



## Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Screening Template

**\*\*\*Completed Screening Templates are public documents and will be posted on the Trust's website\*\*\***

See 'Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Guidance Notes' (on SharePoint) for further background information on the relevant legislation and for help in answering the questions on this template.

### (1) Information about the Policy/Proposal

(1.1) Name of the policy/proposal

**Breastfeeding and Returning to Work Policy**

(1.2) Is this a new, existing or revised policy/proposal?

This is a revised policy.

(1.3) What is it trying to achieve (intended aims/outcomes)?

This policy has been developed considering good practice guidelines from the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) to provide a private, healthy and safe environment for breastfeeding mothers to express and store milk and recognises the value of breastfeeding for mothers and babies. This policy aims:

- To support employees who choose to return to work whilst continuing to breastfeed<sup>1</sup>.
- To inform and support managers and employees to enable breastfeeding individuals to continue to breastfeed for as long as they wish to.

In recognition of this the Trust has put in place this Breastfeeding and Returning to Work Policy that fully supports the legal obligations and positively encourages staff to continue breastfeeding.

The Trust is committed to supporting our employees returning to work following the birth of their children, to continue to breastfeed as per World Health Organization (WHO) breastfeeding recommendations. The WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, followed by continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary foods for up to 2 years or beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> References to breastfeeding also includes expressing milk. Breastfeeding mothers and mothers expressing milk have the same rights under this Policy.



(1.4) Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy/proposal?

This Policy is applicable to all employees who are pregnant and /or breastfeeding. The Trust's workforce is approximately 85.6% female and many of our employees with young children, will be combining motherhood and work. As our workforce is predominately female, at any time, we will have employees returning to work whilst still breastfeeding.

(1.5) Who owns and who implements the policy/proposal - where does it originate, for example DHSSPS, HSCB, the Trust?

Southern Health & Social Care Trust – Staff Health & Wellbeing Steering Group

(1.6) Are there any factors that could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/proposal/decision? (Financial, legislative or other constraints?)

No

(1.7) Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy/proposal/decision could impact upon? (staff, service users, other public sector organisations, trade unions, professional bodies, independent sector, voluntary and community groups etc)

All Southern Health and Social Care Trust employees

(1.8) Other policies with a bearing on this policy/proposal (for example regional policies) - what are they and who owns them?

SHSCT:

- Our People Framework
- Workplace Health and Wellbeing Framework
- Southern Trust Infant Feeding Policy 2025
- New and Expectant Mothers at Work Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy
- Time Off Work Policy
- Procedure for the Management of Sickness Absence
- Health & Safety at Work Policy

Human Rights Act

Legislation and guidance relating to breastfeeding and working:

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000



- The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (NI) 1993
- Equality Act 2010
- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976
- Council Directive 92/85/EEC (19 October 1992)

***This list is not exhaustive.***

**(2) Available evidence**

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy?

**2.1 Staff Affected by this Policy/Proposal / 2.2 Composition of Southern Trust Workforce**

This Policy is applicable to all employees who are mothers returning to work whilst continuing to breastfeed.

Section 75 Group	Make up of Staff Affected January 2026	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Female	85.4%
	Male	14.6%
<b>Religion</b>	Protestant	33.9%
	Roman Catholic	55.9%
	Neither	10.2%
<b>Political Opinion</b>	Broadly Unionist	8.9%
	Broadly Nationalist	9.9%
	Other	7.2%
	Do Not Wish To Answer/Not Known	74%
<b>Age</b>	16-24	6.6%
	25-34	22.7%
	35-44	28%
	45-54	21.1%
	55-64	17.5%
	65+	4.1%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	32.1%
	Married/Civil Partnership	55.9%
	Other/Not Known	12%
<b>Dependant Status</b>	Caring for a Child/Children/Dependant Older Person/Person(s) With a Disability	13.8%
	None	31.9%
	Not Known	54.3%
<b>Disability</b>	Yes	2.8%
	No	73.3%
	Not Known	23.9%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Bangladeshi	0.01%
	Black African	0.56%
	Black Caribbean	0.01%
	Black Other	0.03%
	Chinese	0.08%



	Filipino	0.55%
	Indian	1.24%
	Irish Traveller	0.01%
	Pakistani	0.15%
	Mixed Ethnic	0.24%
	White	73.5%
	Not Known	23.62%
<b>Sexual Orientation towards:</b>	Opposite Sex	58.3%
	Same Sex	1.2%
	Same and Opposite Sex	0.3%
	Do Not Wish To Answer/Not Known	40.2%

### 2.3 Patients / Clients Affected

This policy will not affect any service users. This is an internal policy for employees only.

