

OVERVIEW

These guidelines are designed to support you, as a volunteer manager, to understand your responsibilities and those of your volunteers relating to managing volunteers who are nursing children.

All volunteer managers and volunteers have a moral and legal responsibility to create an environment which is accepting of breastfeeding. Although this guidance is focused on volunteering, it references employment law as a model for best practice.

The following areas will be covered:

- The law
- Preparation
- Implementation
- Review

THE LAW

In the UK, an individual's right to breastfeed in public is covered by The Equality Act 2010 which states, "a business cannot discriminate against mothers who are breastfeeding a child of any age." For the Republic of Ireland this is covered by The Equal Status Act 2000.

This means:

- it's unlawful for business owners and their staff to ask someone to leave their premises because they are breastfeeding - so anyone using their services can breastfeed on their premises
- it's unlawful for business owners or staff to refuse to serve anyone because they are breastfeeding - so nursing parents cannot be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because they are breastfeeding
- an individual is within their rights to breastfeed in public open spaces and on public transport
- employees must be aware of the above legal requirements and training should be provided by businesses.

In Scotland, nursing parents are covered by additional legislation called The Breastfeeding etc. (Scotland) Act 2005, which makes it a criminal offence to try to stop or prevent a parent from breastfeeding a child in a public place.

PREPARATION

Creating an environment where volunteers feel comfortable to continue breastfeeding whilst volunteering can encourage loyalty and the organisation can benefit from the skills and time given by the volunteer by allowing them to return while breastfeeding. Being flexible if circumstances change will be really helpful. However, managers should be careful not to inadvertently pressurise volunteers to return before they are ready.

Discuss any adjustments that can be made so that breastfeeding can take place whilst volunteering in RNLI locations. A good opportunity to do this would be prior to the birth whilst undertaking an expectant volunteer risk assessment; perhaps at the 24 week assessment - for further guidance for this see policy **PO1052 – Lifeboat Crew Reporting of Pregnancy** on Horizon (for operational volunteers) or **Guidelines for Managing Expectant Volunteers in Non-Operational Volunteer Roles** (for non-operational volunteers). This would allow the volunteer manager to get a better understanding of the period of time that the volunteer will not be available, allowing alternative arrangements to be made.

IMPLEMENTATION

In order to make adequate provision for breastfeeding it is important to discuss the needs of the volunteer. Some suggestions as to the arrangements that could be made (where practicable) are listed below:

- Offering a private, comfortable and hygienic place for the volunteer to breastfeed or express. An office or meeting room is ideal. Toilets or first aid rooms are not deemed as suitable. *It is worth noting that it is not a requirement for a nursing mother to use a private space. Where a nursing mother feels comfortable, breastfeeding in a public space is to be accepted.*
- Having a refrigerator or cool box available for expressed milk to be stored below 4 degrees Celsius. Colleagues should be notified, and the expressed milk should be well labelled and in a sealed container.
- Rotas, training sessions and other volunteer duties should be flexible to meet the feeding needs of the child. Offering greater flexibility to a volunteer's schedule should be considered.
- Offering additional or extended breaks.
- Welcoming carers, such as the volunteers family members, to access the volunteer location with the child to allow the volunteer to breastfeed. This should be risk assessed and documented.

Consent should be obtained before informing other volunteers of any adjustments which may have been made for breastfeeding in a volunteer location. Communication will help other team members understand why adjustments have been made and may help to remove any barriers and or negative attitudes. It is also an opportunity to remind fellow volunteers of expected behaviours so everyone is acting lawfully.

REVIEW

It may not be appropriate to set an end date as to when these arrangements or adjustments are to come to an end. This is due to the personal preferences of the individual and the changing feeding needs of the child. For example, a baby is likely to feed less frequently as the child becomes older however, the duration of each feed may increase. It is recommended that a review date of between 2-3 months should be set where the arrangement can be discussed.