

# BREASTFEEDING MATTERS

January / February 2026  
laleche.org.uk

**My LLL Story**

**Celebrating  
our Leaders**

**Working and  
Breastfeeding**



La Leche League GB

**#271**



# La Leche League GB

## How to get help

[laleche.org.uk](http://laleche.org.uk)

Free, practical information about breastfeeding, and how to find support.

**0345 1202918 National Helpline Callback Service.** One of our Callback Team will get in touch within 24 to 28 hours.

**Illl.org** La Leche League International for breastfeeding information and worldwide support.

**f LLLGB because Breastfeeding Matters**

**✉ @lllgb.bsky.social**

**@lalecheleague\_gb**

**in LLLGB**

## Breastfeeding Matters

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## Contributions and feedback

We would love to receive your contributions and hear your ideas. If you have a story, toddler talk, poem, piece of art, feedback, or anything else you'd like to share with us, please use our form:

[bit.ly/lllgb-newsletter](http://bit.ly/lllgb-newsletter)

or email [editor@laleche.org.uk](mailto:editor@laleche.org.uk)



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# Editors' Letter

## *Welcome to Breastfeeding Matters!*

Happy New Year, and welcome to Breastfeeding Matters!

As 2026 gets underway, this edition turns its focus to work. Claire shares how she reshaped her job to suit family life, while Shelby reflects on pausing paid employment to spend more time with her son. We also ask what we gain from mothering that we carry back into our working lives. Thank you to Meg, Sam, the mums of LLL Margate, and others for their insights — and to Edwina from Canberra, now retired from midwifery and transforming her breastfeeding knowledge into poetry.

We're also celebrating a wonderful milestone: more than 50 new volunteers joined us last year. In this issue, you'll

hear about some of our newest Leaders, and others who've supported families for decades. Leaders weave volunteering around family life and work commitments.

Becoming an LLL Leader can open unexpected doors, too — Ciara and friends in LLL Ireland were invited to the home of the Irish President!

Wherever you are in your own journey — caring for a baby, long past that stage, working, studying, volunteering, retired, or somewhere in between — we're delighted you're part of our community.

With LLLove,

*Jayne and Bronwyn*



**Jayne Joyce** (left)

Jayne Joyce is a Leader in Oxfordshire. Her family includes three teen/young adult children and a cat called Honey

**Bronwyn Davies** (right)

Bronwyn Davies is a Leader in Rochester, Kent, and mum to two boys



### Cover

Shelby Rimmer

Read Shelby's story  
on page 15



*"It's wonderful to be part of such a vibrant organisation. New Leaders and experienced, Lone Leaders and those in big groups; we're all needed. Every helping situation changes lives."*

Rachel,  
LLL Leader for 45 years

Photo credit: Peter LI



Meet Sarah and Maria, your LLLGB podcast hosts. Listen to the latest episodes:

**Episode 26:** *Thoughts and feelings when breastfeeding doesn't go to plan*

**Episode 27:** *A paediatrician's view on breastfeeding*

Available on Apple and Spotify NOW!



La Leche League GB

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### How to get help

[laleche.org.uk](http://laleche.org.uk)

Find your local LLL contact, submit a helpform, or access our many leaflets and articles.

*Would you like to save us paper and postage?*

*As a member, you can receive the online version of Breastfeeding Matters if you prefer – let us know at [operationsmanager@laleche.org.uk](mailto:operationsmanager@laleche.org.uk).*

*Thank you so much for your support.*

# My LLL Story

By Jessica Franz, LLL Southampton

6pm Wednesday 31st July. This was not how I thought it would go. My husband called to apologise – he was held up at work – and would I be okay to see the midwife for my 40-week appointment on my own? I said of course – I'd been having Braxton Hicks [contractions] at night for a good couple of weeks, but baby would come when baby was ready and I was okay with that. It was just a routine appointment.

As a trained birth doula, I'd attended different births and had an idea of what I hoped for in the birth of our first child, but I knew it might not end up that way. What I never imagined was being told my baby's heart rate was 89 bpm [normal foetal heart rate is 110-160 beats per minute] and that I should really go to the hospital as soon as possible. My husband said he'd never left work so fast.

This is how my breastfeeding journey started. I always knew I'd find breastfeeding hard, as from a young age I was aware I had inverted nipples, so I didn't expect it to come easily.

My mum was an LLL Leader all my young life, often working on the national helpline, and later trained as an IBCLC lactation consultant. I had attended many LLL meetings and conferences, heard multiple phone calls, and played with my toys whilst mothers sat in our

## Editors' note

*Caesarean birth has some additional challenges for breastfeeding, such as restricted mobility, discomfort, and sometimes milk being a little slower to increase in the first few days.*

*Whatever kind of birth brings your baby into the world, they expect to breastfeed – and we're here to help!*

*You can find lots of tips for getting breastfeeding started after caesarean birth at [laleche.org.uk/caesarean-birth-and-breastfeeding/](http://laleche.org.uk/caesarean-birth-and-breastfeeding/)*



*Credit: Victoria White Photography*

living room with brand new babies. There was a joke in our family that we couldn't get through Sunday lunch without someone mentioning breastfeeding!

I had prepped myself on how to avoid a cascade of interventions in labour to try to avoid an unwanted C-section, but I had never considered my baby calling the shots, and me never going into labour.

I knew I wanted to breastfeed and that if I had a caesarean it could make breastfeeding harder, so it was important to me that I expressed some colostrum in the later days of pregnancy. I really struggled getting any, but knew that it was 'liquid gold' so I was pleased I had a few ml in the freezer. If I'm honest with myself, this was really in case anything happened to me in childbirth, as I knew how important colostrum was to my baby's start in life.

