



**North Tyneside Council**

# **Safety Document for New and Expectant Mothers at Work**

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**Produced by: Occupational Health and Safety Unit**

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## **1. Purpose and Scope**

This safety document provides general guidance on assessing the risks at work for new and expectant mothers.

The document is aimed at new and expectant mothers and all managers who supervise and manage the council's employees.

## **2. General Notes**

Pregnancy is not in itself an illness. North Tyneside Council will take appropriate medical action to deal with any symptoms of ill health related to pregnancy

## **3. Definition**

The term "new or expectant mother" means a worker who is pregnant, who has given birth during the previous six months or who is breast-feeding.

## **4. References**

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

## **5. Legal Requirements**

Under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 North Tyneside Council has a duty of care for the health and safety of its employees whilst they are at work. Regulation 16 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 as amended 1999, requires the employer to carry out a specific risk assessment in respect of new or expectant mothers and take practical action to control those risks identified.

They must also make this information known to all their female employees of childbearing age, not just those who have informed them they are pregnant. This is particularly important for expectant

mothers, as it is possible for the first 4-6 weeks of pregnancy to go undetected.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require the employer to provide facilities for pregnant women and nursing mothers to rest, which should be conveniently situated in relation to sanitary facilities and, where necessary, include the facility to lie down.

The Manual Handling Regulations 1992 require a specific risk assessment to be made, which must take into consideration the ability of the individual carrying out the task.

## **6. Responsibilities**

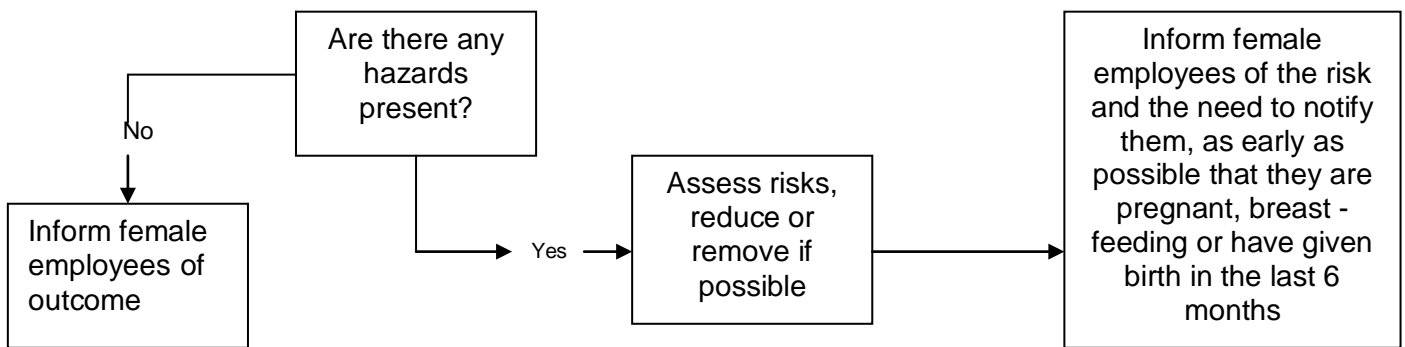
Managers are responsible for the effective implementation of this procedure within their service area/s.

While there is no legal requirement, new and expectant mothers should notify their manager in writing of their condition, and if they continue to breast feed for more than six months they should ensure the employer is informed of this. The employee must cooperate with the employer in relation to any modifications made to their work, to ensure their health and safety.

