

Returning to Work

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About Maternity Action

- national charity working on maternity and equalities
- operating for five years
- two main areas of focus: employment rights and benefits; vulnerable migrant women



About Maternity Action

We provide:

- Information and advice
- Policy and campaigning
- Training and consultancy



Background on the issue

Statistics on breastfeeding in the UK

- 2010 Infant Feeding Survey found that only 19% of working mothers had access to workplace facilities to express milk or to support breastfeeding

(McAndrews and others 2012)



Background on the issue

Statistics on breastfeeding in the UK

- Return to work or college was a factor in stopping breastfeeding for 6% of women

(McAndrews and others 2012)



Background on the issue

Statistics on breastfeeding in the UK

- Of those breastfeeding for 4 – 6 months, 13% reported that returning to work or college was a factor in stopping breastfeeding
- Of those breastfeeding for 6 – 9 months, 20% reported that returning to work or college was a factor in stopping breastfeeding

(McAndrews and others 2012)



Background on the issue

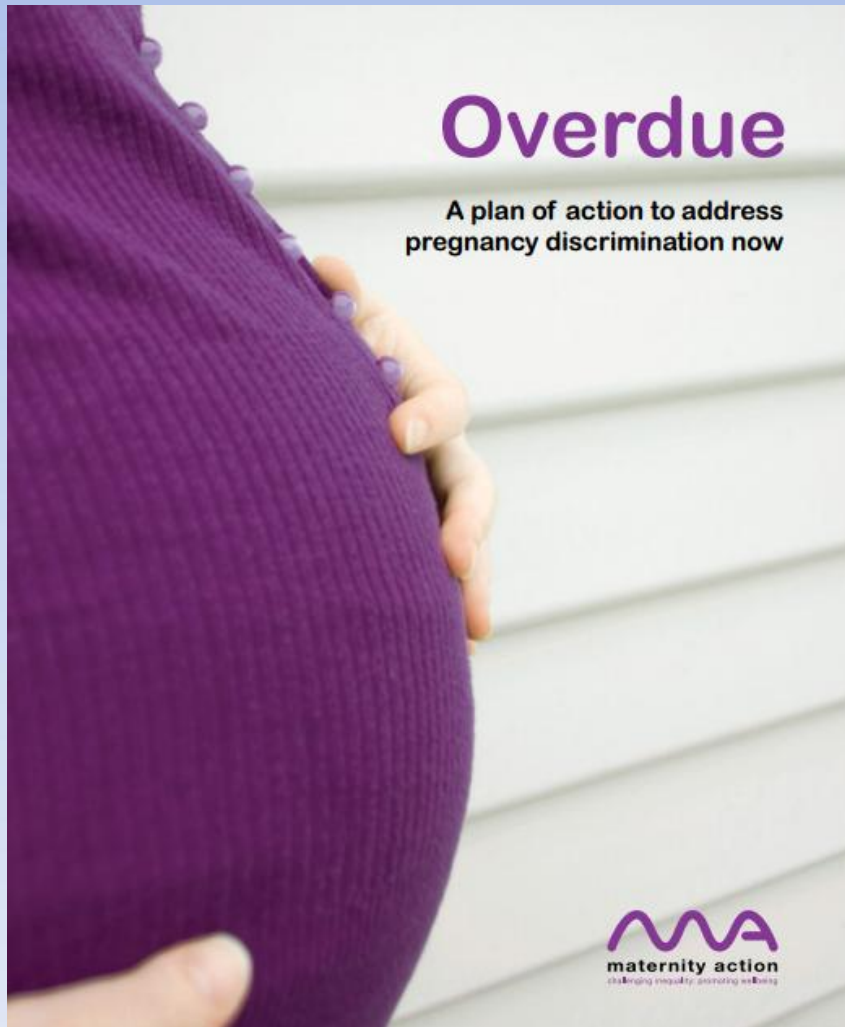
Statistics on breastfeeding in the UK

- Mothers returning to work full-time were more likely to report that feeding had been affected by work than those working part-time (28% f/t compared to 12% working fewer than 15 hrs/wk) (McAndrews and others 2012)



