

Breastfed Child Policies in Childcare: What You Need to Know

In the UK some childcare environments may be unfamiliar with the specific needs of breastfed children. It is therefore essential to have a clear understanding of how your chosen childcare setting will support breastfeeding, especially if you are providing expressed breastmilk. Parents may need to ask key questions, consider the responses, and even include specific agreements in a formal childcare contract. In this guide we provide some information on things to consider regarding childcare and to discuss with your childcare provider (even if that's a family member or neighbour).

Questions to ask your childcare setting

1. Milk Storage and Labelling:

How will the childcare setting store and label any expressed breastmilk (EBM) you provide? Clear systems for storage and labelling are crucial to avoid errors.

2. Staff Training:

Are the childcare setting staff trained in handling expressed breast milk and supporting breastfeeding families?.

3. Wrong Milk Procedure:

What is the procedure if the wrong milk is given to your child? For instance, if your child is accidentally fed formula, another family's expressed milk, or if another child is given your milk, how will the nursery address this? Human error is natural, but there should be a clear policy in place to manage such situations.

4. Feeding Methods:

Breastfed babies often take smaller, more frequent feeds compared to formula-fed babies. Does the nursery understand and use paced feeding methods? You can find some resources in Mother Guide 14 on responsive and paced feeding which you could share with your childcare provide. These explain how to feed breastfed babies with a bottle gently, using a slow flow teat, taking breaks, and respecting the child's natural feeding cues.

5. Prioritising Solids vs Expressed Milk:

Would you prefer the nursery to prioritise solids or expressed breast milk during feeding times? Your preference may depend on your breastfeeding goals, the age of your child (breastmilk or formula is recommended to be the main drink before 12 months) and how easily you can express sufficient milk for your child.

6. End-of-Day Feeds:

If your child signals hunger towards the end of the day, but you will soon be collecting them, how would you like the nursery to handle the situation? For example, would you prefer them to offer a small feed to tide the child over, or would you rather they distract the child until you arrive? Alternatively, you might want them to continue with a full feed regardless.

7. Emergency Scenarios:

What should the nursery do if you are delayed, your supply of expressed milk runs out, or there is an issue with the milk (e.g., it is lost or damaged)? Discuss these potential scenarios in advance to avoid confusion.

Planning Ahead for Success

If you want to breastfeed your child on drop-off/pick up or during your breaks at your childcare setting you may want to discuss with your childcare provider if they have arrangements /space for this.

Establishing a clear understanding with your childcare setting or childcare giver about these key issues will help ensure your child's needs are met while supporting your breastfeeding goals. You might have thought about some of these things yet - maybe this list could be an opportunity to discuss options with your family.

By addressing these topics early on, parents can feel more confident in their childcare arrangements, knowing that their child will receive appropriate care and support tailored to their breastfeeding journey.