

# Maternal Well-Being Infant Feeding and Return to Paid Work

## Technical Report: Maternal Experiences Interviews

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## **Maternal Experiences Interviews**

Respondents to our survey were asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview and to give their consent to us contacting them. If so they were asked to provide a contact email address which was kept separate from their survey responses and only used to contact them in regard to interviews. Those who had indicated interest in participating in an interview were contacted in April 2023, and given the option to select if they would like to take part in an interview, focus group or both. We collected some basic information (whether they had returned to work, whether they continued to breastfeed upon work, occupation, sector and some basic demographics) to aid us in selecting participants to ensure we captured individuals from across a range of sub-groups.

Those who were invited to an interview were sent an information sheet and consent form. (see appendix 1). Interviews took place on MS Teams and were recorded for transcription purposes. Recordings were destroyed once transcription had taken place and interviews were fully anonymised and participants were given a pseudonym.

We undertook 62 semi-structured interviews, 46 (our main group of interest) had continued to breastfeed when they returned to work (46 interviews), 11 had yet to return to work but were planning to breastfeed upon return and 5 had stopped breastfeeding before return to work.

## Appendix 1: Information sheet and consent form

### **Infant Feeding and Return to Work Experiences Interviews**

Thank you for your interest in taking part in an interview for our project exploring ‘Maternal Well-Being, Infant Feeding and Paid Work Decisions’. Please see below for information about the project and your involvement in it.

#### **Project Information**

At the heart of this study is an exploration of the well-being, opportunities and experiences of new mothers who want to continue to breastfeed on return to paid work. As part of this project, we would like to undertake some interviews to better understand workplace experiences. This will help identify practices that benefit mothers as well as areas of weaknesses and challenges in existing workplace processes. Based on this research, we aim to develop suggestions for best practice with the view to inform workplace policy to better support mothers wanting to combine breastfeeding and paid work.

For brevity we use the terms women, mothers and breastfeeding, but we acknowledge that some individuals may not identify with the identities that those labels evoke, and may prefer alternative terms.

#### **Project team**

This project is being funded by the Nuffield Foundation and is being led by Professor Sarah Jewell. The project team includes academic researchers based at the University of Reading including experts in economics, law and health communication. For more information about the project please see [here](#).

#### **What am I being asked to do and what information will be collected about me?**

Taking part in an interview is voluntary. You can take a break or leave the interview at any point. We will ask questions relating to your infant feeding and return to work experiences, how these made you feel and what kind of workplace support you’ve received or what kind of support you wish you had received upon return to paid work. If you take part in an interview we will offer you a £10 high street voucher as a thank you.

#### **How will the information be processed and shared?**

The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed using MS Teams, with pseudonyms used. We expect interviews to last around 30-45 minutes. The recordings will be destroyed once the transcription has taken place. The anonymity of the participants will be ensured and protected at all stages of the research; transcriptions will be anonymised and any information that could identify an organisation or an individual will be removed. Transcriptions prepared in this way will be stored in a Word document and will be shared with the project team. The

transcriptions will be stored securely on the University of Reading network through a secure server.

On completion of the project the anonymised transcriptions will be deposited with the University of Reading research archive where they can be consulted by other researchers. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point up to the recording of an interview is transcribed. Beyond this point we will not be able to identify your responses anymore as the transcriptions will be entirely anonymous. In the expression of interest form we asked some questions to ensure we capture a range of experiences. This information will not be stored with your name and contact details nor interview data and will be used only to report on the characteristics of our interview sample.

Should you require more information or have any questions, please email Sarah Jewell: [s.l.jewell@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.jewell@reading.ac.uk).

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Please sign and date at the end to confirm you have read and understand the following, and consent to take part in the research:

1. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me and any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet above in so far as they relate to my participation.
2. I have had explained to me what information will be collected about me, what it will be used for, who it may be shared with, how it will be kept safe, and my rights in relation to my data.
3. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project and to withdraw my response up to their anonymised transcription, and that this will be without detriment.
- 4 I understand that the data collected from me in this study will be preserved and made available in anonymised form, so that they can be consulted and re-used by others.
5. The University of Reading is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998. Personal data collected within this research project will be processed in accordance with this act and with the University's Data Protection Policy (see [www.reading.ac.uk/data\\_protection](http://www.reading.ac.uk/data_protection)). This project has been reviewed by the appropriate Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.
6. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name: .....

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Please send the completed form to X, before the start of the interview.

## Appendix 2: Maternal Experiences Interview Question

Interviews were semi-structured and questions were adapted for each interviewee based on their experience/previous answers

### *Continued to Breastfeed Upon Return to Work Questions*

	<b>Core question</b>	<b>Prompts</b>
<b>1 (a few breastfeeding questions)</b>	Tell me about your breastfeeding journey up to returning to work?	<p>Why did you want to breastfeed?</p> <p>How important was/is breastfeeding to you?</p> <p>If not already mentioned, ask about duration [if it feels appropriate; may come up naturally later], if they are still breastfeeding [if it feels appropriate; may come up naturally later]</p>
<b>2 (return to work)</b>	<p>Tell me about your return to work, how did you find it?</p> <p>How did you feel about returning to work?</p>	<p>What were the reasons you returned to work [when you did]?</p> <p>How old was your child when you returned?</p> <p>Can you briefly tell me about your job/job role you were doing upon return to work?</p> <p>Did you return to the same job/job role?</p> <p>What worked well/was positive for you/what did you enjoy? What did you find challenging?</p>

