

Frequently Asked Questions on the HPH/BFHI Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace Project

What is the project?

It can be difficult for health workers to promote and support clients to breastfeed if they themselves are not supported to continue breastfeeding when they return to work. Therefore, the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Ireland, as part of the Health Promoting Hospitals Network developed a project to support staff who are breastfeeding. This project is open to any health workplace – a general hospital, a specialist hospital, a care facility, or a whole health board.

Why should a health facility join the project?

Breastfeeding is good for employers because it reduces absenteeism, increases productivity and staff commitment, leads to lower staff turnover, and creates a positive corporate image. Participating in the Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace Project helps a workplace to meet the requirements of the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Bill covering support for breastfeeding in the workplace.

What is needed to get an award?

A Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace is one that recognises the value of mothers on the staff continuing to breastfeed. Workplaces may be at different stages in supporting breastfeeding, so different awards are available to recognise this support – Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. The application pack gives details of the criteria for each award. At all award levels, the health facility must nominate a focal person for the project, return an annual evaluation and an annual Action Plan for improving or maintaining supportive practices. Designation is reassessed every two years.

How does this project link with other HPH projects?

This project is a staff health promotion project. Co-ordination of this project may be the remit of Health Promotion, Personnel, or Occupational Health. Mothers returning to work have already established breastfeeding and this project does not provide for any clinical support with breastfeeding. Thus a health facility can join this project even if they do not provide maternity or paediatric services. Information or resources may be provided by the maternity or paediatric services and community supports in the same way as this assistance would be provided to any other mother in the area.

Who can provide more information on the project?

For more information and to request an application pack, contact: Genevieve Becker, HPH/BFHI Breastfeeding Supportive Workplace Project Co-ordinator, Irish Network of Health Promotion Hospitals, c/o Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. Email : bfhi@iol.ie
www.ihph.ie/babyfriendlyinitiative

Steps to a Mother Friendly Workplace

1. Have a written policy addressing the importance of support for pregnant and for breastfeeding staff, and regarding lactation breaks and other supports in the workplace.
 2. Provide information to all managerial, supervisory, personnel staff and for co-workers on the implementation of this policy.
 3. Inform employees who are pregnant or considering pregnancy of their maternity benefits, the importance of breastfeeding and the breastfeeding supports in the facility.
 4. Provide comfortable private and safe facilities for expressing and storing breast milk and/or a place to feed the baby.
 5. Keep the work environment clean and safe from hazards to pregnant and breastfeeding women.
 6. Provide paid breastfeeding breaks or a reduction in working hours with cover provided for the women's work while she is on break.
 7. Offer flexible work hours/work site to pregnant and breastfeeding women.
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