



Does UCD support the lactation needs of students on return to campus?

McGuinness, D., Vickers, N., Frazer, K.,
Coughlan, B., Nahal, R. Barr, A. Watts, E.

Date: 26th February 2024



Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
UCD Vision & Mission	6
We're Breastfeeding Friendly at UCD	7
Ethics	8
Setting	8
Health & Sciences Centre	9
Newman Building	11
Tierney Building	13
UCD Village	15
O'Brien Centre for Science	16
Smurfit School of Business (Blackrock)	19
Recommendations	21
Conclusion	21
References	22

Introduction

Breastfeeding is a basic human right for every child in society and integral to their optimal growth and development. It provides short and long term benefits for the breastfeeding mother, child and family. Breastfeeding is welcomed across the wider campus. Lactation and infant feeding rooms provide a private space for breastfeeding students to continue breastfeeding their infant on return to campus or to express breastmilk and maintain their milk supply during the college day. The presence of infant feeding and lactation rooms supports students to sustain breastfeeding and meet their educational goals.

Background:

Breastfeeding is globally acknowledged for its immense benefits to both maternal and infant health (Victoria et al., 2016). Moreover, it is becoming increasingly recognised that the multifaceted benefits of breastfeeding transcend beyond individuals and incorporate social, economic and environmental benefits. Breastfeeding is a key component of the 2023 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and as such is aligned to many of the SDG's (2023). The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of an infant's life, with continued breastfeeding along with complementary foods until two years and beyond (WHO, 2023). Nevertheless, despite these recommendations, Ireland faces significant challenges with low initiation and continuation rates of breastfeeding. The Irish Maternity Indicator Report (2023) states that only 63.1% of women initiated breastfeeding in Ireland in 2021. This is in stark contrast to other geographical jurisdictions such as Australia whereby the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) report that 83.5% of infants were receiving breast milk at two months of age and the United States 83.2% (CDC, 2021). Disturbingly, by the time mothers leave the maternity services in Ireland, only 36.8% were exclusively breastfeeding in 2021 (HSE, 2023). The WHO Global Breastfeeding Collective (2023) has aimed for a global rate of 70% of infants to be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life by 2030. There is a critical need for enhanced support and facilitates to encourage and enable breastfeeding mothers to attain this which is pertinent to the student breastfeeding parents in UCD. Ireland, with its notable lower rates of initiation and continuation of breastfeeding is facing an urgent call to bridge these gaps and align with global breastfeeding standards.

More recently the Health Service Executive has recognised the importance of support to breastfeeding mothers on return to work following maternity leave and the provision of breastfeeding breaks (HSE, 2020). There is little discussion around student breastfeeding parents, their return to campus and the provision of adequate facilities to enable continued breastfeeding or expression of breastmilk. Breastfeeding supportive environments embrace inclusivity, diversity and equality and support the work of the Athena Swan framework.

UCD Vision & Mission

UCD is a university of the future, connected and connecting, engaged and engaging, committed to a sustainable future built on a healthy biosphere. UCD is a breastfeeding friendly university and parents are welcome to breastfeed across the wider campus. Infant feeding rooms are provided for parents who require privacy to breastfeed or express their breast milk. UCD is committed to supporting student parents and breastfeeding families to continue their career and education as they embark on their parenting journey. UCD embraces a culture that supports and raises awareness of breastfeeding. The key strategic themes guide the vision for UCD; building a healthy world, creating a sustainable global society, empowering humanity and transforming through digital technology (UCD 2024).

There are six lactation and Infant feeding rooms in UCD to support breastfeeding parents who wish to use the facilities as they return to the wider university:

- Health Science Centre
- Newman Building
- Tierney Building
- UCD Village
- O'Brien Centre for Science
- Smurfit School of Business (Blackrock)

There are no facilities in the Conway Building currently.

