

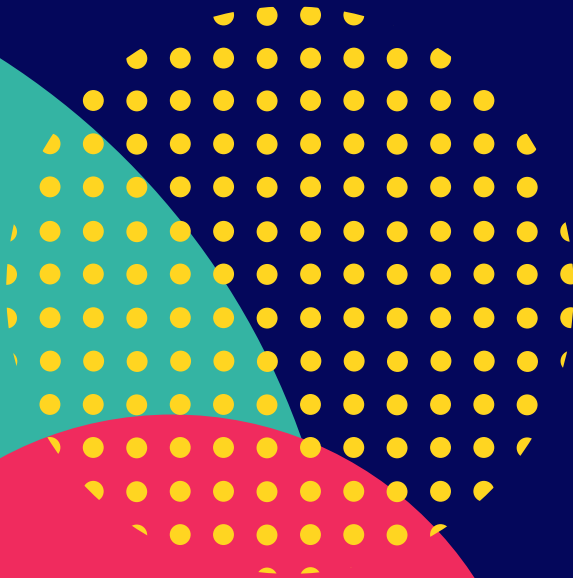


Cymru Iach ar Waith
Healthy Working Wales



Breastfeeding in the workplace toolkit

AUGUST 2026



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Cymru
Public Health
Wales

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WHY BREASTFEEDING IN THE WORKPLACE MATTERS: INFORMATION FOR ORGANISATIONS

This toolkit is designed to support employers across Wales in creating inclusive, family-friendly working environments that enable employees to continue breastfeeding when they return to work. Its purpose is to support current guidance and local policy and not replace them.

Breastfeeding is a highly effective public health intervention that supports the best possible start in life for children and contributes to improved health outcomes across the life course. Supporting employees to continue breastfeeding when they return to work can help reduce unfair differences in health outcomes and aligns with Welsh Government ambitions to increase breastfeeding rates in Wales. Creating breastfeeding-friendly workplaces also promotes equality, diversity and inclusion by ensuring employees feel valued, supported and able to balance work and family responsibilities without disadvantage.

This toolkit provides workplaces with a charter and clear, practical guidance on legal responsibilities, workplace policies and best practice, helping organisations understand the needs of breastfeeding parents. This enables workplaces to implement simple, effective measures such as flexible working, appropriate facilities and supportive management approaches.

Supporting employees to continue breastfeeding offers significant benefits to workplaces:

- **Retaining employees** – staff are more likely to stay, reducing recruitment and training costs.
- **Boosting reputation** – creating a breastfeeding-friendly environment strengthens your organisation's reputation for supporting workforce wellbeing and social responsibility.
- **Saving money** – support for breastfeeding can lead to fewer sick days due to healthier mothers and babies, while promoting sustainability and reducing long-term costs.

BREASTFEEDING
IS RECOMMENDED
FOR SIX MONTHS
EXCLUSIVELY AND
FOR TWO YEARS AND
BEYOND ALONGSIDE
SOLID FOOD.

Breastfeeding is recommended for six months exclusively and for two years and beyond alongside solid food. Despite this, many employees stop breastfeeding due to perceived or actual challenges faced when returning to work. Responses to a Public Health Wales (PHW) survey found that employee experiences varied widely, demonstrating a lack of consistency in support. Different employees will have varied support needs and different breastfeeding journeys. Some employees may implement mixed feeding approaches or breastfeed a baby brought into the workplace. Some parents including minority ethnic, disabled or lower income families experience barriers to meeting their feeding goals, and managers should consider intersecting concerns in creation of breastfeeding policy, spaces and resources and when having conversations with pregnant and breastfeeding staff.

AS SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYERS YOU CAN NORMALISE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT BREASTFEEDING AND PUT EMPLOYEES AT EASE THAT BREASTFEEDING IS NORMAL, ACHIEVABLE AND THAT YOUR ORGANISATION IS PROACTIVELY SUPPORTING IT.



This toolkit will help you understand what you can do to support employees who are breastfeeding regardless of what approach they may take. However, you may wish to go further and include breastfeeding within wider family-friendly workplace policies and strategies and link to other health and wellbeing policies.