My husband and I had spoken about wanting children on our first date, but when it came to trying for a baby, it had started to look like it might not happen for us. After 14 months of not getting pregnant, we were diagnosed with 'unexplained infertility'. After trying

everything under the sun, including working with a nutritionist, we were ecstatic to find out I was pregnant weeks before our first IVF appointment.

I was cautiously optimistic throughout my pregnancy. I didn't want a baby shower, I wouldn't buy anything for the baby, and was almost afraid of getting excited until I held my baby safely in my arms.

Our son was born by category 2 C-section eight hours after my 40-week midwife appointment. [Caesareans are categorised 1-4, with 1 being the most urgent]. They had pressed the 'big red button' when I arrived at hospital, but the immediate fear for our baby's safety dissipated and we had time to consider our options. It turns out I was 3cm dilated despite not experiencing contractions.

It was a very positive birth, even if it wasn't what I had hoped for. I was able to advocate for myself and my baby was safe. But lying in the hospital bed with my newborn, I started to fear that, as my body wasn't quite ready to give birth, I could really struggle with breastfeeding.

That first night was one of the best, but also worst, nights of my life. I had the baby I had wished for, but although the midwife had gotten him to latch in the first hour after birth, that was the only time he had done it. 24 hours after he arrived, I became the person on the ward with the crying baby that I couldn't settle all night.



I was in so much pain from the surgery. Every time I called for help I was told someone would be 'right with me', but they never came. I knew what I 'should' do, but it wasn't working. I kept my baby skin to skin as much as possible, but I couldn't get him to latch. Eventually I resorted to hand expressing into a syringe, then syringe-feeding my baby, but it didn't feel like enough. He continued to cry. I was alone, and so tired after almost no sleep in 36 hours, that I had to put him down and try to rest. I was in pieces by the time my husband was allowed back into the hospital in the morning.

The next day I discharged myself with a feeding plan. An amazing lactation consultant in the hospital stayed past the end of her shift to help me. She measured me for the correct flange size, arranged for a loan pump, and gave my baby his first proper feed of donor milk from the hospital milk bank.

She taught my husband how to syringe-feed, with the baby sucking his finger to improve the suck reflex. She told us that he more than likely had a tongue tie, and booked us in to have it assessed. She showed me how I could feed my baby upright over my knee, and use muslins to prop up my breast.

Finally he latched properly, for the first time since birth! As the lactation consultant knew my mum could help, we all agreed I would go home, as I didn't want another night alone in

hospital.

That lactation consultant saved me that day, and I will be forever grateful to her. The hospital has since started to allow birth partners to stay overnight, which is so great to hear.

Back at home I was constantly skin to skin, using the pump to express. My husband was syringe-feeding, with the baby sucking his finger. Life became just a cluster of one-hour blocks. I was so relieved when the baby avoided jaundice and his weight stayed within an okay range – I was obviously doing something right!

My milk came in, which was both a shock and a relief. On day four he had his tongue tie divided, and we saw a cranial osteopath, which I am sure really helped. However the pain was still so severe.

His latch now seemed to be okay, so I thought it must be from my inverted nipples being stretched. Stopping breastfeeding didn't feel like an option for me. I started using a gadget to pull my nipples out before every feed and mainly fed him upright, in the position I had been taught in hospital.

However, it took such a lot of preparation, and was uncomfortable for long feeds. I couldn't get side-lying to work for me, nor flicking my nipple into his mouth. If I barricaded myself in with cushions I could sort of feed him in a cradle



hold, but I was often really sore.

I was so proud of myself for asking for help and for persevering. I remember on day ten of being a mother, coming downstairs whilst my baby slept and my mum was in the kitchen. I was tired, in pain, and felt broken.

It was a beautiful day, but I'd barely seen the sun and life was a blur. My mum suggested I go outside and stand on the grass with bare feet. She knew just what I needed and it was the most grounding, surreal moment for me. I burst into tears and thought, we've done it. We have a baby. This is all I've ever wanted, but I am in so much pain.

Back inside, I collected my last post-operation blood-thinning injection and crumpled into my husband's arms. My insides hurt, I was cramping, I could barely walk, my breasts were leaking, and my nipples felt like knives.

The last thing I wanted to do was inject myself. It was all too much. But there was never any question of stopping breastfeeding for me, I just had to keep taking everything an hour at a time and I had faith it would improve. I look back on this moment now and it still makes me emotional.

I knew what it looked like to breastfeed comfortably and I was desperate to get to the point where I could cradle my baby, and he could latch without my help. I went to my local LLL group and some Breastfeeding Network coffee mornings and, with their support and the support of my mum, eventually my baby and I



learnt a way to get a consistent latch involving fewer props. This opened up feeding out and about, which was a game changer!

The groups really helped build my confidence and it was great to be with other breastfeeding mothers so I could see that it would get easier. I kept doing more of what I'd learnt and after about three months I suddenly realised – I'm doing this! This is what I've seen mothers do all my life!

By the time my baby was six months old, breastfeeding was the most natural thing for me. I loved that I didn't have to think about bottles. We went out for dinner, we went abroad, and on family day trips, and it was just so easy.

I was so grateful for the support I had received and felt so lucky that I was able to continue breastfeeding through such a hard start. My mum has since said that I was one of the hardest cases of her career!

Our wonderful, joyful little boy is now just over a year old, and I'm not planning on stopping breastfeeding any time soon. I am still meeting his needs and he has grown into a happy, interested, and delightful toddler. I love our time feeding in the morning and evening, and also that I can still feed him to reassure him after a morning at nursery.