Building	Location	Access	Contact
O'Brien Centre for Science	Room E 0.12 (beside Moore Auditorium)	Access on request - granted by Welcome Centre	ext. 2845 Science Welcome Centre
Tierney Building	Ground floor (beside ladies' toilet)	Open access (through 'Staff Only' double doors)	
Health Sciences Centre	Room B3.23	Open access	
Smurfit School of Business (Blackrock)	E118 Ground Floor	Open access	
Newman Building	B001	Open access	
UCD Village	Room 108 First floor	Access on request - The Village Welcome Desk	UCD Estates 01 716 7000

We're Breastfeeding Friendly UCD

UCDs Breastfeeding policy was developed in 2022. In autumn 2023, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems launched Phase 1 of the We're Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative. A team of academics and staff, Denise McGuinness, Niamh Vickers, Dr Kate Frazer, Dr Barbara Coughlan, Emily Watts from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems, in association with Dr Clare Hayes Brady, School of Arts and Humanities, Dr Sharleen O'Reilly School of Agriculture and Food Science, Dr Ursula Fanning, Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, Dr Katherine Fama, UCD School of English, Drama and Film and Professor Colin Scott, Registrar, Deputy President and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The project was further supported by two BSc Midwifery students Ramanpreet Nahal and Amandine Barr, as part of their elective placement of two weeks duration each. This facilitated an audit of the lactation and Infant feeding rooms on campus, with a specific focus on student parents returning to campus and continuing their breastfeeding journey.

Ethics

A low risk ethical exemption was sought but the Research Ethics Committee (REC) provided assurance that ethical approval or low-risk ethical exemption was not required. The study did not involve collecting data from human participants and ethical approval was not required to undertake the research study.

Setting

This research was conducted at University College Dublin (UCD), the largest University in Ireland, with an extensive campus that spans over 133 hectares and hosts nearly 38,000 students. Notably, the student body is diverse, with 31% comprising international students. This study specifically focused on seven designated private breastfeeding rooms situated across the UCD Dublin campus as per the UCD Breastfeeding Policy (2022). Utilizing the criteria outlined in the Australian Breastfeeding Association's (ABA, 2024) Baby Care Room award checklist. The ABA is a leading organisation in Australia whose many roles include advocating for the promotion and protection of breastfeeding across Australia. The Baby Care room initiative, established by the ABA, identifies public facilities that provide appropriate facilities for feeding and changing infants and supporting breastfeeding families. These designated spaces offer a secure, clean, accessible and inclusive environment which supports the needs of breastfeeding families. An observational evaluation was conducted to assess the adequacy and accessibility of these rooms. This evaluation aimed to identify strengths and highlight areas necessitating improvement in the University's facilities to support breastfeeding among its student and staff populations. By evaluating these designated spaces within an educational setting, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights

towards enhancing breastfeeding support structures within academic institutions and, by extension, the broader community.

Health Sciences Centre

Accessibility/ Availability:

The Health Science centre breastfeeding room is located in room B3.23 on the 3rd floor of the building. This breastfeeding room can be accessed by a mother who uses a wheelchair or mothers that may have their baby in a pram or sling, by using the lifts present in the building. This ensures inclusivity and provides a supportive environment for all. The breastfeeding room has an open door policy and is available and accessible during the college day. This room is equipped with two breastfeeding chairs which allows two breastfeeding mothers to use the room at the same time. Unfortunately, there are no signs to guide the breastfeeding mother to the designated room which makes it difficult to find the room.