EMPLOYERS WHO ENGAGE WITH THE BREASTFEEDING TOOLKIT WILL BE RECOGNISED FOR THEIR COMMITMENT. TO RECEIVE YOUR RECOGNITION BADGE, PLEASE EMAIL HEALTHYWORKINGWALES@WALES.NHS.UK.

You can also find advice on supporting employees who are new mothers on the [HSE website](https://www.hse.gov.uk).

THIS TOOLKIT WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WHO ARE BREASTFEEDING.

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BREASTFEEDING CHARTER: YOUR FIRST STEPS

This document provides a clear framework for supporting breastfeeding parents in the workplace and employers can demonstrate their commitment to best practice by implementing its standards. Employers may wish to write comments or add links to show their commitment.

IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYER THAT HAS COMMITTED TO THE BREASTFEEDING CHARTER, PLEASE EMAIL HEALTHYWORKINGWALES@WALES.NHS.UK TO RECEIVE YOUR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT BADGE.

REQUIREMENT	BEST PRACTICE	COMMITMENT
Breastfeeding Policy (this may be part of another workplace policy)	A policy is good practice to promote and normalise breastfeeding at work. It should include any measures to support breastfeeding employees such as dedicated facilities and additional breaks. Include breastfeeding in staff wellbeing, women's health and family friendly workforce strategies.	
Training	Line managers should understand their legal obligations and good practice around supporting breastfeeding employees. A "toolbox talk" Powerpoint presentation is available from HWW to support this.	
Breastfeeding 'Passport'	A document that can be used to record individual plans – see example on page 12.	

REQUIREMENT	BEST PRACTICE	COMMITMENT
Communication	Organisations can publicly commit to being breastfeeding friendly workplaces. Plans should be made for internal communications about the toolkit. You could consider: • nominating breastfeeding champions who can advocate for good practice, promote a breastfeeding inclusive culture and signpost colleagues to internal and external resources • Promoting the toolkit at key awareness moments such as wellbeing events • Raising awareness through staff communications and meetings It is important to discuss breastfeeding before maternity leave and on returning to work. Conversations should be recorded. It should be recognised that employees may not be comfortable to bring up the subject themselves.	
Governance and Monitoring	A plan for implementation and monitoring of the toolkit and employee experience in your organisation.	

IT IS IMPORTANT
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INFORMATION FOR MANAGERS: TURNING POLICY INTO ACTION



QUICK CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS

BEFORE MATERNITY LEAVE	BEFORE THE EMPLOYEE RETURNS	ON RETURN	EVERY 3 MONTHS / ONGOING
Raise the topic sensitively, advising that breastfeeding will be supported.	Ask if they would like to discuss breastfeeding, reminding them they will be supported.	Complete breastfeeding support discussion and risk assessment.	Review breastfeeding support discussion and risk assessment.
Provide the breastfeeding passport and section of the document for employees.	Schedule time for a breastfeeding support discussion and risk assessment	Finalise breastfeeding passport.	Check if any needs have changed.
Explain the policy and employee rights.	Update rotas or cover as needed.	Confirm room access and arrangements.	Escalate any issues early.
Explain what facilities are available .	Make sure facilities are available .	Remind the team about respect and inclusion.	Update passport if required.

YOUR ROLE AS A MANAGER

Complete relevant training on breastfeeding in the workplace, such as the toolbox talk accompanying this toolkit. Ensure you understand your legal obligations including risk assessments for breastfeeding employees.

Inform employees about available support before maternity leave and start breastfeeding support discussions early.

CONSIDER HOW
YOU CAN CREATE A
SUPPORTIVE CULTURE
IN YOUR TEAM.

Agree mutually acceptable arrangements to support continued breastfeeding, following your organisation's policy, and record these in the Breastfeeding Passport. Refer to occupational health if required and follow any advice provided.