Background on the issue

Job security and returning to work early



Half of all pregnant women suffered a related disadvantage at work, and that each year 30,000 were forced out of their job (EOC 2005)

In 2014, all the available evidence suggests that such pregnancy and maternity discrimination is now more common than ever



Background on the issue

The Law

Women do not have a statutory right to breastfeed on return to work **HOWEVER** breastfeeding mothers have some legal protection under health and safety and sex discrimination laws



Background on the issue

The Law: Health and safety protection

- Very few direct risks from working but scientific evidence shows that the baby's health and mother's health are put at risk if the mother does not breastfeed for 12 months



Background on the issue

The Law: Health and safety protection

If the woman's work brings you into contact with a dangerous substance, the employer should take appropriate steps to make the job safe.

If this is impossible, the woman may be transferred to a suitable alternative job or suspended on full pay.



Background on the issue

The Law: Health and safety protection

- A risk assessment must be conducted
- Risk must be mitigated
- Employer must give information on action taken to mitigate risk
- If there are still risks and the woman wants employer to take action, **the employer must be informed in writing**



Background on the issue

The Law: Health and safety protection

- Reasonable action should be taken to protect the woman's health and safety whilst breastfeeding e.g. rest breaks, comfortable environment
- **Note: the law does not currently allow a simple, straightforward right to breastfeeding breaks.**



Background on the issue

The Law: Flexible working hours

- All employees (with at least 26 weeks' service) have the right to ask for flexible work.
- Employees have legal protection against indirect sex discrimination



Background on the issue

The Law: Discrimination law

A breastfeeding woman is protected against sexual harassment which could include detrimental treatment or offensive teasing because they are breastfeeding.

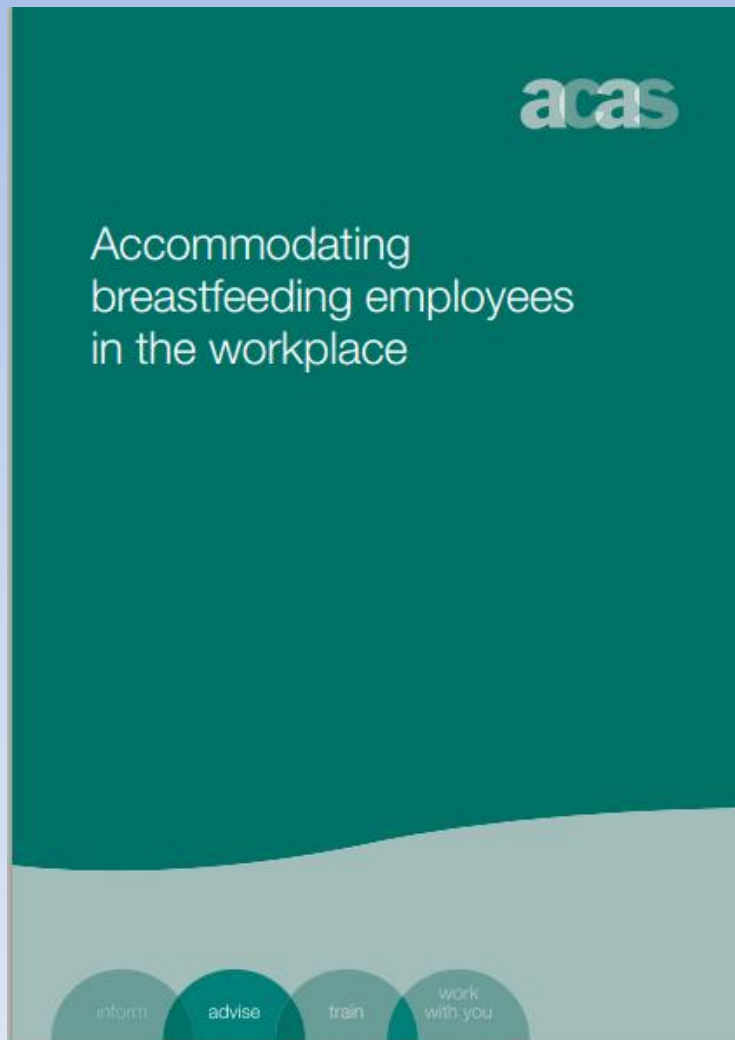


The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Maternity Action was funded by the Department of Health to develop a programme for delivery at local level to promote breastfeeding on return to work



ACAS guidance



We worked with ACAS, the Government's employer advisory service, on the development of their guidance, with a number of other organisations.