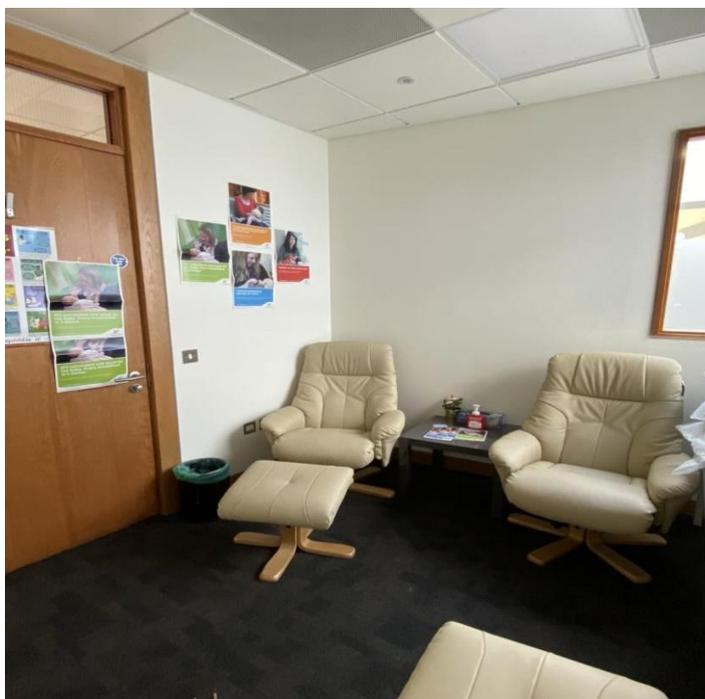


Image: Health Sciences Centre

Comfortable Environment:

This breastfeeding room provides a very comfortable and inviting atmosphere for mothers, as it is well equipped. It contains additional equipment such as cushions, light blankets and toys for toddlers.

Cleanliness:

This room maintains a high standard of cleanliness. There is a regular cleaning schedule documented. During a purposeful check on cleaning this was found to be out of date.

Equipment:

This room provides an electrical outlet for breast pumps, two comfortable breastfeeding chairs, a table to place the breast pump on, a bed for the mother (for different feeding positions) and a fridge to store expressed breastmilk. There is no temperature control for the fridge. The breastfeeding room did not include a sink for handwashing purposes or to wash/ clean other equipment. There was no baby changing table. The room did not have a toilet attached, however, a toilet close by was very accessible.

Newman Building

Accessibility/ Availability:

The Newman building breastfeeding room is located in room B001 on the ground floor. This breastfeeding room can be accessed easily by a mother who uses a wheelchair or mothers that may have their baby in a pram/sling, as it is on the ground floor. The breastfeeding room maintains great accessibility, ensuring that mothers may access it at all hours of the college day. The breastfeeding room does not require the woman to ask for permission or request access as it provides an open door policy. Unfortunately, this building does not provide signage to guide parents to the breastfeeding room which makes it difficult to find.

Comfortable Environment:

This breastfeeding room had minimal equipment to support a comfortable environment for breastfeeding parents. The chair provided in the room is not an appropriate chair to facilitate breastfeeding.

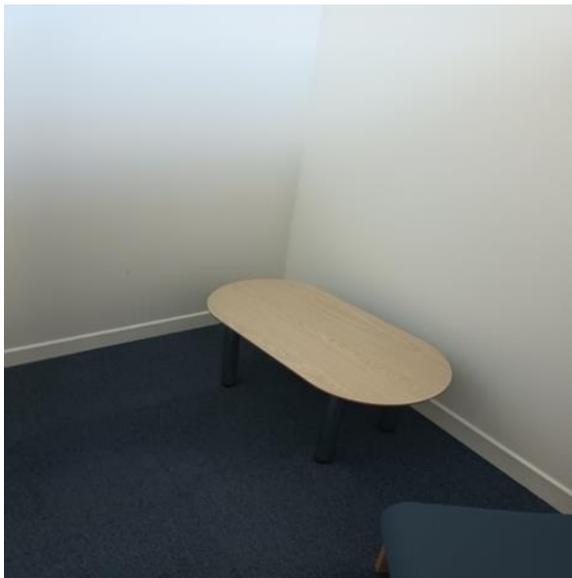
Cleanliness:

This breastfeeding room was very clean and tidy. However, the room does not have a regular cleaning schedule which can show parents using the room that the room has been cleaned/ disinfected. This room would benefit from the inclusion of a rubbish bin.

Equipment:

The room provided a fridge to store expressed breastmilk, an electrical outlet for the breast pump, a table to place the breast pump on, a regular chair (not a breastfeeding chair). No temperature control of the fridge was evident. The breastfeeding room did not include a bed, a changing table or any cushions and blankets. It also does not have a sink and a toilet attached

to the room and it may be hard for a mother using the room to find a toilet, if it is her first time using the room.



