

Know your rights: welfare facilities at work



Adequate welfare facilities for staff are an indicator of how valued staff are in the workplace, and the evidence links healthier, valued staff to better patient outcomes. That's why it is so important that all nursing staff have access to suitable welfare facilities at work.

The information below comes from the NHS Staff Council and explains your rights to welfare facilities at work. Full details can be found here: <https://nhsemployers.org/publications/welfare-facilities-healthcare-staff>. All the regulations can be found in Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 and The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

The RCN Workforce Standards, particularly standard 13, may also be of use: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Publications/2021/May/009-681.pdf>.



Drinking water: There must be a 'readily accessible' supply of drinking water, not only during break times but also during shifts. Employers have an obligation to provide clean drinking water for their workforce. Regulations require that "an adequate supply of wholesome drinking water shall be provided for all persons at work in the workplace." This supply shall "be readily accessible at suitable places' (Regulation 22)



Facilities to rest and eat: Employers must provide suitable, readily accessible facilities to allow you to rest and eat meals. These areas should be away from your working environment, with adequate seating (complete with back support) for the number of persons at work likely to use them at any one time. Where hot food isn't readily available, there should be adequate facilities to allow you to store and heat up food. Special provisions need to be put in place for pregnant staff and nursing mothers. Facilities should be accessible to staff with disabilities. (Regulation 25)



Changing facilities and lockers: Changing rooms should be provided for workers who change into special work clothing. They should ensure the occupier's privacy and be accessible from your work area. There must be secure facilities for staff to store their clothing. Changing facilities should be fitted with adequate seating, clothing accommodation and showering facilities with accessible facilities for disabled staff. They should be large enough for the maximum number of workers expected to use them at any one time to do so. (Regulation 23 and 24)



Sanitary and washing facilities: Washing facilities should have running hot and cold or warm water, soap and clean towels or other means of cleaning or drying. Where the work results in contamination of the skin by hazardous or offensive materials, suitable and sufficient showers should also be provided for staff to use. (Regulation 20 and 21)

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