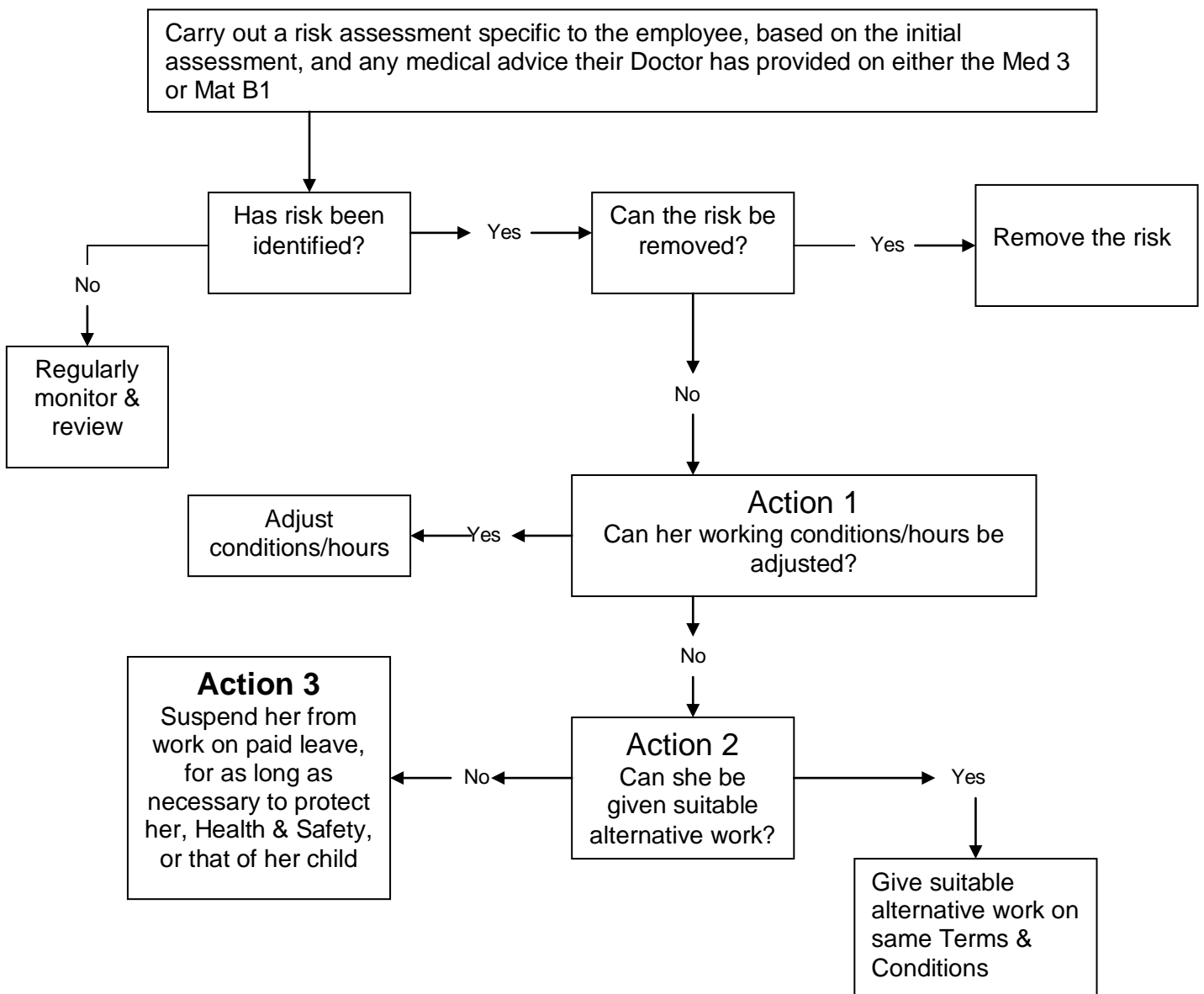
## **7. The Risk Assessment**

A major factor to be considered when carrying out the risk assessment is that pregnancy is not a static condition as such, it will be necessary to review the assessment with the employee as their pregnancy develops. In addition, the employee must be made aware of the need to notify their line manager of any change in their condition, or any difficulties they may be experiencing at work as a result of their condition which their manager must take into account as part of the risk assessment. At Beacon Hill the risk assessment will be undertaken by the Deputy Head responsible for the department in which the member of staff works. It will be undertaken in discussion with the member of staff and will use the existing risk assessment form. The risk assessment will detail any actions to be taken which may include a change of timetable or classroom base. The assessment will be reviewed every 3 before the birth of the baby.

## STAGE ONE: Initial Health & Safety Risk Assessment



Stage Two: After the employee has provided written notification that she is pregnant, has given birth in the last six months or is breast feeding



**Employers should monitor & review these actions on a regular basis**

## **8. Specific factors for consideration are:**

1. Manual handling activities which require frequent assessment as abilities alter as the pregnancy develops
2. Exposure to physical agents such as temperature extremes, vibration, noise, repetitive movements and postural problems should be avoided or at least minimised.
3. Unusually stressful work
4. Working at heights
5. Travelling
6. Lone Working
7. Excessive working hours (night-work etc)
8. Exposure to violence
9. Exposure to ionising radiation should be avoided.
10. Exposure to biological agents, which include for example measles, mumps, TB, brucellosis, especially agents capable of causing abortion, should be avoided.
11. Exposure to chemical agents such as mercury, lead, substances absorbed through the skin, cytotoxic drugs (drugs designed to kill cells), carbon dioxide and chemicals labelled as follows should be avoided:

Possible risk of irreversible effects:

- May cause cancer
- May cause heritable genetic damage
- May cause harm to the unborn child
- Possible risk of harm to the unborn child
- May cause harm to breast-fed babies

Where the risk assessment identifies risks to new and expectant mothers and the preventative protective steps taken by the employer cannot avoid these risks, the employer will need to:

1. alter her working conditions or hours of work if it is reasonable to do so and would avoid the risks or, if these conditions cannot be met;
2. identify and offer her suitable alternative work that is available, and if that is not feasible;
3. suspend her from work. The Employment Rights Act 1996 (which is the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry) requires that this suspension should be on full pay

## **9. More general factors for consideration are:**

- Morning sickness can occur at any time during the day. Fumes or strong smells may aggravate this condition so it is important to locate the employee away from these.
- Sickness and the need to urinate require easy access to toilet and washing facilities both in terms of close proximity and ability to leave the task.
- Backache, haemorrhoids and varicose veins are all conditions associated with pregnancy the pregnant employee should avoid standing, sitting for long periods of time and avoid manual handling.
- General fatigue is often an effect of pregnancy. The employer and the employee should ensure excessive exercise is avoided and once again access to rest facilities.

## **10. Further Guidance**

Further guidance for new or expectant mothers is available on the council's intranet under:

1. Human Resources – Work Life Balance Policy – appendix A Maternity Pack
2. Human Resources – Health and Safety – Safety Document for Risk assessment