We are hoping for baby number two soon and

I anticipate that I will soon start feeding him less frequently. But I am so grateful that we had the support that got us to where we are today; despite the pain and stress of the early days, I have been able to experience what I imagined breastfeeding would be.

I have spoken to so many friends, who in hindsight, wished they had breastfed for longer, but it just felt too difficult. The support I received is what got me through the hard times. I hope that I am living proof that even after a hard start, breastfeeding can turn into something wonderful.

I wrote this poem when I was pregnant:

### First Ultrasound

I am but a vessel for you  
Keeping you alive.  
You move,  
but I have no idea.  
I try not to think about it  
For then the worse I'll fear.

I am but excited really  
You are here with me.  
You sleep,  
But I have no idea.  
We've wanted you for so long babe  
Let's celebrate you're near.

I am but your mummy baby  
You are so damn loved.  
You grow,  
but I have no idea.  
One day we'll see your little face  
Thank goodness that you're here.

*By Jessica Franz, age 36*

*For my mum, Jill Welsh. An LLL Leader for thirty years, she helped hundreds of mothers on their breastfeeding journeys and I feel so lucky I get to call her my mum.*

# Working and Breastfeeding

## Combining work and Breastfeeding

By Claire Patel, Southend-on-sea

### Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Hello! I'm Claire, and I've been Operations Manager for LLLGB since October 2022. I have a six-year-old-son, Ishaan, and an almost-four-year-old daughter, Annika. We live in Southend-on-sea, Essex, within walking distance of the beach. I work 18 hours across the week for LLLGB and LLL gives me the flexibility to arrange those hours to suit myself. For the most part I have a routine of working between 09.30 and 14.30, while my children are at school and preschool. My husband has a very busy work life – which is one of the reasons I found this role.

### What does your job involve?

I'm part of the layout team for *Breastfeeding Matters*. I love being part of the wider team working on each edition, and reading all the stories! In the rest of my job, I look after all the statutory and administrative functions of the charity: keeping Companies House and the Charity Commission updated, making sure Leaders have their DBS checks, looking after our databases, policies, and anything else that needs doing. I provide administrative support for our volunteer Leaders all the way from when they first apply to when they retire.

### What did you do before this?

I've always worked in Business Support Functions, though usually in much more corporate environments. When I was pregnant with my daughter, I was working as a Practice Manager in a very busy law firm, and I found it incredibly hard to balance that role with the needs of our family — especially with a two-year-old at home. **I felt caught in that pressure to work as if you don't have children, and parent as if you don't work**, and it just wasn't sustainable.



My role wasn't allowing me to parent the way I wanted, and I knew I needed something very different when I had my daughter. The children won't be small forever, and I didn't want their childhood to pass me by.

### Can you tell us more about the decision to 'downsize' your job?

I absolutely love being a mother — far more than I ever expected to. At the same time, I've always enjoyed working, and I never imagined myself as a full-time stay-at-home mum. I really appreciate the social side of work and the sense of achievement it gives me. I'm naturally a very organised, tidy person... which doesn't always go hand-in-hand with parenting!

I truly enjoy the time I spend with my children, and I also really value being able to keep hold of this other part of who I am through my work. Balancing those two pulls can feel really hard at times. I'm very aware of how fortunate we are to be in a position where I could take a pay cut, and it's something I don't take for granted.

### How did you find LLL, and your current job?

I already knew about LLL as a mum, and I followed LLLGB on social media. I spent many hours scrolling through the website in the middle of the night, while I was breastfeeding! One night I found the operations manager job advert. I was interviewed on Zoom and started



when my daughter was about nine months old.

### How do you combine working and breastfeeding?

When I first started working for LLLGB, my daughter was still nursing all the time. For the first six months, every Leader I spoke to saw me breastfeed – it was the only way I could keep Annika quiet while I was on a call! I would work around her naps: drop my son off, walk her around in the buggy until she fell asleep, open my laptop right away, and work in the next room. **This role allowed me to continue breastfeeding far more easily and longer than I might have been able to otherwise.**

When the children were younger they were used to seeing me working. I could work for a few minutes here and there, while I cared for them. Covid has changed the relationship families have with work. With more people working from home, it's become much more common for children to see their parents working.

As the children get older, there's a clearer divide between mothering and work, and it's actually becoming more difficult to work alongside them. When they're not with me all day anymore, I really want to be fully present with them when we are together. During the holidays, I'm incredibly grateful to their grandparents for taking them out sometimes so I can have a bit of uninterrupted work time.

I do still manage to work with the children around, though. They'd often prefer that I sit and play playdough with them, but it's also good for them to see that part of family life is everyone

contributing in their own way – and that includes the work that helps keep everything going.

### How has your experience as a mother supported your role?

Becoming a mum has given me a huge amount of compassion for other parents. When an email pops into my inbox at 3am instead of going to the Helpform team, I completely get it - I've been there too. Being a breastfeeding mother has also helped me connect more deeply with the charity's ethos and the families we support.

I've recently become a Governor at my son's school, which feels like another naturally child-centred role and a lovely way to be more involved in our local community. As my children grow and I slowly gain a little more time and space, I can see my work evolving alongside them.

### What would you say to a mother who was weighing up her work options?

No two people are the same – each person has to decide for themselves. Every family, and every season of life is different – there's no single 'right' path. It's completely okay not to feel like you have it all figured out, and it's more than okay to change your mind as things shift. It's okay not to 'have it all', and to change your mind. Do what's right for you and your family.



