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## **LEAFLET 9 TO PART 3 TO SHEF MANUAL**

### **NEW AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS**

1. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations introduced measures to improve the health and safety at work of pregnant workers and workers who have given birth (to a living child or, after 24 weeks of pregnancy, a stillborn child) within the previous 6 months or are still breastfeeding. These measures specifically require employers to take particular account of the risks from any agents, processes or working conditions through the risk assessment process. Therefore a specific risk assessment must be raised for each employee known to be in this category. The risk assessment must be reviewed on a regular basis as although the hazards are likely to remain constant, the possibility of damage to the unborn child will vary at different stages of pregnancy, and there may be different risks to consider for the worker and baby when breastfeeding. Please refer to Annex A.

2. There is no time limit imposed regulating how long a mother can continue to breast feed. That decision lies entirely with the mother, not the employer. She may continue to breast feed for as long as she wishes.

3. All SCE female employees should inform their line manager in writing as soon as they become aware that they are pregnant. Line management is not required to take any action until the employee has done so. They are not required to maintain these controls if the employee fails to produce a certificate confirming her condition, within a reasonable time when requested to do so in writing.

4. The day to day activities associated with SCE employees do not in general carry a high risk however the assessment must still be conducted and consideration must be given to the following; (which is not an exhaustive list)

- a. Contact with chemicals in science labs. (Obtain guidance from a SHEF Advisor if this is likely to be applicable).
- b. Manual handling - Pregnant workers are especially at risk as hormonal changes can effect ligaments, postural problems may increase as the pregnancy progresses. Possible risks from those who have recently given birth e.g. limitations on lifting and handling capability after caesarean section. Breastfeeding mothers are at no greater risk than other workers.
- c. Computers and VDU's - Although there has been widespread anxiety about radiation emissions from display screen equipment and possible effects on pregnant women, there is substantial evidence that these concerns are

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unfounded. However, as the employee's size and shape changes her DSE assessment will require review.

d. Extremes of heat and cold - When pregnant, women tolerate heat less well and more readily faint or be liable to heat stress. Breastfeeding may be impaired by heat dehydration.

e. Fatigue - Miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight can be associated with fatigue. Excessive physical or mental pressure may cause stress, anxiety and raised blood pressure. Consideration should be given to the following;

- Ensuring that hours, volume and pacing of work are not excessive.
- Where possible, allowing employees have some control over how their work is organised.
- Ensuring that seating is available where appropriate.
- Giving longer or more frequent rest breaks.
- Adjusting workstations or work processes.

5. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations require suitable facilities to be provided for pregnant or breastfeeding employees to rest, and to providing facilities for those who are breastfeeding to express and store milk. However, employers are under no obligation to allow employees to bring their babies into the workplace.