



Breastfeeding Welcoming Venue Guidance

Breastfeeding has many benefits for babies, mothers, and the environment, yet many women are anxious about feeding in public. This can be a barrier to establishing and continuing breastfeeding which gives maximum health benefits to baby and mother. As a result, they may decide not to breastfeed or stop before they want to due to circumstances such as unfavourable public perceptions. It is important to remember that the right to breastfeed in any public place is protected by The Single Equality Act 2010 and that most women only have positive experiences of breastfeeding out and about.

We want you to help mothers feel welcome and supported, while being aware that different mothers may also need more private spaces for expression of breast milk.

What does a breastfeeding welcoming building look like?

- Women should be made to feel comfortable no matter how they choose to feed in public areas of your building/s.
- Women will have access to a more private space if they feel the need for more privacy whilst feeding. There is no expectation that all buildings will have a private, specially designated feeding rooms or facilities- a quiet sheltered area is often adequate
- There should be no expectation that women will use a toilet/baby change area to feed their babies. Breastfeeding in a nappy change or toilet area is not appropriate.
- If you have a sheltered/private area to breastfeed in your facility and a woman is comfortably feeding in your public space, do not oblige her to go and feed in that space. If she is happy where she is, leave her.
- Respectful, supportive, and understanding staff members are required should other service users/members of the public express negativity in your service areas/buildings.
- Display poster (Welcome to breastfeed here) and window stickers at the front doors/windows of your building, feeling free to add signage/stickers to your sheltered or private area. The scheme means that ALL your public areas are breastfeeding friendly, not just the designated spaces.

What can you do to promote a breastfeeding welcoming environment?

Key pointers

Normalise Breastfeeding: Encourage a culture where breastfeeding is normalised and accepted as a natural part of life. Encourage breastfeeding mothers to feel comfortable breastfeeding in public by advocating their rights and normalising the sight of breastfeeding in public spaces.

Offer support: Politely ask if she needs any assistance or if there is anything that can be done to offer support. Offer help with finding a comfortable place to sit, adjusting her surroundings for privacy if it is needed, or any other needs she may have such as changing tables, outlets for breast pumps, and a glass of water

Display signage: Clearly display signs indicating that breastfeeding is welcome and supported in the establishment. Display signage prominently in areas where it will be seen by the public, such as near entrances.

Educate staff: To give staff the information and understanding about being supportive of breastfeeding mothers and knowing their rights and needs. This could be what to do and say/what to not do and say e.g. how to ask someone if they need anything to feel more comfortable or how to respond to someone displaying negative views.

What do I do when customers / members of the public start displaying negativity towards breastfeeding?

1. Acknowledge that everyone has different experiences. However, emphasise that this building is a Breastfeeding welcoming venue.
2. It is the law under the Single Equalities Act 2010 that women can breastfeed in public spaces. Highlight the importance of respecting the choices and rights of breastfeeding mothers.
3. Ensure the mother is okay and offer her the support if needed.

Supporting staff who are breastfeeding through offering.

- Allow flexible work schedules/breaks during the day to provide time for milk expression or if near enough, for a carer to bring baby to the workplace (if suitable) to feed in person.
- Give access to a hygienic and private location for milk expression e.g. welfare room (toilets/baby change rooms are not a suitable place for expressing breast milk.)
- Give access to a nearby clean and safe drinking water source
- Provide a sink for washing any breast-pump equipment. A staff domestic/kitchen sink is fine.
- Provide safe storage for expressed milk. A domestic staff fridge is fine. The mother should label and store her expressed milk securely. Medical sample fridges are not appropriate, however a separate, work lunch room domestic type fridges are fine. Expressed breast milk does not require a separate breast milk fridge. If other staff complain at breast milk storage in the domestic fridge at work, explain that it is a corporately purchased fridge and that the organisation has adopted this policy under the Health and Safety Act work legislation guidance.

For more information see;

[Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

[New and expectant mothers at work: Your health and safety - HSE](#)