

NEW AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS PROCEDURE

Introduction

This procedure sets out the University approach towards New and Expectant Mothers and applies to all University staff and students on all campuses and where students and staff are carrying out fieldwork. The phrase 'new or expectant mother' refers to an employee or student, who is pregnant, who has given birth within the previous six months or who is breast feeding.

Students, while on placement for Work Based Placement Learning, are regarded as employees of the organisation providing the placement opportunity. It is therefore the legal responsibility of the placement provider to ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out for a student who informs them of their pregnancy while on work based placement learning.

Pregnancy should not be regarded as ill health. It is part of everyday life and the health and safety implications can be adequately addressed by normal health and safety management procedures that are already in place throughout the University.

Many women work or study while they are pregnant and may return to work/study while they are still breastfeeding. Some hazards in the workplace may affect the health and safety of new and expectant mothers and their child (ren). Therefore, working/study conditions normally considered acceptable may no longer be so during pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding.

Pregnancy can go undetected, in many cases, for the first 4 to 6 weeks. It is important for employers to identify hazards and risks for all female employees/students of childbearing age. It should also be taken into account that some hazards can present more of a risk at different stages of the pregnancy.

Procedure

The law requires employers to assess risks to their employees/students; including new and expectant mothers, and to do what is reasonably practicable to control the risks. By controlling risks appropriately for all who could be exposed, the need for special action specifically for new and expectant mothers is reduced. See responsibilities section.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 requires that employers provided suitable facilities for workers who are pregnant or breastfeeding to rest. UWS have Parenting Rooms on each Campus which can be used by staff, students and visitors.

Ayr – Room 3.039 – the code can be obtained from the main reception

Dumfries – (Dumfries and Galloway College) Room 1023. Anyone wishing to use this room should obtain access through reception at the College.

Lanarkshire – Room 1.0.12 – the room can be accessed via swipe card.

Paisley – Room P102 – the access code can be obtained from main reception in the Brough Building.

London – please speak to the main reception.

Responsibilities

The University must assess and monitor the ability of pregnant women to perform their work safely and without exposure to significant risks to their health throughout the declared term of pregnancy and the post-natal period and, where necessary, make appropriate changes to the control measures arising out of previous risk assessments.

All female employees have a responsibility to inform People and Organisational Development (P&OD) of their pregnancy as soon as possible after it has been confirmed. It is advisable that the new/expectant mother, if an employee notifies the head of their department/school in writing at that time. Students must notify their Programme Leader. This will allow the University to implement this procedure as appropriate in order to give the best support we can.

For information on maternity leave and pay, implications for your pension, keeping in touch days and returning to work after maternity leave you should refer to the P&OD website or contact your assigned school/department HR Business Partner.

The University's New and Expectant Mothers Procedure places the responsibility on the Heads of Department/Schools to carry out risk assessments of the workplace and work/teaching activities. Each pregnancy must be individually and continually assessed for potential risks to the mother's health and the health of the unborn child, and following the birth, the nursing mother and baby.

The New/Expectant Mother and her line manager or other person nominated by the Head of Department/School should carry out the risk assessments. A copy of this should be given to the Head of Department/School or their nominee for any appropriate action. If required, UWS Health and Safety Team can provide further advice and support. A copy of the risk assessment should be retained by the New and Expectant Mother, her line manager and the Head of Department/School, and updated as required throughout the pregnancy.

Each situation should be individually assessed for potential risks. A written risk assessment must be completed as soon as possible following notification to the Head of Department/School of the pregnancy. This requirement applies to members of staff and students who are pregnant, who have recently given birth or in anticipation of a new mother returning to work

A student who is pregnant or who has recently given birth is strongly advised to notify her Programme Leader or academic supervisor as soon as possible in order to determine if they are exposed to any hazards and allow them to carry out a risk assessment.

In either case (staff or student) it is the responsibility of the Dean of the School to ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out and any controls are identified and put in place.

Female contractors or visitors to UWS should be notified of any hazards prior to entering any high risk areas. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department/School bringing in the contactor or visitor into UWS to ensure that the correct advice is given.

Risk assessments for new and expectant mothers need to be kept under review. Although hazards are unlikely to change, the risk of damage to the unborn child as a result of a hazard will vary at different stages of the pregnancy. Dexterity, agility, co-ordination, speed of movement and reach may also be impaired in the expectant mother because of increasing size as the pregnancy progresses.

While it is difficult to define a frequency for review of the risk assessment as every pregnancy is different, review should be carried out if it is suspected that the risk assessment is no longer valid, if there have been significant changes to anything it relates to or if requested by the expectant mother. As part of that process, the risk assessment should take into account possible risks that may occur at different stages of your pregnancy.

It is your responsibility, and to your benefit to complete with your line manager a new and expectant mothers risk assessment form, this is available on the intranet pages. This risk assessment will look at work activities in particular and the environment in which you work to ensure that you are not exposed to any potential harm. If any issues around the health of the mother or baby are highlighted, please contact Occupational Health. All matters will be treated in confidence.

If you believe there is a risk to your health and safety, or to that of your baby, that has not been considered by the risk assessment, you should immediately bring this to the attention of your Line Manager, your HR Business Partner, Health and Safety or Occupational Health.

For further information or for line manager training in how to carry out a risk assessment please contact HealthandSafety@uws.ac.uk

Further References:-

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/faqs.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg373.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/infection-mothers.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/flowchart.htm>

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