### 2.4 Northern Ireland Health And Social Care Workforce Key Statistics

According to the 2025 Census figures some key stats for the HSC are:

- The HSC workforce grew by 22% (11,944.8 WTE) between the 2016 and 2025 Censuses.
- The largest employer in the HSC was the Belfast Trust with 21,191 (19,038.9 WTE) staff or 28% of all HSC staff.
- The largest Occupational Family was Nursing & Midwifery with 24,887 (22,269.3 WTE) staff or 33% of all HSC staff.
- Over two thirds (34%, 22,402.2 WTE) of WTE HSC staff were employed at Agenda for Change Bands 1 to 4.
- Over three quarters (78% or 58,354 headcount) of HSC employees were female.

### (3) Needs, experiences and priorities

- (3.1) Taking into account the information above what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the Section 75 categories and for both service users and staff.  
**(NB: Use relevant statistical and qualitative data to complete the table below)**

Section 75 Category	Details of Needs, Experiences and Priorities	
	Staff	Service Users
Gender	The Policy is applicable to all employees who choose to return to work whilst continuing to breastfeed. Employees who are breastfeeding are permitted to breastfeed or express milk during working hours using their normal breaks and as part of additional lactation breaks (usually 20 minutes once to twice daily) as agreed with their line manager. If additional time is needed beyond the	N/A
Age		N/A
Religion		N/A



<b>Section 75 Category</b>	<b>Details of Needs, Experiences and Priorities</b>	
	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Service Users</b>
<b>Political Opinion</b>	agreed set breaks and lactation breaks employees may use personal leave or may make up the time by coming into work earlier or leaving work later as appropriate to the needs of both the workplace and the employee. If an employee who is breastfeeding is no longer able to undertake their usual role the Manager should offer suitable and appropriate alternative work, if possible. Where suitable appropriate alternative work cannot be facilitated ensure their employee is temporarily facilitated with paid time off work.	N/A
<b>Marital Status</b>		N/A
<b>Dependent Status</b>		N/A
<b>Disability</b>	The Trust will take into account the needs of individuals in line with its obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act including its duty to provide reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments will be facilitated according to the individual needs identified.	N/A
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Provision of information in different languages for employees who do not speak English as a first language - where necessary/on request.	N/A
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	The Trust is committed to promoting a good harmonious working environment for all staff regardless of sexual orientation.	N/A

(3.2) Provide details of how you have involved stakeholders, views of colleagues, service users and staff etc when screening this policy/proposal.

Internal stakeholders such as Workplace Health & Wellbeing Steering Group Members, Head of Midwifery and Gynaecology Services, Breastfeeding Co-ordinator, Head of Employee Relations and Trade Union views sought in the development of this policy. This policy was developed in light of good practice guidelines from the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSE) and from HSC Public Health Agency (PHA). The revised policy was also shared for comments with Infant Feeding Lead Midwife, Community Infant Feeding Lead, Antenatal Education Co-Ordinator, Trade Union rep, Occupational Health & Wellbeing Nurse Practitioner and Head of Employee Relations.

## (4) Screening Questions

You now have to assess whether the impact of the policy/proposal is major, minor or none. You will need to make an informed judgement based on the information you have gathered.

### (4.1) What is the likely impact of equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy/proposal, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 category	Details of policy/proposal impact		Level of impact? Minor/major/none
	Staff	Service Users	
Gender	The policy is intended to provide support/advice/information for employees returning to work while continuing to breastfeed.	NA	Minor positive
Age			
Religion			
Political Opinion			
Marital Status			
Dependent Status			
Disability			
Ethnicity			
Sexual Orientation			

### (4.2) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 category	Please provide details
Gender	See considerations at 3.1
Age	As above
Religion	As above
Political Opinion	As above
Marital Status	As above
Dependent Status	As above
Disability	As above
Ethnicity	As above
Sexual Orientation	As above

### (4.3) To what extent is the policy/proposal likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none

Good relations category	Details of policy/proposal impact	Level of impact Minor/major/none
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		none
Racial group		none



<b>(4.4) Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?</b>	
<b>Good relations category</b>	<b>Please provide details</b>
<b>Religious belief</b>	none
<b>Political opinion</b>	none
<b>Racial group</b>	none

## **(5) Consideration of Disability Duties**

(5.1) How does the policy/proposal encourage disabled people to participate in public life and promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

The policy and related information will be made available in alternative formats –where necessary/on request to ensure employees with a disability can access the policy and associated provisions. Reasonable adjustments will be considered in the out-working of the policy for employees with a disability.