# Transferable skills of mothering

By Sam Kennedy Christian, LLL Herne Bay

The morning after my first child was born, as the midwives changed shift, someone came to see us and asked how things were going. I shared that after feeding for around 14 hours non-stop the previous day (or so it felt!), my baby had then slept much of the night and was quite sleepy. Cue panic, insistence that she needed formula, and she was taken away from me and given a bottle across the room. Not the start I'd imagined.

Despite that, we were still breastfeeding when her little brother arrived!

I first went to the Herne Bay LLL group when I was expecting my second child. It was so nice to go to a group where feeding my then three-year-old felt completely 'normal'. It was great to talk through how to manage tandem feeding, and start talking about weaning (although it was still two years away, as it turned out!).

It was when I was expecting my son that I left my career in communications to start my coaching business. I'd been working in charities and the public sector in campaigns

and communication roles for many years, but it was hard to see how I could combine a senior communications career with young children. The work can be unpredictable, requires long hours, and at that time (in late 2021/early 2022), lots of offices were moving back to several days a week in the office.

I returned to my coaching business when my son was about four months old, and my husband took Shared Parental Leave for five months. I expressed at work (thank you, hands-free options!) and thankfully my son took fairly easily to a bottle.

Because of my personal experience with work, maternity leave, and juggling young children, I started to find these topics coming up in coaching sessions. Returning from maternity leave is a great time to invest in coaching, because it's a real opportunity for a reset.

As much as returning is an opportunity, many mums feel anxious about how they will manage at this time. Some of the themes I see include:

- confidence wobbles after not being at paid work for maybe six, nine, or twelve months.
- worries about settling their baby into childcare or with other family members.
- pressure to hold the whole mental load of motherhood and family life on top of paid work.

The reality is, becoming a parent and caring for a small child actually supports us in developing a lot of skills. It's far from a break or time off.

In her book, *The Motherhood Penalty* (Simon & Schuster UK, 2022), Joeli Brealy shared research by Valeria Leonardi, which highlights how parenting is an effective training programme for the development of:

- Personal attributes: efficiency, emotional intelligence, tolerance, patience, learning-agility, intuitiveness.
- Communication: giving individual attention, giving and receiving feedback, reading non-verbal cues.
- Developmental skills: mentoring, enabling independence in others, motivating others.
- Organisational/management skills:





prioritisation, productivity, delegation, switching off from work.

Personally, my most developed skill since becoming a mum is patience, particularly with other people. Nothing like a three-year-old in their 'I do it myself' phase for training that one!

I've also noticed my coaching clients become much more focused and productive. I used to love working after 5 pm in a quiet office, after everyone had started to go home. No emails pinging in, no calls. But once I had to leave for pick-up, I no longer had that luxury. It takes time to practise and establish these boundaries and make them work for you, but having a hard deadline to leave certainly helps.

### Top tips for returning from maternity leave

1. Get some expert support. Did you know employers (even charities) often pay for coaching at this critical time? This especially applies if you're thinking about a shift in direction! It's so hard to carve out space to think that through properly alone.

2. Treat yourself like a new starter. You don't need to dive straight into old habits and routines. Take your time to absorb what's changed, what hasn't, meet new people, and use your fresh eyes to ask great questions.
3. Remember how you cared for yourself postpartum. Take as much pressure off other areas of life as possible.
4. Dual career couple? Remember, you're now working a paid job alongside parenting, just like your partner. You don't need to be responsible for all the organising, planning, and thinking that comes with having a child. The way our parental leave is set up here in the UK, it's often mums and birthing parents who end up taking on this mental load in the early years. Now you're both working, let your partner build up their experience too – perhaps by being the first phone number for your childcare to call, or dividing responsibilities around meals.

If I could go back to the beginning, I'd tell myself that we're all learning here. There's no perfect solution to work hours, childcare, or home life. I thought I had my working pattern nailed. In reality? It worked for me, but not for my partner. And then Covid happened, so it all changed anyway. Even without a global pandemic, our children grow older, start school, develop their own personalities, and it all constantly changes. The most important thing is to learn as you go and develop a practice of open communication – with work, with your partner and family, and even with yourself.



# Children as Connection

By Meg Harcourt, LLL  
Oxfordshire

In my line of community work, having young children has been a huge asset.

I'm often working with elderly and/or vulnerable adults and they often absolutely love children (especially the women, it must be said!). It's been a bonding experience to share stories and photos of the children in our lives, and these experiences cross political and cultural divides. Children are all fundamentally hard work, hilarious, and wonderful, no matter who you vote for or what you believe in.

The adult group I work with sometimes seem as invested in my children as I am, often asking for updates and photos. I get to learn a lot through these parenting conversations too and come out wiser, richer, and with new perspectives on my own mothering.

My children have been a great asset at community events, playing with the other children and allowing me to fit in as a fellow parent mothering their child, rather than as a staff member organising something.

Children are a talking point across cultures and languages, too. Mothering is a language of its own. We share knowing sympathetic smiles when someone's child comes nagging for



snacks, coos and ahhs over baby photos, and the slight groan from a Mum when a toddler rudely bats their breast for milk, then both mother and child settle down for a feed.

When (if) people find out I'm a breastfeeding counsellor, they are keen to tell their stories and traditions around feeding. Even now I'm always stunned at the powerful memories women in their seventies and eighties hold of feeding, and the emotions they've held on to and are so keen to share. It's helped me connect to people whose verbal language I don't share and where upbringings and culture have been wildly different.

Motherhood has given me new ways to connect to my community and other communities, and as this is central to my job, it has enhanced what I can offer in the workplace.