Complete and review breastfeeding support discussion and risk assessments regularly (every 2–3 months). Adjustments to accommodate breastfeeding are often short term and temporary and while breastfeeding may continue for several years, the need for workplace support is likely to reduce over time (such changes should be led by the breastfeeding employee). Promote a respectful and supportive team culture and seek advice within the organisation if needed.

THE SAME ACCOMMODATIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR BREASTFEEDING EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE NOT GIVEN BIRTH, SUCH AS MOTHERS IN SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS WHO MAY SHARE BREASTFEEDING.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Breastfeeding conversations should be a routine part of maternity leave and return to work planning. Here are some suggested ways to start the conversation.

Before maternity leave, you can highlight the support available by saying:

“Just so you are aware, of course it is a long way off but if you'd like to continue breastfeeding when you return to work, we will make a plan to support you.”

You can ask employees who are due to return:

“Would you like to discuss breastfeeding? Support is available for breastfeeding in the workplace.”

**YOU COULD
SIGNPOST TO /
PROVIDE THE
INFORMATION FOR
EMPLOYEES
PROVIDED IN THIS
TOOLKIT.**

WHAT MAKES A SUITABLE ROOM?

MUST HAVE	HELPFUL EXTRAS
Private and lockable – privacy in shared spaces can be achieved by, for example, signage and clear scheduling	Plug socket
Not a toilet, but toilets nearby	Table or surface
Clean and hygienic	Sink in the room
Comfortable seating including a space to lie down / rest	Soft lighting
Access to handwashing facilities	'Room in use' sign
Accessible (including for disabilities)	A schedule for room users if required
Access to storage for expressed milk	Fridge in the room

FLEXIBLE BREAKS

The number of breaks required throughout the day should not be prescriptive and should be considered on an individual basis. Women with younger babies may be more likely to require more breaks, to maintain their milk supply and ensure comfort. Arrangements can be supported by flexible working and time off in lieu arrangements.

YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS BY:	AVOID:
Staggering breaks	Asking employees to use a toilet
Adjusting start/ finish times	Treating breaks as a problem
Allowing longer breaks	Rushing or pressuring the employee
Temporary task swapping	Suggesting formula feeding

ADDITIONAL BREAKS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH ORGANISATIONAL POLICY AND MAY BE UNPAID, TAKEN AS TIME OFF IN LIEU (TOIL), OR PROVIDED AS PAID TIME.

TEMPORARY ROLE CHANGES

With agreement between the employee and employer you may wish to consider role / hour changes for a temporary period. This may be appropriate in some workplaces where it is unsafe or impractical for the breastfeeding mother to express/ feed whilst in their current job role or shift pattern. For example, it may be appropriate to temporarily remove an employee from nighttime working. This should be considered on an individual basis; use of existing workplace policies such as flexible working could be considered.

MANAGING THE TEAM

You may get questions from colleagues. Your approach should be:

- Keep information confidential
- Reinforce expectations of respect
- Explain that the team will share workload fairly

If concerns are raised, you can say:

“These arrangements support an employee’s health and wellbeing, just as we would for anyone. Let’s work together to manage the workload fairly.”

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

You must follow relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

EMPLOYEES ARE PROTECTED FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND UNREASONABLE LACK OF SUPPORT. A RISK ASSESSMENT MUST BE CARRIED OUT FOR BREASTFEEDING EMPLOYEES.



WHEN TO GET SUPPORT

Escalate within the organisation if:

- No suitable space is available
- There are staffing or workload concerns
- Team conflict arises
- You’re unsure how to handle a situation

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TOOLBOX TALK: AWARENESS TRAINING FOR MANAGERS

A “toolbox talk” presentation is available from HWW, outlining the responsibilities of employees with managerial responsibilities in the workplace.

> DOWNLOAD THE PRESENTATION

If you need further support, please contact [Healthy Working Wales](#).





BREASTFEEDING PASSPORT EXAMPLE

Employee Details

Name:

Job Title:

Department:

Manager:

Expected Return Date:

Breastfeeding support discussion 1: Before starting maternity leave

Date:

Start breastfeeding support discussion and highlight organisational arrangements.