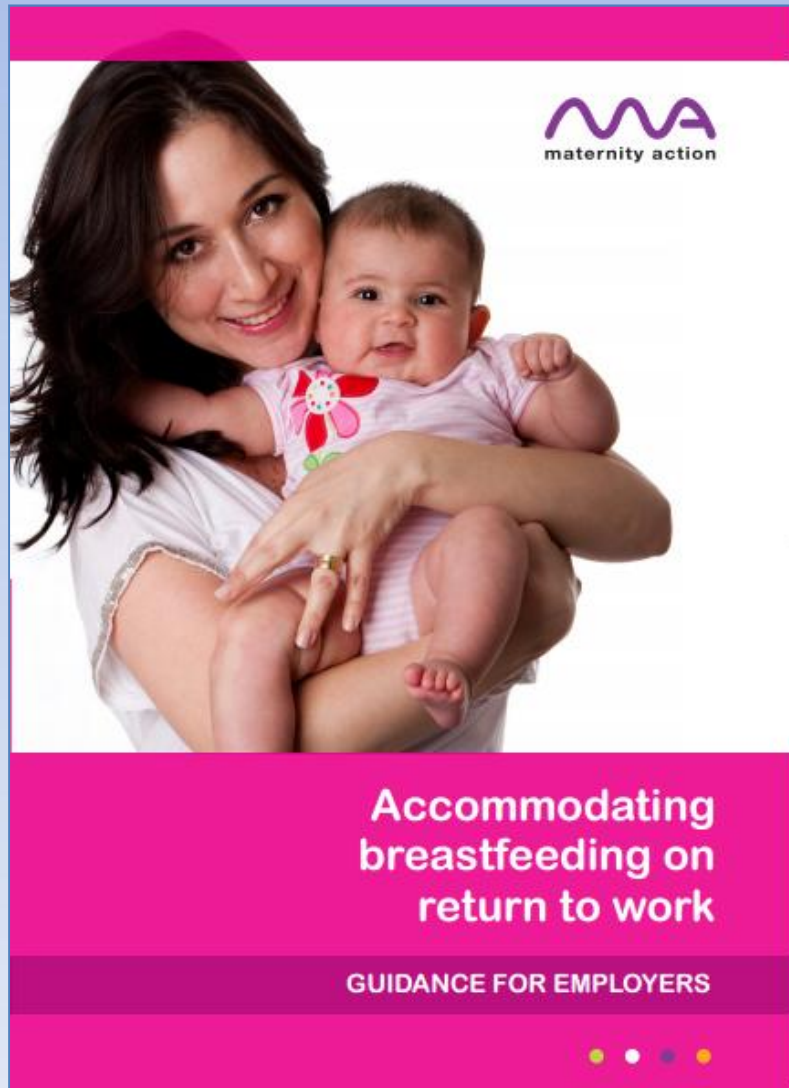
The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Rigorous process behind production of leaflet for employers:

- Consultation and extensive research with project reference group, which included representatives from the LCGB, Association of Breastfeeding Mothers, NCT, La Leche League, specialist infant feeding midwives and others.
- Consultation with ten employers (four small, one medium, one large); studied draft leaflet(s) then took part in a phone interview



The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work



Three sections:

- Business case
- Managing requests
- Practical requirements



The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Breastfeeding on return to work: Development of the leaflet



