

HR TEAMS AND FACILITIES MANAGERS

Mothering Room Specification Guide

What the law requires. What good looks like. A practical guide to getting it right - and keeping it right.

1 in 3

working mothers leave their job within a year of returning. Provision is a retention decision, not a facilities one.

80%

of parents say workplace support has a direct impact on their performance. The room is a signal, not just a service.

20%

of employers now rated highly supportive - down from 29%. The gap between expectation and provision is widening.

LEGAL LANDSCAPE

What the law actually says

Most employers believe they are compliant. Many are not. The legal framework is broader than most HR teams realise - and the gap between legal minimum and genuinely good provision is significant.

Legislation	What it requires
Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992	Employers must provide suitable rest facilities for pregnant workers and nursing mothers. The space must be hygienic and private. A toilet cubicle does not qualify.
Equality Act 2010	Breastfeeding is protected under sex discrimination provisions. Asking a nursing mother to move, cover up, or use a different space is unlawful. This applies to any person in the workplace - employees, visitors, and contractors.
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974	Requires a specific risk assessment for new and expectant mothers. Inadequate facilities can be cited as a failure of duty of care - separate from the discrimination argument.
HSE Guidance (non-statutory)	Recommends a private room with a comfortable seat, clean surfaces, access to a fridge, and a power socket. These are best practice, not legal minimums - but they represent what a court would consider reasonable provision if challenged.

The gap between legal minimum and good practice is significant.

Most employers meet the legal floor and stop. The floor is low. A toilet with a chair added is not a mothering room. The employers who invest in a properly designed space see the return in retention, morale, and the quiet loyalty of every woman who uses it - and every woman who notices it exists.

SPECIFICATION CHECKLIST

What a mothering room needs

The following covers the space itself, the environment, and the systems around it. Required items reflect legal obligations or HSE guidance. Recommended items represent the difference between a compliant space and one that women actually want to use.

REQUIRED - legal obligation or HSE guidance		RECOMMENDED - best practice standard
THE ROOM		
Lockable door with occupied indicator	Not a curtain or screen. A door that locks from the inside and shows when in use.	REQUIRED
Not located within a toilet facility	HSE guidance is explicit. Adjacent to toilets with a separate entrance is acceptable.	REQUIRED
Comfortable nursing chair with arm support	Arm support is essential for nursing posture. A standard office chair is not suitable.	REQUIRED
Clean surface at the right height	For a pump, phone, or drink. Not the floor.	RECOMMENDED
Power socket	Non-negotiable for returning mothers using electric breast pumps.	RECOMMENDED
Access to a fridge	A dedicated shelf in a nearby kitchen is acceptable. Not shared with food.	RECOMMENDED
ENVIRONMENT		
Acoustic privacy	Basic sound dampening. A room that can be heard through walls creates anxiety.	RECOMMENDED
Space for a pram or buggy	A room that cannot fit a buggy forces an impossible choice.	RECOMMENDED
Calm, considered decoration	Sensory-neutral. The environment communicates whether the person is valued.	RECOMMENDED
Adequate lighting - adjustable preferred	Harsh fluorescent lighting is not appropriate for a rest space.	RECOMMENDED
Activity or distraction for young children	A small basket of quiet toys. The session is calmer for everyone.	RECOMMENDED
SIGNAGE AND SYSTEMS		
Available during all operating hours	Locked or inaccessible facilities are as damaging as no facilities.	REQUIRED
Clearly signed from main entrance and key corridors	Parents should not have to ask where it is.	RECOMMENDED
Communicated in onboarding materials and HR policy	Mothers returning from maternity leave should know it exists before their first day back.	RECOMMENDED

THE BUSINESS CASE

Why this is a commercial decision

A mothering room is not a welfare provision. It is a retention tool, an engagement signal, a legal risk reduction measure, and an employer brand asset. The cost of getting it wrong exceeds the cost of getting it right by a significant margin.

Pillar	The argument	The number
Retention	Women returning from maternity leave are at peak attrition risk. A properly equipped mothering room signals that the organisation has thought about them specifically. The cost of replacing a mid-career woman is typically 50-200% of her annual salary.	50-200% replacement cost
Engagement	Employees who feel genuinely supported during the 0-5 year period show measurably higher engagement scores. The mothering room is a physical signal of a culture - visible to every woman in the building, not just those currently using it.	1 in 3 leave within a year
Legal risk	Inadequate provision creates direct exposure under the Equality Act 2010. A single employment tribunal claim will cost more than a decade of maintaining a proper facility. Documentation of provision matters.	Equality Act 2010
Employer brand	The employee benefits market is saturated. Family-specific provision is a genuine differentiator in recruitment, particularly for mid-career women who research culture before accepting offers.	20% employers rated highly supportive

COMMON SHORTFALLS

What to avoid

<p>Repurposing a store cupboard</p> <p>Adding a chair to a broom cupboard does not create a mothering room. The environment communicates value - or the absence of it.</p>	<p>Sharing the accessible toilet</p> <p>The accessible toilet is used by disabled colleagues and visitors. Mothering should have its own dedicated space wherever possible.</p>
<p>No fridge access</p> <p>Expressed milk must be stored safely. Without a fridge, the room fails at a basic functional level for many of the women who need it most.</p>	<p>Not telling anyone it exists</p> <p>A room not communicated in onboarding, HR policy, and line manager training might as well not exist. Discoverability is part of provision.</p>

THE TURNKEY SOLUTION

Ready to install. No construction required.

Mother Moments designs and supplies fully equipped, self-contained mothering room units - ready to install in your existing space. No building works. No lengthy procurement. A properly designed mothering room, delivered.

Fully equipped	Design-led	Scalable
Chair, surfaces, storage, power, and privacy - everything in one unit. Nothing to source separately.	Built to feel considered, not functional. Because the women who use it notice the difference - and so does everyone else.	One unit or many. Suitable for offices, retail destinations, and public venues of all sizes.

QUESTIONS TO START WITH

Before you do anything else

- Do we currently have a dedicated mothering room - or just a repurposed space?
- Is the room communicated in our onboarding materials and maternity returner policy?
- Does it have a power socket, access to a fridge, and a lockable door?
- Do our line managers know where it is and what it is for?
- When did we last ask a returning mother whether the provision meets her needs?
- How does our provision compare to what the law actually requires?

Want a second opinion on your space?

Mother Moments supplies fully equipped, self-contained mothering room units - no construction required. Happy to talk through what would work for your organisation.

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