Images: Newman Building

Tierney Building

Accessibility/ Availability:

The Tierney building breastfeeding room is on the ground floor. This breastfeeding room can be accessed easily by a mother/parent who uses a wheelchair or mothers that may have their baby in a sling/ pram as it is situated on the ground floor. The breastfeeding room maintains good accessibility, and is open during college hours. While this room may be easily accessible, it is located in a staff only area, therefore women/breastfeeding parents may hesitate to access the room. There are no signs to guide parents to the breastfeeding room which makes it difficult to find. The room itself has a sign 'rest room' instead of 'breastfeeding/infant feeding room'.

Comfortable Environment:

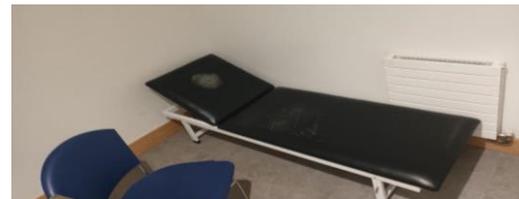
This breastfeeding room had minimal equipment to support a comfortable environment for breastfeeding parents. The chair provided in the room is not an appropriate chair to facilitate breastfeeding.

Cleanliness:

The room was observed to be clean and tidy. However, the room does not have a regular cleaning schedule which can show parents using the room that it has been cleaned/ disinfected.

Equipment:

The room lacks a lot of basic equipment that should be available in a breastfeeding room. The room has an electrical outlet to plug in a breast pump, a basic chair (not a breastfeeding chair) and a bed. This room does not provide a fridge to store expressed breastmilk, a table or changing table. This room is located next to the ladies toilets which makes it easy for women to use the toilet and the sink there.



UCD Village

Accessibility/ Availability:

The UCD village breastfeeding room is located in room 108 on the 1st floor of the building. The breastfeeding room can be accessed by a mother/parents who use a wheelchair or mothers that may have their baby in a pram/sling, by using the lift present in the building. The breastfeeding room allows good accessibility during the day, however it does require access to the room by asking at the welcome desk.

Comfortable Environment:

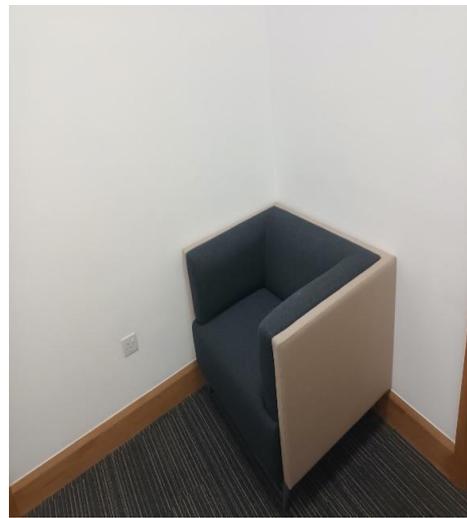
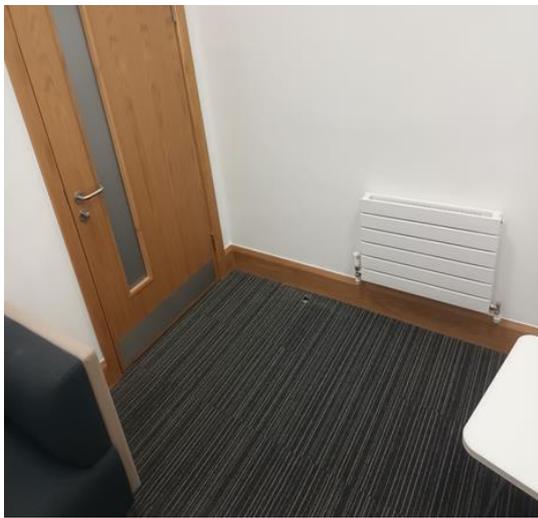
The breastfeeding room provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere for mothers/breastfeeding parents, as it has a comfortable breastfeeding chair and basic equipment.