## Editors' note

*Our LLL community has extensive experience supporting mothers returning to work. For practical ideas and information about your legal rights, visit [laleche.org.uk/working-and-breastfeeding](http://laleche.org.uk/working-and-breastfeeding)*

*Our handbook The Art of Breastfeeding (9th edition, 2024) includes a dedicated chapter on managing separation from your baby, featuring lots of stories from real mothers across the world.*

*You can meet others who've returned to work at in-person and virtual LLL meetings. You're welcome to attend meetings at any stage of breastfeeding, or to contact an LLL Leader to talk through your work situation one-to-one.*

# Going with the flow - my decision not to return to work

By Shelby Rimmer, LLL  
Oxfordshire

Prior to having my son in February 2025, I was Registered Manager of a Children's Home. I worked within residential childcare for seven years, supporting many teenagers and working my way up the career ladder.

This role was my purpose. I lived and breathed it. I thrived on making a difference to the lives of others and poured all my passion and energy into it – many times putting my personal life on hold to ensure I was there to support my team and our young people. I missed many opportunities to catch up with friends, have a date night with my partner, birthdays, Christmases – you name it!

When I was pregnant with my son, we knew this was going to shift the focus in my professional life. I would not be able to attend at the drop of a hat or be available to the Home 24/7, and the unsociable hours wouldn't really work alongside our family life. What I suppose I wasn't prepared for was the intensely emotional pull I would feel at the thought of leaving my son for 40 hours a week.

As an exclusively breastfeeding mum, I haven't been away from my son for more than an hour. He has only ever been left with his Dad or his Nannie. I know my boy inside out: how to calm him when he is feeling unsettled, how to make him laugh, and which toy he prefers out of the endless mountain we seem to have accumulated in his short time here with us (babies really do take over your house!).

As I am writing this, he is just shy of turning nine months old. My statutory maternity pay is due to end and I have three months left of my allocated time at home with him. Three months will go in the blink of an eye!

We had spoken since I was pregnant about the possibility of me not returning to work, but this never really felt like a reality for me. In today's world, it is incredibly difficult to support a family on one income, and for a long time this

just felt like a dream.

As time has gone on, however, our desire for me to remain home and raise our son has only strengthened. Whilst he is still young, it is important to us that he is with people that know and love him, and we are not blessed with proximity of family for support. Due to me only receiving statutory maternity pay for the duration of my leave, we have already adjusted quite drastically to a reduction in income.

I am incredibly lucky to have a partner who is supportive of me taking time away from work for the early years of my son's life. He has worked very hard over the past nine months to increase his income in order to allow us to make our dream a reality – I have resigned from my role and will be remaining at home with our son.

My maternity leave is ending soon, and I'm involved in many conversations with fellow mums, discussing when they will return to work. I am often met with shock when I say I won't be returning. I almost feel like a bit of an alien, going against the grain, but I do know how lucky we are as a family to be able to make this choice.

That said, my career has been a big part of my identity in my adult life and it does feel frightening to make the choice to step away



from it. Alongside the financial pressure, it removes a big part of who I was 'before'. It is often said that becoming a mum can bring a loss of identity.

It is a little scary to think that the people who have surrounded me in this first chapter of motherhood are returning to work. I am very much stepping into the unknown. There are still many changing dynamics of motherhood to face, and I will do it whilst figuring out who I am now, too!

My partner and I are very 'go with the flow'. We are not sure what the long-term plan is, or how long I will be off work. As we've learned, things often switch and change in life when you've got a little one.

When my son is a little less dependent on me, we will reassess, and look at the next options. Right now, I am looking forward to not having the impending pressure of returning to work and only seeing my little bestie before bed!

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity and look forward to spending every day with my boy and being present for all those incredible milestones. It is such a privilege.



## Working and breastfeeding?

Are you looking for information about returning to paid work, expressing, or leaving your baby?

The LLLGB Shop has a range of leaflets and books about working and breastfeeding - scan the QR to see what's there!

When you buy from the LLLGB Shop you can be confident that any profits help to fund LLLGB's work supporting breastfeeding. It's another way to show your support.



**La Leche League GB**  
SHOP breastfeeding, books & more

# What skills from mothering would you put on your CV?

*“During the ‘return to work’ meeting, we asked what skills you’ve picked up/mastered/honed during maternity leave that you’re bringing back to your workplace. It was inspiring to see how many transferable skills come from looking after newborns and toddlers.”*

– Sarah, LLL Margate

***This was such a great question that we asked around the wider LLGB community, too! It’s clear that the skills developed through motherhood are valued – with or without the workplace in mind.***

“Holding three conversations simultaneously whilst also doing something else... like cooking.

Holding two conversations at the same time as cycling with one child on the front and the other perched behind – with a normal (not electric) bike!”

– Shoko



“How to say ‘no’ without saying no; prioritising; time management”

– Anonymous



- Marketing, e.g. pasta isn’t just pasta, it’s “pasta with sprinkles”. You learn to influence/persuade/
- Emotional regulation
- Master storytelling
- Multi-tasking
- Adaptability
- Negotiation
- Calm under pressure
- Prioritisation

– Mums of LLL Margate

- Multi-tasking
- Persuasion
- Getting someone else to do something
- Distraction

– Fran

# Latching On – Celebrating National Breastfeeding Week in Ireland

By Ciara Murphy, LLL Dublin East

On the morning of Thursday 9th October, I attended Mrs Sabina Higgins' "Latching On" event. This is an annual celebration of National Breastfeeding Week in Ireland, held in the President's residence, Áras an Uachtaráin.

