



BREAKS AT WORK GUIDANCE

Title	A Framework for Breaks at Work
Who should use this	All Staff
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Approved by Management Team	
Approved by Joint Board	NA – Existing Guidance
Reviewer	Office Manager
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Review History

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1	Minor amendments	MARCH 2015
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Framework for Breaks at Work

1. Background

It is important that managers apply consistency while at the same time have flexibility, pragmatism and discretion of approach depending on circumstances. Importantly, the delivery of customer services cannot be affected. Clearly the aim – and indeed the Board’s responsibility as an employer - is to provide a safe working environment for all employees with the primary focus on the positive promotion of employee health and well-being.

2. Health & Safety

The Board will embrace and comply fully with the legislative framework surrounding the Working Time Directive. Managers must ensure employees have a minimum break of at least 20 minutes should they be at work for at least 6 hours. Operational arrangements for organising and taking employee breaks, in line with service delivery requirements, should be agreed with the immediate supervisor or line manager.

In addition, there are some posts where work activities require a break and change of activity or task – for example working with personal computers which are covered by Display Screen Equipment (DSE). In managing the work load and activities, managers must ensure employees are given regular breaks from these tasks to undertake other work.

3. General Breaks: Current position

While tea breaks are not provided for within the conditions of service, it is recognised that over many years the practice has developed whereby employees regularly enjoy a tea break. Not only does the practice vary across sections, but the length, frequency and location of breaks also varies.

In addition to having a “tea break”, some employees also have a smoking break. Clearly the Board has a no smoking policy in line with the legislation and smoking within Board premises, and within vehicles is prohibited. Again, there is no provision for smoking breaks within the conditions of service.

4. Guidance

It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure customer services and day to day workloads are not affected by any type of employee break. Managers must put in place flexible but fair arrangements and ensure consistency of approach among employees. This would include:

- Taking into account the time appropriate for a coffee break – e.g. 10 minutes
- the location – for example, it would not be appropriate for employees to have a smoking break within their vehicle or have tea / coffee at a customer reception point
- the frequency - frequent breaks in the morning and / or afternoon would not be appropriate for example a tea / coffee break **and** a smoking break is not permissible
- staff requiring extra time for either a smoke break or to visit the shop must flexi in and out using their own time
- there is no afternoon break as such but if staff want to have a tea or coffee while “working” they may do so at their work station, but the practice of stopping work is not expected.

As described above, breaks will normally be paid, but flexi-time can be used if a longer or additional break is requested.