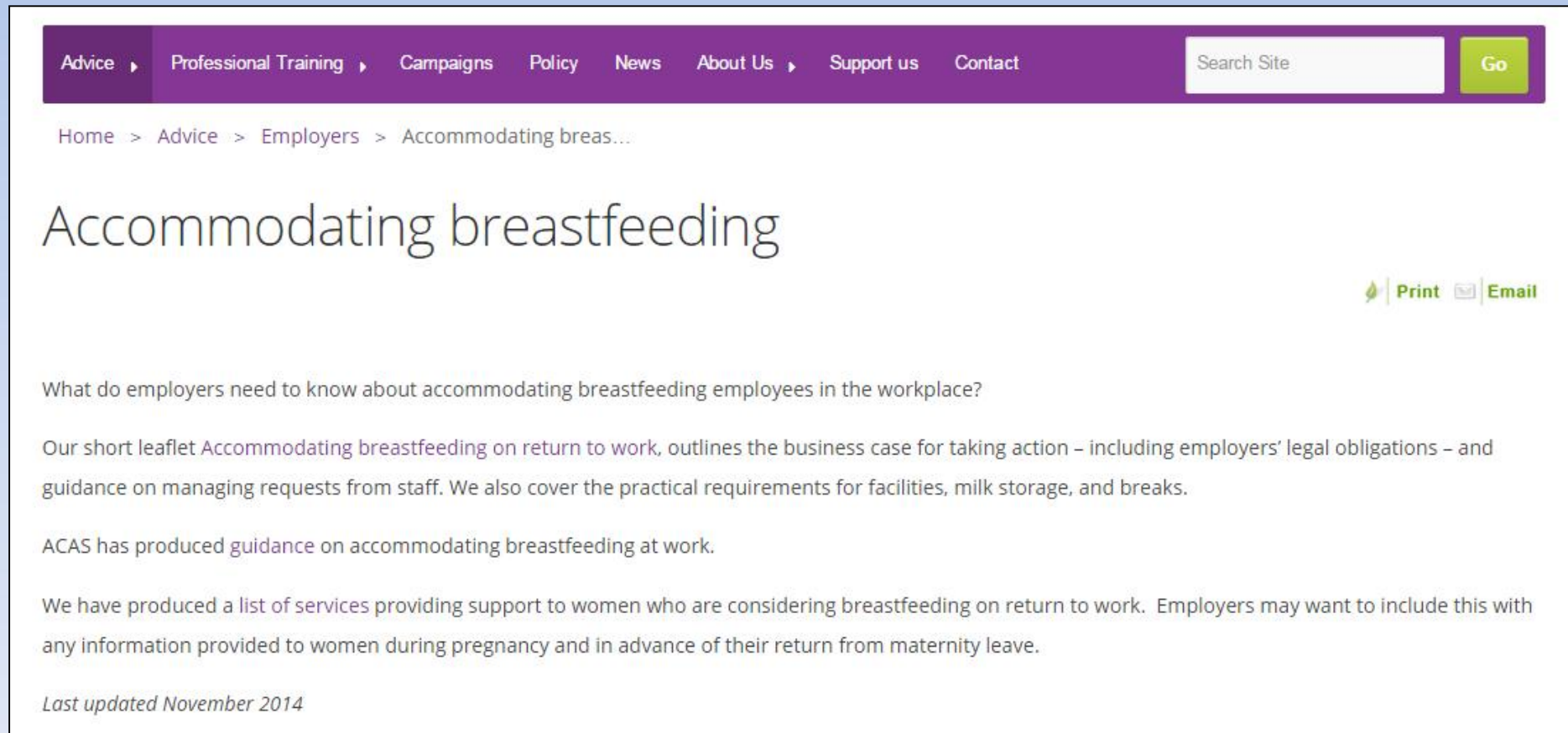
November 2014



The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Resources produced:

- Dedicated webpage for employers



The screenshot shows a website page with a purple navigation bar at the top containing links for Advice, Professional Training, Campaigns, Policy, News, About Us, Support us, and Contact. A search bar with a 'Go' button is on the right. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Advice > Employers > Accommodating breas... The main heading is 'Accommodating breastfeeding'. To the right of the heading are icons for Print and Email. The main content area contains the following text:

What do employers need to know about accommodating breastfeeding employees in the workplace?