I had heard a lot about this event from speaking to leaders of my local breastfeeding groups, and I was so excited to have my name put forward to receive an invite and represent La Leche League Dublin East. My baby had just turned one year old the same week, so I was delighted to celebrate one year of breastfeeding.

I received a lot of support throughout my breastfeeding journey from LLL groups, Cuidiú [a parent support charity in Ireland], and local breastfeeding meet-ups in my area. This helped me to continue breastfeeding and work through issues with latching, pain, and other various road bumps throughout the year!

A huge number of breastfeeding mothers and their babies, supporters, and professionals in the field from all over the island of Ireland made their way up to the Áras that morning. There were rows of prams and buggies, sounds

of coos and cries, and lots of oxytocin in the air as babies of all different ages were warmly welcomed in.

It was a very special event this year, because in a few weeks Sabina and President Michael D. Higgins will reach the end of their tenure and a new President of Ireland will be elected.

Mrs Higgins spoke about the low rates of breastfeeding in Ireland, how support is so essential to help increase the rates, and how education really matters. We heard speeches from people at the forefront of breastfeeding today, including the Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, Breastfeeding Law Group, Cuidiú, maternity hospitals, La Leche League of Ireland, and Gaza Infant Nutrition Alliance.

Sabina met with all attendees after the event, and we took a large group photo to mark the occasion. She was so warm and kind, and her passion for breastfeeding was really inspiring.

It was heartwarming to meet breastfeeding parents from all over Ireland, and to hear about



LLL Ireland members with the Irish President's Wife, Mrs Sabina Higgins



*Photos by Heather Rice*

their experiences in different locations around the country. A central theme was support, and how we give each other strength along the way.

After the speeches, I recognised Heather, an LLL Leader from the Portlaoise “Nursing Beyond Infancy” Zoom group, which meets monthly. Their group has stretched far and wide online, providing a space for us to speak about life with our nurslings who are nine months and older. Chatting to LLL members from all over the island was amazing – I really felt part of a wide community!

My baby girl enjoyed playing with the other babies, and she loved the delicious food that was served at the reception. I loved being there with such a diverse group of parents and breastfeeding supporters.

There are over 100 LLL Leaders running more than 30 groups across the island of Ireland. It was an honour to represent La Leche League at the event, and to have the important matter of breastfeeding highlighted.

## Calling all Healthcare Professionals and Breastfeeding Supporters

Sign up to receive our FREE quarterly newsletter for healthcare professionals



La Leche League GB



# Celebrating our Leaders

## Editors' note

*Work takes many forms. While paid work is visible and widely valued, the work of mothering is often invisible and overlooked. Volunteering is another vital kind of work, offering rewards that can't be easily measured. 2025 has been a bumper year for growing LLLGB's volunteer community — meet some of our wonderful colleagues!*

## Hannah Crowe

### LLL Oxfordshire

#### Tell us about you, your family and which LLL group you belong to.

Hello! I'm Hannah, I live in West Oxfordshire with my husband and three kids: Rowan is nine, Jocelyn is six, and Julian is two. I'm a (new) Leader with LLL Oxfordshire, and help out with LLL Cotswolds WhatsApp group too.

At the moment I'm a full-time "Family Manager", but previously worked in Qualitative Market Research. My bigger kids are at school, and my little one is doing a couple of mornings at preschool whilst I fight my ever-increasing laundry pile.

I wear a number of voluntary hats aside from LLL, including being a Parent Governor at the primary school, Peer Supporter with Pregnancy Sickness Support, and Trustee with the local Scout group. My house is constantly a tip, I don't get enough sleep, and I say yes to way too many things.

#### What does breastfeeding mean to you, your child and the rest of your family?

Breastfeeding is the only way I know how to parent very small people! It's something that's morphed from essential nutrients to the easy foundation of the way we parent. To me, breastfeeding is the lynchpin of my matrescence, the heart of how I became who I am as a mother.

To Julian, who is still feeding, it's comfort, calm, connection, and rest. To the rest of my family it's just normal life. The kids have all had different breastfeeding journeys, each with their challenges, and I'm passionate about babies getting the best support to give them the best start with human milk.

#### How did you hear about LLL?

In the desperate search for "how the hell do I make this work?" way back in 2016 when my first was born, I did encounter LLL. But the image wasn't for me... I envisaged an almost competitive environment of overly crunchy parents, meeting in a front room in London (my front room was the size of a postage stamp, there's no way these people were "like me"). I found support elsewhere.

When we moved to Oxfordshire in 2020, I finally had time to consider giving back to breastfeeding for the incredible support I had in the early days, and looked for a charity to start peer supporting with. I trained as a peer supporter via Association of Breastfeeding Mothers to volunteer with Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support, but was also introduced to the online meetings run by LLL Oxfordshire – this was pandemic times! – and to my surprise I felt right at home.





### **Why did you decide to become a Leader?**

Knowing I wanted to further my potential for impact on supporting breastfeeding, I considered both the ABM Breastfeeding Counsellor training and LLL Leadership. Ultimately the more holistic approach of LLL drew me in this direction.

### **How did you find the Leader accreditation process?**

I accredited via the first ten-week pathway at the start of 2025. It was intense, revealing, like being under the microscope... but also uplifting, inspiring, and empowering to take on in such a short amount of time. I was given my accreditation on Zoom in the middle of a chaotic family holiday.

### **What do you do as a Leader and how does it fit into your life?**

I keep having to remind myself that I'm in the trenches of parenting right now with such small kids; so what I do as a Leader I do fairly sporadically. I aim to be at one meeting a month, but life is unpredictable: someone is sick, or once I crashed my car on the way to a meeting!