Cleanliness:

The breastfeeding room was observed to be clean and tidy. However, the room does not have a regular cleaning schedule which can show the women using the room that the room has been cleaned/ disinfected.

Equipment:

The basic equipment is provided in this room. It includes an electrical outlet for the breast pump, a table to place the pump on, two chairs (one comfortable chair good for breastfeeding and a normal sitting chair). This room does not have a bed which may restrict the different positions that a mother can feed in. This room also does not have a sink or a toilet attached to the room.



Images: UCD Village

O'Brien Centre for Science

Accessibility/ Availability:

The O'Brien Centre for Science breastfeeding room is located in room E0.12 beside the Moore Auditorium, on the ground floor of the building. This breastfeeding room is not easy to access. The room can be accessed through the doors at the bottom of the Moore Auditorium, which can be challenging to access if there is a lecture in session. The room can also be accessed through another door. This entry point has a lift, which allows the mother/parents using a wheelchair and mothers who may bring their baby

in a pram/sling to access the room easily. The breastfeeding room requires a code to enter, therefore the woman/parents will need to ask for access at the welcome desk. This building also has no signs to guide the woman/parents to the breastfeeding room which makes it difficult to find the room. The room is hidden which makes it difficult to find, particularly for the first time user. The room has a sign stating it is a breastfeeding room, along with some important rules to follow while using the room. However, this room is used for staff meetings also. This can make a woman/parents feel uncomfortable and worried about privacy while feeding.

Comfortable Environment:

The equipment in the room is very comfortable, however the room does not feel very welcoming.

Cleanliness:

This breastfeeding room looked clean and tidy. However, the room does not have a regular cleaning schedule which can show the woman/parents using the room that the room has been cleaned/ disinfected.

Equipment:

The basic equipment is provided in this room. It includes an electrical outlet for the breast pump, a table to place the pump on, a breastfeeding chair, a bed and a fridge. This room does not provide a changing table. This room also does not have a sink or a toilet attached to the room. It can be difficult to access a toilet as the woman will have to use the lift to leave the room and ask a staff member to be allowed into the room again(as the door locks automatically).



Images: O'Brien Centre for Science

Smurfit School of Business (Blackrock)

Accessibility/ Availability:

The Smurfit School of Business breastfeeding room is located in room E118 on the ground floor. The breastfeeding room can be accessed easily by a mother /parents who use a wheelchair or mothers that may have their baby in a pram/sling as it is on the ground floor. This breastfeeding room also maintains good accessibility during the college day, ensuring that mothers may access it at all hours of the day. The breastfeeding room does require the woman to request access as the woman will need a key to open the room. Unfortunately, this building also has no signs to guide the parents to the breastfeeding room, making it difficult to find the room. The room itself has a sign saying 'welfare room' instead of 'breastfeeding room'. This room also has a study table, therefore it a multipurpose room.

Comfortable Environment:

The breastfeeding room is very comfortable for a mother to use for breastfeeding, however, as the room is designated a 'welfare room' and not solely a designated breastfeeding room, breastfeeding parents may be inclined to avoid this room due to its multiple functions as a private study area for all students as well as a breastfeeding room.

Cleanliness:

The breastfeeding room was observed to be clean and tidy. However, the room does not have a regular cleaning schedule which can show the woman/breastfeeding parents using the room that the room has been cleaned/ disinfected. This room is provided with cleaning equipment for use prior to leaving the room.

Equipment:

The room provides an electrical outlet for breast pumps, comfortable breastfeeding chairs and a long sofa (which can be used as a bed), a table to place the breast pump, a fridge to store expressed breastmilk and a changing table. There is no temperature regulation for the fridge. The breastfeeding room did not include a sink for handwashing or to wash/clean other equipment. The room did not have a toilet attached however a toilet outside the breastfeeding room was very accessible.



Image: Smurfit School of Business

Recommendations

Student breastfeeding parents returning to campus following the birth of their child require an infant feeding room that is accessible to their particular college, enabling the student to return quickly to their lectures. The room should be a dedicated space for lactation purposes with appropriate signage and offer comfort and privacy to breastfeed or express breastmilk. The room should be easily accessible, available and clean. It should provide at a minimum a comfortable chair and table, a fridge to store expressed milk and an electrical socket for use of a breast pump. The fridge should be cleaned regularly and the temperature recorded by the addition of a simple thermometer.