Our short leaflet [Accommodating breastfeeding on return to work](#), outlines the business case for taking action – including employers’ legal obligations – and guidance on managing requests from staff. We also cover the practical requirements for facilities, milk storage, and breaks.

ACAS has produced [guidance on accommodating breastfeeding at work](#).

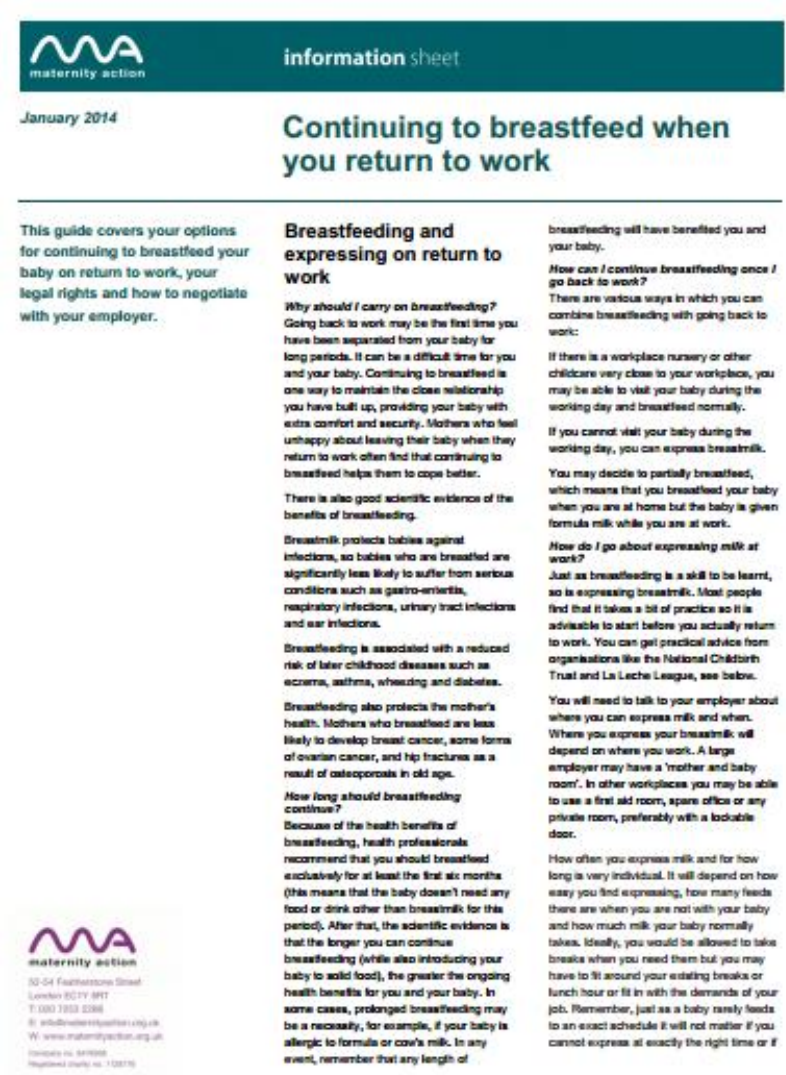
We have produced a [list of services](#) providing support to women who are considering breastfeeding on return to work. Employers may want to include this with any information provided to women during pregnancy and in advance of their return from maternity leave.

Last updated November 2014

The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Resources produced:

- Information sheet for mothers



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information sheet

January 2014

Continuing to breastfeed when you return to work

This guide covers your options for continuing to breastfeed your baby on return to work, your legal rights and how to negotiate with your employer.

Breastfeeding and expressing on return to work

Why should I carry on breastfeeding?
Going back to work may be the first time you have been separated from your baby for long periods. It can be a difficult time for you and your baby. Continuing to breastfeed is one way to maintain the close relationship you have built up, providing your baby with extra comfort and security. Mothers who feel unhappy about leaving their baby when they return to work often find that continuing to breastfeed helps them to cope better.