Breastfeeding support discussion 2: Before returning to work

Date:

Risk assessment and
breastfeeding support
discussion completed.

Comments:

Agreed actions to include:

- Role/ hours changes
- Breaks arrangements
- Suitable space
- Storage
- Any other arrangements

Comments:

Agreement confirming
that the above
arrangements have been
discussed and agreed.

Date:

Employee signature:

Manager signature:



Ongoing breastfeeding support discussions – please note any adjustments

Date:

Comments:

Date:

Comments:

Date:

Comments:

Date:

Comments:

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SUCCESS STORIES: HOW OTHERS HAVE MADE IT WORK

FUN FOUNDATIONS

Established in 2010, Fun Foundations has two nurseries in the Vale of Glamorgan. As part of their inclusive approach when employees return from maternity leave, they make sure to support breastfeeding in the workplace.

This includes discussing individual needs, carrying out risk assessments and providing suitable spaces for employees to express and store milk. Through working with HWW, they have enhanced their commitment to employee health and wellbeing, including keeping up to date with health campaigns like Breastfeeding Awareness Week.



PUBLIC HEALTH WALES – BREASTFEEDING FACILITIES

Public Health Wales introduced 'The Nest', a dedicated wellbeing space that includes a parents' area for breastfeeding and expressing milk. Developed in partnership with staff networks and employee groups, it provides a private and comfortable environment that supports both parenting and wellbeing needs.

By providing visible and practical support for employees returning from maternity leave, Public Health Wales has strengthened support for breastfeeding staff and raised awareness of breastfeeding-friendly practices.



"AT PUBLIC HEALTH WALES WE WANT TO SUPPORT ALL FAMILIES IN WALES TO BREASTFEED FOR AS LONG AS THEY WOULD LIKE TO, AND THAT STARTS WITH OUR STAFF."

CLAIRE BIRCHALL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NURSING, QUALITY AND INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE.

Good practice examples from Public Health Wales survey

- A member of staff was provided with a lockable room with a "room in use" sign to avoid disturbance, with a radio and fan for comfort. When her baby was unwell arrangements were made for her partner to bring the baby in for feeding and comfort. The same arrangements were available to other employees.
- Longer lunch breaks were permitted for mothers to go home to feed where possible, or extra breaks provided for expressing. Shift changes considered to support continued breastfeeding.
- A department adapted shift patterns to ensure staff could get home for bedtime feeds and allowed additional breaks.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR MANAGERS

When should I speak to an employee about breastfeeding support?

Managers should raise breastfeeding routinely, helping to create a culture where breastfeeding is normalised and openly supported.

You should initiate the conversation:

- During pregnancy (antenatally)
- Before maternity leave
- Before their return

What are my responsibilities once an employee notifies me?

You must:

- Ensure a **breastfeeding friendly environment**
- Complete the **Breastfeeding Passport** with the employee
- Carry out a **risk assessment on return**
- Identify and provide **appropriate facilities**
- Agree an **individualised action plan**
- Treat information **confidentially and respectfully**
- Promote a **positive, inclusive culture** among the wider team

How do I arrange breaks for breastfeeding at work and/or expressing?

Work with your employee to:

- Identify suitable times
- Minimise operational disruption
- Maintain fairness within the team. Breaks must be **reasonable and flexible**, recognising that breastfeeding needs vary.

What if service pressures make it difficult?

Breastfeeding needs are a legal health and safety requirement. Managers must make reasonable arrangements and seek support if barriers arise.

How can I support cultural or religious needs?

Some employees may have specific modesty, privacy, or cultural requirements affecting breastfeeding. Discuss these sensitively and take reasonable steps to meet them.

What should I do if colleagues react negatively?

Managers must:

- Address inappropriate comments or behaviours immediately
- Uphold Dignity at Work expectations
- Model supportive behaviour
- Communicate expectations clearly within the team

Where can I signpost an employee who needs breastfeeding support?

The [National Breastfeeding Helpline](#) provides support via phone and direct message 24 hours a day.



