Dear Mr Forsey,

I am Chief Executive of The Breastfeeding Network. We are one of the largest breastfeeding support organisations in the country, supporting mums to breastfeed for as long as they want to, be that one day, one week, one month, one year or more. One of our organisation’s main aims is to promote breastfeeding and a greater understanding of breastfeeding in the United Kingdom.

We have recently been contacted by a customer of yours, Wioletta Komar. I’m sure by now you are fully aware of how she was treated by a member of Sports Direct staff in your Nottingham store earlier this year – but just in case you’re not, she was asked quite rudely to leave the store because she was breastfeeding her upset 3 month old baby while waiting for her father to complete his shopping (in your store). This meant she had to try and feed her baby outside in the rain. On her return to the shop, the assistant who had asked her to leave gave her name and suggested Wioletta complained.

Which she did. She called and emailed and wrote to you over the course of three months, with no response, until she involved the local and national press.

We were pleased to hear Sports Direct have now finally been in touch with Wioletta to apologise and send her flowers. And while we hope this is just an isolated incident involving one staff member at one store, we are disappointed that there hasn’t yet been a public apology from Sports Direct on this issue. (as are 69,000 people and counting on a sumofus petition (<http://action.sumofus.org/a/sports-direct-breastfeeding>).

While we can’t and don’t expect every business in the country to provide a specific breastfeeding room or area, we do expect all businesses to adhere to the laws that protect breastfeeding mums. As I hope you’re aware by now, women have a right to breastfeed anywhere they need to in public. This is covered in The [Equality Act 2010](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act/) which bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. (<https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance>)

The reason this is important is because statistics show the UK has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world, and that more than three in five women say they stopped breastfeeding before they wanted to. Evidence also shows that being made to feel uncomfortable breastfeeding in public is one of the reasons mums give for stopping breastfeeding early. So the more support we can give mums to breastfeed their babies wherever and whenever they need to, the better.

I realise the bigger picture is may not be of massive concern to Sports Direct, but as a company concerned with health and fitness, you’ll want as many healthy customers as possible in future, meaning higher profit for you. All the evidence shows breastfeeding provides the healthiest possible start for all babies.

I note on your corporate website you mention you ‘are consistently investing in the training and development of our employees…’ We’d be happy to provide you and your team with breastfeeding awareness training should you require it. Please contact us for more information.

Yours sincerely,



Shereen Fisher

CEO

The Breastfeeding Network