

Guidance on the Management of New or Expectant Mothers

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde recognises that the generic precautions taken to protect the health, safety and welfare of its staff will in many occasions also protect new and expectant mothers. However there are occasions when due to their condition different and/or additional measures will be necessary.

Definition of a New or Expectant Mother

A pregnant employee – this means a woman who has given her employer a medical certificate (or similar) stating she is pregnant

An employee who has recently given birth – this means an employee during the 14 weeks immediately after giving birth. Under Health & Safety regulations 'given birth' is defined as 'delivered a living child, or after 24 weeks a stillborn child'.

An employee who is breastfeeding – this means an employee who is breastfeeding during the 26 weeks immediately after giving birth

Duties

All Staff (including agency, part time, voluntary and those on short term or temporary contracts)

- Co-operating with all relevant procedures and documentation set out for ensuring their wellbeing, safety and welfare
- Bringing to the immediate attention of their Line Manager/ Deputy any hazards that they may identify or where they have any concerns regarding their health, safety and welfare
- Report any work related incidents or illnesses timeously and inform their Line Manager/Deputy immediately

Managers/Supervisors must ensure that:

- The Health and Safety Management Manual is made available to all staff and relevant others
- New and expectant mothers are encouraged to disclose their pregnancy at the earliest possible opportunity
- The highest level of confidentiality is maintained at all times
- Risk assessments are carried out for all work activities undertaken by new and expectant mothers and associated records and documentation maintained
- All necessary control measures identified by the risk assessment are implemented, followed monitored, reviewed and, if necessary, revised
- New and expectant mothers are informed of any risks to them/and their child and the control measures taken to protect them
- All adverse incidents are immediately reported and investigated
- Appropriate training etc. is provided where suitable alternative work is offered and accepted
- Provision is made to support new and expectant mothers who need to take time off work for medical reasons associated with their condition

New and Expectant Mothers must

- Inform their general practitioner or midwife of the nature of their work
- Notify their employer in writing, as soon as possible, if they are pregnant, have just given birth or are breastfeeding (expecting mothers must inform their employer that they are pregnant by at least the fifteenth week before the baby is due, around 25 weeks pregnant, in order for maternity leave to be arranged. However, it is recommended that employers are informed as soon as possible so that a risk assessment can be carried out. **Legislation protecting new and expectant mothers only applies once the employer has been advised, in writing, about the pregnancy.**
- Follow all safety arrangements implemented for their protection, including training sessions, complying with any control measures, etc.
- Not act in a manner that adversely affects their own health and safety, or that of their child and/or anyone else
- Report any perceived or real hazards or risks immediately to their Line Manager/Deputy

Assessment of Risk

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 stipulates the requirement of a risk assessment to be carried out of the risks to the health and safety of the pregnant worker, those who have recently given birth or those who are breastfeeding.

Initial Assessment

The purpose of an initial assessment is to identify:

- The presence of any females of potential child bearing age (those females will usually be employees but may also be visitors, contactors, volunteers, work experience etc.)
- Which work activities and/or areas of the workplace may pose a risk of harm to female employees and therefore warrant a full risk assessment

Conducting a full Risk Assessment

The full risk assessment will evaluate the work activities identified as potentially harmful in the initial assessment and determine those that present a significant risk.

Certain information can be used to help decide whether a significant risks exists, including:

- The presence of any specified hazards
- Compliance with prescribed exposure levels, ionising radiation
- Accident and sickness records
- The advice of occupational health advisors or general practitioner
- Complaints and information from staff

If there are any measures required as a result of other legislation which cannot control the identified risks the employer is required to alter the working conditions, or hours of work of the woman.

If this is not possible then in exceptional circumstances it may require the woman to be suspended from work if no suitable alternative employment can be found.