after maternity leave because she continues to breastfeed?*

Maternity leave will end after 52 weeks. If the employee wishes to take a longer period of leave, this could be accommodating through taking annual leave or unpaid parental leave (in the latter case, subject to operational requirements).

*We don’t have a designated room for breastfeeding in the building – what should we do?*

The room does not need to be a formal breastfeeding room. It could be a private office with a lockable door, a quiet room or a first aid room. The most important thing is that the room is private and can be made available when the individual needs to use it. The room **cannot** be a toilet. Take advice from the relevant facilities team for additional support in finding appropriate facilities.

*What breaks are members of staff entitled to?*

There are no specific break periods set in law; they need to be adequate for the individual and their role. Staff can be asked to use their normal breaks, but managers will need to show a degree of flexibility in this depending on the circumstances. It is good practice to discuss with the returning member of staff about what she requires, including frequency of breaks.

*Does a risk assessment have to be carried out in all cases?*

Legislation provides for some specific circumstances in which a risk assessment must be carried out, when the working conditions, processes, or specific products used by them could pose specific risks. Even when this does not apply, it is good practice to carry out a risk assessment so that any particular risks can be identified and minimised.

*If there were any particular risks identified due to the nature of the role, but we cannot remove them, what should we do?*

You can consider moving the member of staff to alternative duties whilst she continues to breastfeed. Offers or alternative work should not be unreasonably refused. Terms and conditions would remain the same. The member of staff would return to her normal job when she stops breastfeeding.

**Related Documents**

Maternity Policy

Flexible Working Policy