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Breastfeeding

Police Family Support Guidance



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Overview & Legislation

In the UK, there is no single, unified legal definition of 'breastfeeding', but breastfeeding and expressing milk are protected through several pieces of legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

While there isn't a single legal definition of "breastfeeding" in UK law, various laws provide protections and guidelines related to breastfeeding. These laws aim to ensure that those who are breastfeeding are supported and not discriminated against in various settings, including the workplace and public services.

For the purpose of this chapter, 'breastfeeding' refers to breastfeeding or expressing milk. For consistency with UK equality legislation, this chapter uses terms such as *mother* and *woman* where the law itself is written in sex-based language. This reflects the recent UK Supreme Court ruling confirming that, under the Equality Act 2010, the protected characteristic of sex refers to biological sex. However, this guidance applies to all staff who breastfeed or express milk, including non-birth, adoptive, trans and non-binary parents.

It is strongly recommended that each police force develops a bespoke breastfeeding policy to support those who choose to breastfeed while returning to work. Ensuring that women feel confident in their ability to continue breastfeeding after returning to work can significantly impact their decision to return earlier and more willingly.

A flexible, supportive environment increases the likelihood of retaining skilled and experienced staff, which in turn reduces recruitment costs, improves retention, wellbeing, and by default, performance (Recommendation 16, The Angiolini Report Part One (2024)). National research has demonstrated that supporting breastfeeding employees reduces absenteeism, boosts retention, improves morale, and enhances the organisation's family-friendly reputation (The Breastfeeding Network, 2025).

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2024) and UNICEF (2024) recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, continuing breastfeeding as part of the child's diet for at least two years or longer. As a significant portion of the police workforce is female, with around 36% of police officers being women (ONS, 2024), many will be balancing both motherhood and their professional roles. Supporting these women through thoughtful, proactive workplace policies is vital to their health and wellbeing and that of future generations.

Creating an environment that supports breastfeeding in the police service not only aligns with legal requirements but also fosters a workplace culture that values staff and their

family commitments. By implementing a comprehensive breastfeeding policy, police forces increase opportunities to retain experienced staff, reduce absenteeism, improve morale, and enhance their reputation as a family-friendly employer.

Key Legislation

Several key pieces of legislation support breastfeeding mothers in the workplace:

1. **Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (Reg 16-18)**
Employers must undertake an individual risk assessment when notified that a new mother is breastfeeding. If risks cannot be removed, employers must adjust duties or offer suitable alternative work.
2. **Workplace (Health, Safety, and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (Reg 25)**
Employers must provide suitable facilities for rest for pregnant and breastfeeding workers.
3. **Equality Act 2010**
The Equality Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against women at work on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity, or breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding Facilities and Requirements

To ensure a supportive environment, police forces should provide appropriate, hygienic, private spaces for breastfeeding or expressing. The following guidelines should be followed:

Essential Facilities:

- **Private, Comfortable Space**
A warm, private room or space should be available for breastfeeding or expressing milk, with an arrangement that ensures privacy with a lock on the door. Toilets are not a suitable place.
- **Temperature-Controlled Storage**
A dedicated fridge should be provided for storing expressed milk. If individual fridges aren't available, milk should be stored in lockable storage bags. General use departmental fridges should be avoided for milk storage where possible.
- **Power Supply**
The room should be equipped with electric power points for breast pump usage.
- **Comfortable Furniture**
A low, comfortable chair, and a table or desk at an appropriate height should be available for use during breastfeeding or expressing.

- **Hygiene Facilities**

There should be facilities for hand washing and a clean area for storing sterilising equipment.

- **Room Maintenance**

The space should have easy-to-clean surfaces and be disinfected regularly to ensure a hygienic environment for expressing milk.

- **Designated Personnel**

A designated person should be responsible for ensuring the space is maintained and accessible.

Although the law sets the minimum requirements, police forces are encouraged to build on these statutory obligations, creating a family-friendly environment that promotes staff satisfaction and loyalty.



Support for Women Returning to Work

Those who are breastfeeding should be encouraged to request any adjustments they feel they need to their work schedule, including adequate time to leave their work area or to express milk. Line managers must ensure they fully consider any requests and accommodate these where it is reasonable to do so.

The time needed for expressing milk will vary depending on individual circumstances, including the age of the

child, the frequency of feeding, and the milk supply.

Supervisors and senior leaders should be proactive in facilitating any reasonable requests to support breastfeeding, providing necessary flexibility. This includes ensuring that time to express or breastfeed is incorporated into their working schedule without detracting from their overall performance or duties.

