

Job Title: Milk Bank Technical Specialist

Department: Hearts Milk Bank

Hours: Part time or flexible time, Mon – Fri; occasional out-of-hours service may be required

Contract: Open-ended, 3-month initial review period

Reports to: Technical Services Coordinator

Pay rate: £21,892 (FTE, pro-rata as appropriate; pension)

Closing date: 28th February

Interviews: Middle week March, start date as soon as possible thereafter, tbc

Role summary

The Human Milk Foundation is looking for a laboratory-based technical specialist to support the operation of the Hearts Milk Bank.

Working closely with the Technical Services Coordinator, our Donor Recruitment Coordinator, lab technicians, volunteers, director and Trustees, the Technical Specialist will play an integral role in the day-to-day operations of the milk processing rooms, including milk tracking, pasteurisation, quality control, nutritional analysis and meticulous packaging.

The Technical Specialist will possess attention to detail and meticulous working, and enjoy working in a team that is driving excellence and innovation in the support of infant and maternal health. We need your energy and enthusiasm and offer opportunities to participate in a range of projects both within the HMF and with external collaborators. Full training will be given, but initially the Technical Specialist will be comfortable making independent decisions and working autonomously, as well as being part of a strong and happy team. The Human Milk Foundation and Hearts Milk Bank provides a fast-paced environment and we encourage developing independent solutions alongside the support of senior team members.

Support will be offered by the charity in the form of training, supervision and regular opportunities to gain new skills. Experience in a laboratory or food preparation environment would be helpful but is not essential. Candidates should also have an understanding of the role that milk banks can play in infant nutrition.

This role offers variety in day-to-day activity across a range of areas:

1. To contribute to the smooth running of every aspect of donor milk processing, ensuring the highest standards of quality are maintained throughout
2. To support the administration and logistics of milk coming in and out of the milk bank
3. To input and maintain information relating to donor milk records
4. To maintain and monitor excellent information systems, particularly using the in-house tracking and tracing systems
5. Over time, to support the training of volunteers and new members of the charity's team.
6. Maintaining good communication with the laboratory, logistics and lactation teams

Key tasks

1. Registration of donated milk arriving at the milk bank
2. Maintaining accurate records, stock rotation and location management to prevent wastage and enhance efficiency
3. Preparation of donor milk and laboratory spaces for pasteurisation
4. Pasteurisation
5. Nutritional analysis
6. Preparation of microbiological samples
7. Operation and routine daily maintenance of key equipment in the milk bank, including pasteurisers, nutritional analyser, Class II biosafety cabinet, fridges, freezers, etc.
8. Maintaining accurate records relating to each pasteurization cycle and milk storage conditions
9. Preparation and cleaning of all laboratory work spaces
10. Monitoring levels of key supplies and initiating orders
11. Liaising with lactation team regarding stock demand
12. Ensure the confidentiality of records and hospital information at all times
13. Support the team in identifying, developing and implementing opportunities to improve the milk bank service
14. Support for new and ongoing research studies

Key responsibilities

- ✦ Ensure milk is maintained to the highest quality standard at every stage of its processing
- ✦ Escalate any issues promptly and appropriately.
- ✦ Regularly meet with and inform your line manager regarding service status and any issues of concern, particularly tracking and pasteurization issues
- ✦ Use initiative to maintain and improve efficiency within all aspects of donor milk processing, including communication with other teams within the Hearts Milk Bank
- ✦ Train and mentor more junior members of the team as the service develops and your role progresses

Person specification

| Requirements | Essential (E) Desirable (D) |
|--|--|
| Candidates/post holders will be expected to demonstrate the following: | |
| Education | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A-levels, preferably in science-related subjects | D |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree level subject in healthcare related area, or equivalent | D |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food handling certification | D |
| Knowledge & Experience | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A background in food preparation or laboratory work | D |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An understanding of donor milk use and impacts of infant feeding | D |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent communication skills and the ability to deal with a wide range of people | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to prioritise own work and operate in a busy environment. | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail-orientated approach to work, with multitasking abilities | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining confidential records within GDPR requirements | E |
| Skills & Abilities | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to prioritise work to drive efficiency | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attention to detail and meticulous approach to work | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hygiene and handling training | D |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to produce positive solutions under time pressure | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent computer literacy, including web tools, Excel, Word, Outlook | D |
| Personal Attributes | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A willingness to help drive this service forward, while maintaining the highest of standards and respect for the team, beneficiaries and aims of the charity | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A willingness to learn new skills and responsibilities, showing a long-term commitment to the broad aims of the HMF (see below) | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on doing work to be proud of and take responsibility for the optimal quality of the processed donor milk | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be an independent decision-maker but know when to ask for help. | E |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivate and encourage others and be able to work as part of a supportive team. | E |

Please send your CV, details of two references and a covering email describing why you would like to apply for the role and what strengths you will bring, with examples to illustrate, to info@humanmilkfoundation.org.

Informal enquiries and virtual tours to meet the team are encouraged. Should you have any queries please contact Dr Natalie Shenker – natalie@humanmilkfoundation.org.

Charity overview

The Human Milk Foundation is a charity based at the Rothamsted Institute between St Albans and Harpenden in Hertfordshire. Our goal is to help more babies have access to human milk.

We operate the UK's first independent, non-profit human milk bank - the Hearts Milk Bank (HMB, www.heartsmilkbank.org) providing donor human milk to neonatal intensive care units across London, the southeast and East Anglia. Much like donated human blood, there are situations where donated human milk can be lifesaving. Premature babies are very vulnerable and at risk of life-threatening conditions such as necrotising enterocolitis (NEC), a condition which causes some or all of the bowel to die. Mothers who have given birth early are sometimes unable to produce their own milk straight away and can be very unwell themselves, so donor milk is vital in protecting baby during the first days and weeks after birth; it allows mum the time and support to establish her own milk supply.

The HMB team recruit milk donors who undergo blood tests and a detailed lifestyle and health questionnaire before donating milk. Donor milk is collected from donors by volunteer SERV ("blood-biker") volunteers and delivered to the milk bank where it is heat-treated (pasteurised) to destroy potentially harmful bacteria and viruses, checked by microbiologists to make sure that there is no bacterial contamination and stored frozen. The milk is collected and delivered to hospitals and to mothers in the community who cannot breastfeed such as those with cancer, HIV or lack of breast tissue. The HMB has recruited more than 850 milk donors in the past 3 years and supplied donor milk to feed 1000s babies cared for in over 35 neonatal units. We have also supported more than 200 families in the community, including mothers who are establishing their own milk supply and mothers with cancer. The HMB is also a recruitment centre for a range of research projects in association with Imperial College London.

The Human Milk Foundation has a small team of dedicated individuals with a broad set of skills across medicine, lactation support, milk banking, research, design and communications. We all have a great passion to make change to improve the health of future mothers and babies and to give mothers the support they need to be able to feed their babies, and new members of the team will share that passion.