

## DRAFT

# **POLICY STATEMENT-BREAST-FEEDING AND RETURNING TO WORK**

"Birmingham City Council as an employer will contribute to the health of their employees and their families by establishing a policy to encourage support for mothers returning to work who wish to continue breast-feeding",

### **Our Commitment**

1. Birmingham City Council will encourage an understanding, and positive attitude of the value of breast-feeding amongst all staff.
2. Birmingham City Council will be positive and support employees who have returned to work and have continued to breast-feed.
3. Birmingham City Council will, wherever possible, allow appropriate flexibility in working hours, including regular breaks for employees who wish to express milk. Reasonable time will be given to enable employees to express breast-milk.
4. Birmingham City Council will wherever possible and as necessary, make available facilities to enable employees to express breast-milk.

### **How will we meet the commitments**

1. Revise guidance notes in Personnel Handbook for managers on related policies and procedures e.g. Maternity Leave, Health & Safety etc.
2. Produce an information leaflet for employees promoting and encouraging breast-feeding.
3. Sign post flexible working options to help enable employees and managers develop a strategy for the period an employee is breast-feeding.

4. Personnel Officers, Health and Safety Officers and Occupational Health Officers to promote and encourage directorates to look at current staff facilities with a view to enable employees to express breast-milk.
5. Where there are not dedicated or appropriate staff facilities the use of interview rooms etc could be an option for employees to book and be able to express milk.

**What are the advantages to Birmingham City Council of these commitments?**

- ♣ Higher rate of returners from maternity leave
- ♣ Early returners following maternity leave
- ♣ Staff loyalty
- ♣ Recruitment incentive
- ♣ Reduced costs e.g. cover, training etc
- ♣ Reduced parental absence-healthier children

## **GUIDANCE NOTE**

### **Breast-Feeding and Returning to Work**

Birmingham City Council is committed to improving the health of its employees and their families.

One of the ways of improving health is to encourage more women to breast-feed or breast-feed for longer.

Breast milk offers greater nutritional benefits to children and has an impact on their health and development.

Breast fed babies have a reduced risk of:

- ♣ Chest Infection
- ♣ Diarrhoea Illness
- ♣ Middle ear infection
- ♣ Urinary tract and other infections
- ♣ Juvenile onset diabetes

Women who breast-feed experience long term health benefits for example a reduced risk of:

- ♣ Pre-menopausal breast cancer
- ♣ Epithelial ovarian cancer
- ♣ Hip fractures in later life

As an employer our own obligations begin as soon as an employee has notified us that she is pregnant and continues until 6 months after the child's birth or until she stops breast-feeding or express milk.

What do you need to do if you wish to return to work if you are still breast-feeding and wish to continue breast-feeding?

You must notify your Manager/Personnel that you are breast-feeding. (This could be done when you give notice of your intention to return to work following maternity leave).

You and your manager will need to come to an arrangement around flexible working for the time you intend to express breast milk.

This can be facilitated within the parameters of the flexible working scheme and where practicable employees should be permitted time during working hours to express breast-milk.

Birmingham City Council's Commitment to women who wish to return to work and breast-feed

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### **What your manager will do**

A risk assessment will be carried out and any areas of concern will be raised and discussed appropriately. *(A risk assessment must be carried out when all women return to work from maternity leave).*

### **What will you and your manager need to discuss:**

1. It may be that although you are still breast-feeding there may be little or no impact on your working day i.e. you already work reduced hours or you are only feeding your baby in the morning or evening:
2. If you wish to breast-feed your baby rather than express milk you will need to think and plan this carefully. Reducing your hours or changing your work pattern and if you work close enough to be able to travel home you may be able to do this.

But the impact on the service and the practicalities of this need to be considered carefully.

3. Where appropriate a rest area/room should be identified to enable a woman to express breast milk. **(The ladies toilet is not an option)**

Consideration needs to be given to:

- ♣ The area/room needs to be clean, warm with a comfortable chair.
- ♣ The room should be lockable or have an arrangement for ensuring privacy.
- ♣ There should be hand-washing facilities near by.
- ♣ There should be an electric socket.
- ♣ An appropriate area for storing and using sterilising equipment
- ♣ A refrigerator should be available for storing expressed breast-milk at 2°-4°c until it is taken home. (Health and Safety guidelines suggest a dedicated refrigerator -this may not be practicable).

### **Further Information & Advice**

Directorate Personnel Teams  
Occupational Health & Safety Unit  
Health & Safety Tem  
Equal Opportunities in Employment Team