The addition of a washbasin, hand soap, paper towels and a waste paper bin will further support good hygiene measures. Routine daily maintenance will maintain cleanliness to a high standard and this can be recorded in the room.

Conclusion

The presence of six lactation and Infant feeding rooms on the UCD wider campus is welcomed. One Infant feeding room in the Conway building is no longer available. Some rooms provided a standard that was not in keeping with the wider university campus standards. This deficit in standard will not support student breastfeeding parents utilising the rooms to breastfeed their infant or express their breast milk. The result is twofold in that the breastfeeding journey is compromised and students may be challenged to continue their studies. It is recommended that action is taken and the lactation and infant feeding rooms are designated for the sole purpose of

breastfeeding and expression of breastmilk and that there is a greater awareness and visibility of the infant feeding rooms across the university. The rooms must meet the standard of the Australian Breastfeeding Association Baby Care Rooms.

Acknowledgement- Thank you to Roisin Roberts, Marketing Assistant, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems for creative assistance in the development of this report.

References:

- ABA (2024) Baby Care Rooms. Available at <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/sites/default/files/2024-01/ABA-BabyCareRooms-Requirements-A4.pdf> [Accessed 1 February 2024]
- ABS (2023) Breastfeeding. Available at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/breastfeeding/latest-release> [Accessed 1 February 2024]
- CDC (2021) Breastfeeding. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/> [Accessed 1 February 2024]
- HSE (2020) Breastfeeding Policy for Staff Working in the Public Health Services. Available at <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/breastfeeding-policy-for-public-health-service-employees.pdf> [Accessed 1 February 2024].
- HSE (2020) Perinatal Statistics Report 2022. Healthcare Pricing Office/ Health Service Executive. [online] Available from [https://www.hpo.ie/latest_hipe_nprs_reports/NPRS_2020/Perinatal Statistics Report 2020.pdf](https://www.hpo.ie/latest_hipe_nprs_reports/NPRS_2020/Perinatal_Statistics_Report_2020.pdf) [Accessed 30 January 2024]
- Irish Maternity Indicator System (2023) National Report 2021. National Womens and Infants health Programme. Available at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/acute-hospitals-division/woman-infants/national-reports-on-womens-health/irish-maternity-indicator-system-national-report-20211.pdf> [Accessed 1 February 2024]
- Jackson, J.E., Hallam, J., Griffiths, A., Leverton, J., Safari, R. (2023) Understanding the attitudes towards breastfeeding amongst staff and students in a UK higher institutional setting – a mixed-method cross-sectional study, International Journal of Health Promotion and Education, DOI: 10.1080/14635240.2023.2273263
- Sturtevant, C., Huebner, C. and Waite, W., (2021). An evaluation of on-campus lactation spaces for student-parents. Journal of Human Lactation, 37(1), pp.173-182
- UCD (2024) UCD Rising to the Future. UCD Strategy 2020-2024 [online] Available from : <http://https://www.ucd.ie/strategy/> [Accessed 30 January 2024]
- United Nations (2023) Sustainable Development Goals. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/> [Accessed 1 february 2023]
- Victora, C.G., Bahl, R., Barros, A.J., França, G.V., Horton, S., Krasevec, J., Murch, S., Sankar, M.J., Walker, N. and Rollins, N.C., 2016. Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. The lancet, 387(10017), pp.475-490.
- WHO (2023) Exclusive Breastfeeding for Optimal Growth, Development and Health of Infants. Available from

<https://www.who.int/tools/elena/interventions/exclusive-breastfeeding>
[Accessed 30 January 2024]

WHO (2023) Global Breastfeeding Scorecard 2023. WHO/UNICEF. Available from

<https://www.unicef.org/media/150586/file/Global%20breastfeeding%20scorecard%202023.pdf> [Accessed 1 February 2024]