Mainly I support via our local WhatsApp groups, which I love, and recently joined the next group over to help with theirs.

### **What do you enjoy most about being a Leader?**

The community is lovely, but what I'm really here for is the babies – knowing that one more baby (or toddler), one more mum, was able to breastfeed for one more day because I was able to listen and hopefully help.

### **What would you say to someone thinking about becoming a Leader?**

There's no such thing as perfection, and if there was it wouldn't be the best idea anyway. All of us are doing the best we can with the information we have and the time we have now, and if you're up for some personal growth and to support the growth of others then Leadership could be for you. Even when you are in the trenches and can only give a little, every moment of help, like every drop of breastmilk, is hugely valuable.

### **What is your best tip for a new mother?**

Once you find the support you need and realise that you are the expert in your own baby, you can do anything and go anywhere.

### **What would your perfect day look like?**

I don't know. I need some sleep, and to climb my way out from under Mount Washmore before I can even think about tomorrow.





Some of the LLLGB Leaders accredited during 2025. L-R Samantha Burges (LLL South West London), Rosie Adams (LLL South East London), Jess Dearing (LLL Swindon), Riina Thomalainen (LLL Cambridge)

## Riina Thomalainen

### LLL Cambridge

I found a sense of belonging with LLL from the start, but when becoming a Leader was suggested, it felt all kinds of intimidating and doubtful. Would I ever get the work done, would I see it through, would I be good enough anyway?

After taking things slowly (really quite slowly!) I joined the 10-week pathway and was swept up in not only the motivation and momentum, but also the excitement of belonging and building connections within the Leader community.

Accrediting was definitely a proud achievement as well as a challenge, and not only because of the actual learning involved. The imposter syndrome is still strong (every time I put on my Leader badge and lanyard it feels a little surreal, like I wonder who ever thought to give this to me, of all people!) but I also feel such joy in being able to support other parents, the way I have been – and still am – supported.

And being part of the Leader community, I feel

so welcomed and cherished all over again, just like I did when I came to my first meetings with a tiny baby and all those doubts and questions.

I hope to never stop learning new things and every single Leader I've met, veteran or brand new, continues to inspire me. I appreciate and celebrate the kindness and generosity with which they share their time, energy and expertise, beyond any words I could find.

#### **Editors' note**

*If you're interested in becoming a Leader, we'd love to hear from you!*

*There are two ways to prepare for accreditation: through self-directed study, or via a new route, as part of a 'pathway' group that meets regularly on Zoom. Whichever route you choose, you'll be supported throughout the process - and once accredited, you'll join a growing team of Leaders across England, Wales, and Scotland.*

# Rosie Adams

## LLL South East London

I was inspired to become a La Leche League Leader after receiving support myself in online meetings during the pandemic. I struggled with aversion quite severely for most of my breastfeeding journey and cannot overstate the impact of the support offered to me by Leaders. I wanted to give back some of that loving kindness and understanding to others.

I started accreditation training back in 2021, when my daughter was two years old and still nursing. I found it hard to juggle my application work alongside mothering a toddler – it always ended up at the bottom of my to-do list.

Over the years, I came to meetings occasionally and maintained my interest in LLL. When Maria Yasnova told me about the 10-week accreditation pathway starting in just a few weeks, I felt it was the push I needed.

I loved doing the pathway. Most of all because of my fellow Leader Applicants, who quickly became friends, as well as Vicki, Louise, and Anne (running the pathway), who were fantastic.

There was a lot of information to cover and some homework to do, but doing it as a team supporting and rooting for each other made it a pleasure to log on every week.

I have been a Leader for four months now. I have led my first meeting and co-led others with the wonderful South East London LLL team. I have many aspirations and hopes for my future with LLL. I am so glad I finally got there!

# Rachel Cruddas

## Birmingham

My name is Rachel and I am mum to four children – at the time of writing they are almost-four-year-old twins, a 19-month-old and a six-week-old. I've just moved to Birmingham from Oxfordshire.

The first time I came to a LLL meeting, I was a new mum to six-week-old twins and knew that I had found 'my people' in the community that



*Rachel Cruddas*

I could see forming there. I kept going, and found people who were as passionate about breastfeeding as I was.

About eight months later, one of the Leaders emailed me and asked if I'd thought about Leadership! I was too deep in the trenches at that point, but said I would think about it when life settled down a bit.

When I heard about the new approach to training, known as the accreditation pathway, I thought that would be better, as independent study would always be delayed by the thousand other priorities of my life. I began the training at four months pregnant, with our house on the market – definitely not a quieter time than when first approached!

The process was correctly described as 'intense', but the group leaders found a slightly easier approach for me that meant I attended the training and then caught up on the independent work afterwards. I've enjoyed it and learnt a lot, although I am aware that I have lots more to learn.

I've just been accredited, but not started leading yet due to the move and the baby. I'm looking forward to supporting parents on this journey and seeing where LLL takes me.

# What's the best thing about being a Leader?

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*Alice*

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The satisfaction that comes from helping others to overcome breastfeeding challenges and seeing them reach their goals! Also, having common ground in which you can share your passion for advocating breastfeeding!

*Jayne*

---

Children's needs remain constant, but childhood, and the experience of motherhood, are continually shaped by a changing world. Now that my own children are older, I value the ongoing connection Leadership gives me with babies and new parents.

*Sarah T*

---

Watching the lives carve out, influenced by breastfeeding.

“

*Helen*

---

When mums speak to you years later and you realise you did help!