Risk Assessments for Breastfeeding Women

A risk assessment must be conducted for a member of staff returning to work following maternity leave, which incorporates physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. This risk assessment **MUST** also consider adjustments in case the woman is breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk. The risk assessment is a legal obligation under the Health and Safety legislation and is required if she returns within six months of giving birth and/or is breastfeeding. This is required for any return to work which include KIT days, court attendance etc.

Please see the Appendix for the suggested breastfeeding considerations to form part of the wider return to work risk assessment.

Raising Awareness

To ensure the successful implementation, supervisors, HR staff, and colleagues should receive guidance on how to support breastfeeding women. This should cover:

- The legal rights of women who are breastfeeding at work.
 - How to manage requests for flexible working arrangements.
 - How to maintain confidentiality and respect regarding breastfeeding.
 - The importance of creating a supportive, non-judgmental environment.
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Signposting

Anya/LatchAid (Tailored Healthcare App)

[Anya - 24/7 Tailored Healthcare Support.](#)

Breastfeeding Network

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

Baby Friendly Initiative

Transforming healthcare for babies, their mothers and families in the UK

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/

National Breastfeeding Helpline:

0300 100 0212

National Health Service (NHS)

[Breastfeeding help and support - NHS](#)

World Health Organisation

The World Health Organization works to provide the needed health and wellbeing evidence

<https://www.who.int/>

Appendix

Return to work plans are an effective way of identifying the individual's needs and concerns.

At the mid-point of maternity leave, line managers should arrange to meet with the member of staff on leave to arrange their 'Return to Work Plan'. This plan can ensure that they identify any adjustments or support needed to return to work, which includes breastfeeding/ expressing.

It is essential for lines managers to have an overview of an individual's circumstances so that a holistic assessment can be made to ensure their safety.

It is important to understand that there is not a "one size fit all" and that specific return to work plans can positively impact an individual returning to work.

These arrangements are expected to be short-term in nature, typically spanning the period during which breastfeeding is taking place and should be viewed as a temporary measure within the wider scope of an individual's long-term career. Forces should support this transition in a way that promotes both the wellbeing of the employee and the operational needs of the organisation.

Employees are encouraged to discuss their needs with their line manager or HR representative and should be reassured that all requests will be handled with sensitivity and in confidence.

It is an ideal opportunity to discuss any concerns or needs of the individual, to remind them of their entitlements and provide reassurance and support.

The plans should be recorded and stored according to force processes.

Breastfeeding Mothers Returning to Work Plan and Risk Assessment

Overview of woman's circumstances

Provide an overview of the woman's overall circumstances. This is not an exhaustive list and may include information on a woman's journey to work, her other caring responsibilities and other disability considerations that she or her baby may have (including medications as some medication is contraindicated in breastfeeding and may impact a woman's health).

Risk, Hazard or Concern	Further Details including risk to mother and baby	How to minimise	Individualised Plan (To be documented after a discussion with mother and line manager)
Lack of time for expressing milk	Discomfort, mastitis, reduced milk supply	Breaks provided in line with policy and/or Police Regulations. Adjusted workload or increase in breaks if needed	
Lack of private, hygienic space	Stress, infection	Private room or space available with comfortable chair, sink access and electrical outlet Ensuring there is a resting space for mothers to express Room should be lockable for privacy Toilets NOT acceptable	
Inadequate storage of breast milk	Spoilage of milk, loss of feeding option	Access to a clean refrigerator with clear labelling. If individual fridges aren't available, milk should be stored in lockable storage bags or boxes.	
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Discomfort, blocked milk ducts, mastitis	Uniform stores review and new fitting to allow flexibility, fit adjustments if needed.	
Exposure to harmful or	Health risks to mother and baby, specifically lead	COSHH assessments by force	

hazardous substances			
Shift work/night shifts	Fatigue, disrupted milk supply	Flexible working or adjusted shifts whilst mother is breastfeeding. A bespoke phased return (a suggested phased return is documented in NPCC National Family Support Document).	
Operational duties (eg Patrol, arrest, emergency response)	Limited time to express due to operational demand	Supervisor to be aware of needs of mother and workload to be adjusted/allocated so ensure expressing needs are met	
Stress & psychological well-being	Reduced milk supply	Regular one-to-ones with staff member	
Physical health	Postural issues including sitting/standing for long periods, hormonal changes impacting ligaments & joints	Display Screen Assessments, force occupational health assessments (i.e. Mummy MOT)	
Job Related Fitness Test (JRFT)	Injury to mother due to physiological changes to body	National Guidance JRFT, the offer of the alternative Chester Treadmill Test if breastfeeding due to potential risk of injury (due to hormones).	