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USEFUL LINKS AND FURTHER SUPPORT

> [Healthy Working Wales](#)

> [Advisory, Conciliations and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\)](#)

> [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)

> [Reading University toolkit](#)

> [All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan](#)

> [Dewis Cymru](#) – search for Breastfeeding Friendly locations near you.

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INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

This information can be useful to share with employees so they understand policies and procedures in place if they wish to express or breastfeed when they return after maternity leave.

You may wish to change the information to reflect your individual policy, handbook and procedures you have in place. We recommend these are shared with the employee before they commence their maternity leave.

YOUR ROLE AS AN EMPLOYEE

Discuss your breastfeeding needs with your manager before returning from maternity leave and throughout your breastfeeding journey. Inform your manager in writing if you plan to continue breastfeeding when you return to work. Your health visitor can advise you about combining breastfeeding and work.

Participate in breastfeeding support discussions and risk assessments. Complete the Breastfeeding Passport in collaboration with your manager and keep them informed of any changes. Follow any health and safety guidance relevant to your role and breastfeeding needs.

In line with all discussions and policies within the workplace, it is important all employees are respectful and supportive to others, to create a positive and supportive culture.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Returning to work while continuing to breastfeed can feel daunting, but support is available. We encourage employees to talk to their manager about their breastfeeding plans before returning to work so that suitable arrangements can be discussed and put in place.

You may wish to start the conversation by saying:

I plan to continue breastfeeding when I return to work and would like to discuss what support may be available.

Or:

Could we arrange some time to discuss breastfeeding support before I return from maternity leave?

Starting the conversation early can help ensure that any support, adjustments or facilities you may need are in place before you return to work.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

Who should an employee inform if they wish to breastfeed or express milk at work?

Employees should notify their line manager in writing before they return from maternity leave. Early discussion is encouraged – ideally as part of a KIT (Keeping in Touch) day – so suitable arrangements can be put in place.

What is the Breastfeeding Passport and who completes it?

The Breastfeeding Passport is a tool for employees and managers to agree practical arrangements, including facilities, break needs, storage and risk assessment requirements. It is completed jointly by the employee and line manager before returning to work and reviewed regularly. Your employer should have an example of this that they can share with you.

What support can I expect when I return to work?

Your line manager will make an individualised plan with you, which may include:

- A clean, private, secure space to breastfeed or express (not a toilet)
- Flexible breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk
- Access to a fridge for milk storage (or you may use a cool bag)
- Temporary change in role or working hours
- Respectful, dignified treatment from colleagues and managers at all times

How often can I take breaks to express?

You will be allowed reasonable flexibility to take breaks as needed. This should be agreed in advance with your manager as part of your Breastfeeding Passport.

Where will I be able to express milk?

Your manager will work with you to identify a suitable space, with:

- A lockable door
- A chair
- Handwashing facilities
- Nearby toilet access

Facilities must be confirmed during your discussions before returning.

Can I store my breast milk at work?

Yes, where possible you can access a fridge for safe storage.
If this isn't available (e.g., community roles), a cool bag may be used.

Do I need a risk assessment?

Yes. A breastfeeding specific risk assessment must be completed upon your return and reviewed every 2 – 3 months while breastfeeding continues.

What if my plans change?

Breastfeeding plans often change – that's fine.
Just update your manager so arrangements can be adjusted.

What if I feel unsupported?

If you believe you have not been appropriately supported:

- Raise the issue with your line manager, or
- Use the policies in your organisation to escalate concerns.

Where can I get information, support or talk through any worries?

You can find information about returning to work in Public Health Wales's Health Information for Parents booklet – see below. Your health visitor or a local peer support group can help, or you can contact the National Breastfeeding Helpline via phone or direct message, 24 hours a day.

FURTHER LINKS AND SUPPORT

> [Advisory, Conciliations and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\)](#)

> [Health Information for Parents](#) – see p118 for “returning to work”.

> [National Breastfeeding Helpline](#)

> [Dewis Cymru](#) – search for Breastfeeding Friendly locations near you.

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This document is also available in Welsh.