## **(6) Consideration of Human Rights**

The Trust has a duty to act compatibly and must take Human Rights considerations into account in its day-to-day functions/activities.

(6.1) How does the policy/proposal impact on Human Rights?  
Complete for each of the articles

<b>Article</b>	<b>Positive impact</b>	<b>Negative impact = human right interfered with or restricted</b>	<b>Neutral impact</b>
<b>Article 2 – Right to life</b>			neutral
<b>Article 3 – Right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment</b>			neutral
<b>Article 4 – Right to freedom from slavery, servitude &amp; forced or compulsory labour</b>			neutral
<b>Article 5 – Right to liberty &amp; security of person</b>			neutral
<b>Article 6 – Right to a fair &amp; public trial within a reasonable time</b>			neutral



Article	Positive impact	Negative impact = human right interfered with or restricted	Neutral impact
<b>Article 7 – Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law &amp; no punishment without law</b>			neutral
<b>Article 8 – Right to respect for private &amp; family life, home and correspondence.</b>	√		
<b>Article 9 – Right to freedom of thought, conscience &amp; religion</b>			neutral
<b>Article 10 – Right to freedom of expression</b>			neutral
<b>Article 11 – Right to freedom of assembly &amp; association</b>			neutral
<b>Article 12 – Right to marry &amp; found a family</b>			neutral
<b>Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the convention rights</b>			neutral
<b>1<sup>st</sup> protocol Article 1 – Right to a peaceful enjoyment of possessions &amp; protection of property</b>			neutral
<b>1<sup>st</sup> protocol Article 2 – Right of access to education</b>			neutral

**Please note: If you have identified potential negative impact in relation to any of the Articles in the table above, speak to your line manager and/or Equality Unit on tel: 028 375 64151. It may also be necessary to seek legal advice.**

(6.2) Please outline any actions you will take to promote awareness of human rights and evidence that human rights have been taken into consideration in decision making processes.

Ongoing Human Rights Awareness Training and staff completion of ‘Making a Difference’ – Equality, Good Relations and Human Right e-learning training. Considering human rights aspects as an integral part of the Trust’s decision making processes and in this instance policy development, implementation and review – see also 8.1 monitoring arrangements.

## (7) Screening Decision

(7.1) Given the answers in Section 4 of this template, how would you categorise the impacts of this decision or policy/proposal? *(Please tick one option below and list your reasons for the decision in 7.2 below)*

<b>Major impact</b>		<b>EQIA Required? (Delete as appropriate)</b>	
			<b>No</b>

<b>Minor impact</b>	✓ positive	Mitigation Required	Alternative Policy Required
		<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>No impact</b>		<b>Screened Out</b>
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(7.2) Please give reasons for your decision and detail any mitigation or alternative policies considered.

This Policy will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of employees who choose to return to work whilst continuing to breastfeed; enabling them to continue breastfeeding for the recommended period of time and is designed to better promote equality of opportunity.

It is expected that line managers will assist in providing a supportive and understanding approach to facilitating breastfeeding employees and undertake additional risk assessments with their employee to ensure that they are not putting themselves or the baby at risk whilst providing a private space ensuring privacy to enable breastfeeding or expressing of milk.

(7.3) Do you consider the policy/proposal needs to be subjected to ongoing screening? NB: for strategies/policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages – screen at various stages during implementation.

Yes	
No	X



**(8) Monitoring**

(8.1) Please detail how you will monitor the effect of the policy/proposal for equality of opportunity and good relations, disability duties and human rights?

This Policy will be reviewed in line with the Trust's default position to review policies at least once every 3 years/sooner where it is necessary to do so.

**Approved Lead Officer:**

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**Please forward completed screening template to [Equality.Unit@southerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:Equality.Unit@southerntrust.hscni.net) for inclusion in the Trust's Policy Screening Reports which are uploaded to the Trust's website**