There is also good scientific evidence of the benefits of breastfeeding.

Breastmilk protects babies against infections, so babies who are breastfed are significantly less likely to suffer from serious conditions such as gastro-enteritis, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections and ear infections.

Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of later childhood diseases such as eczema, asthma, wheezing and diabetes.

Breastfeeding also protects the mother's health. Mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop breast cancer, some forms of ovarian cancer, and hip fractures as a result of osteoporosis in old age.

How long should breastfeeding continue?
Because of the health benefits of breastfeeding, health professionals recommend that you should breastfeed exclusively for at least the first six months (this means that the baby doesn't need any food or drink other than breastmilk for this period). After that, the scientific evidence is that the longer you can continue breastfeeding (while also introducing your baby to solid food), the greater the ongoing health benefits for you and your baby. In some cases, prolonged breastfeeding may be a necessity, for example, if your baby is allergic to formula or cow's milk. In any event, remember that any length of

breastfeeding will have benefited you and your baby.

How can I continue breastfeeding once I go back to work?
There are various ways in which you can combine breastfeeding with going back to work:

If there is a workplace nursery or other childcare very close to your workplace, you may be able to visit your baby during the working day and breastfeed normally.

If you cannot visit your baby during the working day, you can express breastmilk.

You may decide to partially breastfeed, which means that you breastfeed your baby when you are at home but the baby is given formula milk while you are at work.

How do I go about expressing milk at work?
Just as breastfeeding is a skill to be learnt, so is expressing breastmilk. Most people find that it takes a bit of practice so it is advisable to start before you actually return to work. You can get practical advice from organisations like the National Childbirth Trust and La Leche League, see below.

You will need to talk to your employer about where you can express milk and when. Where you express your breastmilk will depend on where you work. A large employer may have a 'mother and baby room'. In other workplaces you may be able to use a first aid room, spare office or any private room, preferably with a lockable door.

How often you express milk and for how long is very individual. It will depend on how easy you find expressing, how many feeds there are when you are not with your baby and how much milk your baby normally takes. Ideally, you would be allowed to take breaks when you need them but you may have to fit around your existing breaks or lunch hour or fit in with the demands of your job. Remember, just as a baby rarely feeds to an exact schedule it will not matter if you cannot express at exactly the right time or if

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The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Resources produced:

- The helpline



Advice ▾

- Advice line
- Mums and Dads
- Employers
- Professionals
- Other languages

Advice line

[Print](#) [Email](#)

Maternity Action's Advice Line offers free confidential telephone support. We will listen to you and try to understand all the issues you are facing. We will then provide you with information that is relevant to you and your situation.

The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Resources produced:

- Online training for midwives, health professionals, advisers:

Breastfeeding on return to work

Maternity Action

Thursday, 8 January 2015 from 10:30 to 11:30 (GMT)



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challenging inequality: promoting wellbeing



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challenging inequality: promoting wellbeing

The Project: Accommodating Breastfeeding on Return to Work

Resources produced:

- Guide to promoting resources



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challenging inequality: promoting wellbeing

Suggestions for promoting resources on breastfeeding on return to work

Impact on the breastfeeding mother

- Enabled to continue breastfeeding; positive scientific impacts; reduced risk of later childhood diseases; protects mother's health
- Continuing to breastfeed can help to maintain the close relationship between mother and baby
- Decision to return to work
- Understanding of rights



Next steps

- Guidance launched
- Being disseminated
- Promotional work now being done
- Evaluation to take place Jan – Mar 2015



EHRC project

We are working with Your Employment Settlement Service (YESS) to showcase examples of best practice amongst employers managing women returning to work after maternity.

Please e-mail for details:

Showcasingemployers@maternityaction.org.uk



Support

- Please share the leaflet and online resources as widely as possible
- It is hoped that the project will have a profound and positive impact on women's health and that of their babies, as well as enhance their self-esteem and enable them to embrace their rights under health and safety law, flexible working law and discrimination law.



Thank you

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