*Bronwyn*

---

Knowing I have helped someone achieve their breastfeeding goal – a priceless gift.

*Eden*

---

Helping babies and their families experience the joy that breastfeeding can bring.

*Sarah CT*

---

Seeing mums' confidence grow and empowering them to trust their instincts.

”

*Charlotte*

---

I know it's a cliché – but the best thing is making a difference.

*Freya*

---

I love the connection I have with people across the country (and the world!). We are all connected by our belief that breastfeeding is important.

*Nicola*

---

The LLL community – found all my best friends with LLL!

*Rachel*

---

Hearing amazing stories of courage and determination.

## NEW LEADERS!

We are delighted to welcome 19 newly accredited  
La Leche League Leaders.

**Catherine Murray** LLL Woking

**Ceili Bristow** LLL Woking

**Doris Lane** LLL Tyne & Wear

**Emma Jeffs** LLL West Norfolk

**Hannah Bates** LLL Farnham

**Hannah Claxton** LLL Farnham

**Holly Gilbert** Waltham Forest

**Jazmin Spry** LLL Devon and Cornwall

**Jess Dearing** LLL Swindon/Oxfordshire

**Katie Doorbar** LLL Dyffryn Amman

**Lisa Matthews** LLL Swindon

**Megan Fraser-Hitchen** LLL Farnham

**Meera Krishnamurthy** LLL South West  
London

**Natalie McKay** LLL Woking

**Nico Matthews** LLL Swindon

**Phoebe Jacka** LLL Devon and Cornwall

**Rebecca Coptay**

**Rachel Cruddas** Birmingham

**Sophie Cooper** LLL Sussex

Wishing you all happy and satisfying years of LLL Leadership!

Would you like to know  
more about how to  
become an LLL Leader?

Would like to give back some of  
the support that you have  
received with breastfeeding? Or  
do you want to help others  
achieve their breastfeeding goals?

If you are wondering about what  
becoming a Leader involves, scan  
the QR code or talk to your local  
LLL Leader.



La Leche League GB



# Now that you're a dad

By Edwina Smith, Canberra, Australia

*I retired two years ago, having been a nurse/  
midwife for over forty years. Much of my  
career has been in maternity hospitals,  
helping mothers to breastfeed their babies. I  
found this to be the most rewarding area.*

*I am 63 years old and enjoying retirement  
very much! This led me on a new adventure  
– writing poetry. My dream is to have one of  
my poems published as a book for children  
one day.*

*I am so thrilled to have my poem published  
by La Leche League and hope families will  
find it helpful.*



Now that you're a Dad  
What does baby need?  
Perhaps a little more  
Than change, burp and feed  
Surely not that hard!  
Let's look and see  
A view through infant eyes  
Shared with you and me

I have no words and yet  
You hear me very well  
Watching for my signs  
Quickly you can tell  
When I need to sleep  
Would I like to play?  
Reading subtle cues  
Attuned with all I say

You talk and sing to me  
With bath or changing nappy  
Your eyes and smiling face  
Make me feel so happy  
Cuddles off to sleep  
Cuddles when I wake  
Wrapped in loving care  
What a Dad you make!

Looks like you know  
Just what Baby needs  
Doing plenty more  
Than change, burp and feeds  
I am very blessed  
With a Dad like you  
Giving all I need  
As you always knew!

With each passing day  
Let's get to know each other  
Learning as we go  
Together we'll discover  
Lots of games to play  
And fun to be had  
A new beginning lies ahead  
Now that you're a Dad.

# Maker

By Steph Morlenwel

It's eleven o'clock when you, for the fourth time, pull on the strings that bring my aching joints to life. It's one o'clock, two, 2:30, 3:45 and now I no longer look, instead my eyes remain glued shut as my hands fumble in the half-light.

Finally, I'm a real Mum. Mama's little mammal tugging once more on my heart strings, asking to be brought closer still. How could I deny your perfect ear the chance to again hear the familiar thump - thump - thump in my chest? Your own heartbeat imprinted so exactly upon my memory: an impatient drumroll signalling your arrival. Fashionably late, you are the greatest crescendo of my life.

I respond swiftly to my marching orders.

As I hold you in my arms, tiny fingers tightly clutch at loose threads trailing within the layers of my petticoats.

Creating delicate spider's webs, you weave connections too magical for me to ever truly understand.

The sinewy knots of pulsing cord were never severed in spirit as I feel another jolt to my core, more akin to bell ringers' rope than any game of tug o' war.

A call to attention, I am dutifully summoned to worship the closest thing to a god I have ever known.

I squint down at your bright eyes, suckling and pawing at my breast, and marvel at how completely overcome I am by a feeling so much greater than divine. You are the ever-expanding epitome of Love, my midnight muse.

I think you must get it from your Dad.

*I wrote this at 7.00 in the morning when my daughter was three months old. She is now 20 months and we are still enthusiastically breastfeeding on demand, co-sleeping, and toddler-wearing.*



# La Leche League Philosophy

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- ♥ Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.
- ♥ Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.
- ♥ Alert and active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.
- ♥ Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying breastfeeding relationship and reliable milk production.
- ♥ Breastfeeding is enhanced by the loving support of the baby's father, a co-parent, a partner, and/or close family members who value the breastfeeding relationship.
- ♥ In the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother, which is as basic as his need for food.
- ♥ For the healthy, full-term baby, human milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of readiness for complementary foods, about the middle of the first year after birth.
- ♥ Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.
- ♥ Ideally, the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the child outgrows the need.
- ♥ From infancy on, children need loving guidance, which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.

