

The Ameda Egnell Breast Pump Agent

Encouraging and supporting mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies is of prime importance to the NCT. There are a variety of occasions when mothers might find a breast pump useful and the NCT has joined forces with Ameda Egnell Ltd., a Somerset based company that specialises in providing breast pumps for hire, to cater for this.

Breast pumps are frequently used for premature babies, or when a baby is not able to feed easily - for example in the case of a baby with a cleft palate. A pump is also useful when mothers want to express milk and leave their baby with someone else to feed - while they go out or go back to paid employment. Using a pump allows mothers flexibility.

The NCT currently has about 500 pump agents around the country. Their role is to encourage and support mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies. It is important that pump agents are aware of the World Health Organisation's Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and support its aims.

Ameda Egnell provides a manual explaining the duties of the NCT pump agent. Agents are paid out of pocket expenses on each hiring, and need to attend a pump study day at least every other year. Pump agents are also encouraged to get together on a regular basis, and meet with local breastfeeding counsellors. They are expected to make themselves known to Special Care Baby Units, maternity units, health visitors, health centres and community midwives, who in turn can refer mothers to them.

A pump agent should be willing to be contacted by parents at all reasonable times, including weekends, evenings and holidays. There is also some paperwork involved. This includes filling in hiring forms and ultimately completing an annual return and stock form, to be sent each year to Ameda Egnell. If there is a discrepancy between the stock form and the stock supplied, the agent becomes liable to pay Ameda Egnell Ltd. for the value of any unaccounted stock.

Pumps are usually hired out for a minimum of five days, although very short hirings are occasionally possible. A form must be completed for out of pocket expenses. Any other exceptional expenses are considered on an individual basis.

If a pump needs attention, Ameda Egnell must be notified. Arrangements will be made to have it picked up and replaced. Pumps are covered by insurance in transit and there is also full product liability cover. It is important that pump agents inform their own home insurers that they are acting for the NCT and Ameda Egnell. Where goods, equipment or similar is kept in private homes it is wise to tell your own home insurers. Should you have any difficulty with your own insurers contact UK Office.

Pumps must be paid for in advance, both for the cost of collection, plus five days hire, and it is important to forward payments promptly to Ameda Egnell.

Pump agents do a really useful job in promoting the merits of breastfeeding and ways in which life can be made easier for feeding mothers. However, if an agent is not a trained breastfeeding counsellor, then she must refer a mother to one for support and information on breastfeeding.

Where Do Enquiries For Pumps Come From?

Enquiries are received from local maternity hospitals, midwives, GPs, health centres, health visitors, the NCT or from Ameda Egnell Ltd. Agents usually have two pumps in stock, but can have more if they are needed, as agreed with Ameda Egnell. Agents are responsible for checking their pumps and need to do this between each hiring to ensure cleanliness. If necessary, they change the tubing in the pumps.

What About Rules And Regulations?

The Ameda Egnell Code of Conduct for pump agents includes the following guidelines:

Pump agents can only hire out pumps which have been agreed in the contract between NCT and Ameda Egnell Ltd.

Pump agents and branches cannot own any breast pumps for loan.

Pump agents must ensure that each mother has her own personal collection set, to avoid any possibility of cross-infection. The agent sells this on behalf of Ameda Egnell Ltd.

Hygienic conditions are paramount when hiring out pumps.

Pump agents should also make sure that the pumps are kept safely, that they are kept in good repair and working order and are properly maintained according to guidelines. Should anything go wrong Ameda Egnell Ltd. must be notified immediately.

Ownership of the pumps remains with Ameda Egnell Ltd. and the pumps are loaned to agents who do not have any other right, title or interest in them.

Pump agents are not allowed to make any alteration to the pumps without the agreement of Ameda Egnell Ltd.

As they are dealing with vulnerable babies and new parents, it is essential that agents keep up a high standard of household and personal hygiene.

Pump agents must not sell, transfer, lease, mortgage, exchange, part with or otherwise dispose of a pump other than to another pump agent or to Ameda Egnell.

How Do I Become A Pump Agent?

Often people who become agents are already breastfeeding counsellors or trainees. If you are interested, contact existing agents to have a chat about what they do, or contact UK Office. UK Office will issue you with an information pack and details on how to apply to become an agent.