<p><b>3 (infant feeding decisions and return to work)</b></p>	<p>Tell me how you thought combining work and breastfeeding would work? Did you have any concerns? And how did your actual experience work out?</p> <p>Regarding feeding your child, how did the return to work influence your feeding practices? [Or vice versa] [If not already picked up]</p> <p>How did you feel about how your baby was fed upon your return to work?</p> <p>Did you feel continuing to breastfeed upon return to work had any impact on your job [role] [duties] [responsibilities]? [As appropriate]</p>	<p>Did you feel any conflict between returning to work and how you wanted to feed your baby?</p> <p>What did you find positive in this respect? What was perhaps more challenging?</p> <p>Do you feel continuing to breastfeed has disadvantaged [you in the workplace] [your job] in anyway? [if Appropriate]</p>
<p><b>4 (workplace support)</b></p>	<p>Did you feel supported upon return to work? What support did you get regarding your infant feeding choices upon return to work?</p>	<p>Who/what offered your most support and what kind of support? Where there any workplace policies or practices that were particularly supportive? [May depend on if they are self-employed] What were the challenges?</p>



		<p>Could ask if they had done any keep in touch days and if so, how their child was fed?</p> <p>Did you know what you were legally entitled to? Was this communicated in any way to you?</p>
<b>5 (Attitudes of others)</b>	How would you describe the position/attitude of your company/employer/line manager/colleagues towards breastfeeding and return to work? [if not already covered; select as appropriate, might not be relevant if the individual is self-employed]	[If relevant] How did these attitudes make you feel?
<b>6 (Well-being)</b>	<p>How satisfied were you with your return to work and/or any support you received?</p> <p>Did your return to work/combining breastfeeding and work/breastfeeding journey impact your mental well being/mental health in any way?</p>	If so how?
<b>7</b>	In an ideal world: what would assist you best/better regarding return to work and breastfeeding your child?	
<b>8</b>	What advice would you give to women who are just about to return to work and wish to continue breastfeeding	
<b>9</b>	Is there anything else you would like to add?	

*Stopped Breastfeeding Before Return to Work*

	<b>Core question</b>	<b>Prompts</b>
<b>1 (a few breastfeeding questions)</b>	Tell me about your breastfeeding journey?	<p>Why did you want to breastfeed?</p> <p>How important was/is breastfeeding to you?</p> <p>If not already mentioned, ask about duration</p>
<b>2 (return to work)</b>	<p>Tell me about your return to work, how did you find it?</p> <p>How did you feel about returning to work?</p>	<p>What were the reasons you returned to work [when you did]?</p> <p>How old was your child when you returned?</p> <p>Can you briefly tell me about your job/job role you were doing upon return to work? Did you return to the same job/job role?</p> <p>What worked well/was positive for you/what did you enjoy? What did you find challenging?</p>
<b>3 (infant feeding decisions and return to work)</b>	Regarding feeding your child, how did the return to work influence your feeding practices, if at all? [Or vice versa] [If not already picked up]	If appropriate can ask if they would have liked to continue BF upon return to work

	<p>How did you feel about how your baby was fed upon your return to work? [If not already picked up]</p>	<p>If applicable can ask if there were any workplace barriers to continuing to breastfeed?</p> <p>Ask if they know of any workplace policies/provisions/facilities for breastfeeding employees at their workplace?</p> <p>Could ask if they had done any keep in touch days and if so, how their child was fed?</p> <p>Did you know what you were legally entitled to? Was this communicated in any way to you?</p> <p>Did you feel any conflict between returning to work and how you wanted to feed your baby?</p>
<p><b>4 (workplace support)</b></p>	<p>Did you feel supported upon return to work?</p>	<p>Who/what offered your most support and what kind of support? Where there any workplace policies or practices that were particularly supportive? [May depend on if they are self-employed] What were the challenges? [These will be general support]</p>

<b>5 (Attitudes of others)</b>	How would you describe the position/attitude of your company/employer/line manager/colleagues towards breastfeeding and return to work? [if feel is appropriate, might not be relevant if the individual is self-employed]	[If relevant] How did these attitudes make you feel?
<b>6 (Well-being)</b>	How satisfied were you with your return to work and/or any support you received? Did your /breastfeeding journey/infant feeding decisions [as appropriate] impact your mental well being/mental health?	If so how?
<b>7</b>	In an ideal world: what would assist you best/better regarding return to work and breastfeeding your child? [Only ask if they wanted to continue to breastfeed]	
<b>8</b>	What piece of advice would you give to women who are just about to return to work?	
<b>9</b>	Is there anything else you would like to add?	

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*Not yet returned to work but plan to continue to breastfeed*

	<b>Core question</b>	<b>Prompts</b>
<b>1(a few breastfeeding questions)</b>	Tell me about your breastfeeding journey to date?	<p>Why did you want to breastfeed?</p> <p>How important was/is breastfeeding to you?</p> <p>If not already mentioned, ask about duration to date</p>
<b>2 (return to work)</b>	<p>Tell me about your intended return to work?</p> <p>How do you feel about returning to work?</p>	<p>What are your the reasons for returning to work ?</p> <p>How old will your child be when you intend to return?</p> <p>Can you briefly tell me about your job/job role you will doing upon return to work?</p> <p>Will you return to the same job/job role?</p>
<b>3 (infant feeding decisions and return to work)</b>	<p>Tell me how you think combining work and breastfeeding will work? Do you have any concerns?</p> <p>Regarding feeding your child, has/will returning to work influence(d) your feeding practices? [Or vice versa] [If not already picked up]</p> <p>How did you feel about how your baby will be fed when your return to work?</p>	<p>Do you feel any conflict between returning to working and how you want to feed your baby?</p>
<b>4 (workplace support)</b>	Does your employer have any workplace policies or provisions to support breastfeeding employees?	

	Do you know what you were legally entitled to? Has this been communicated in any way to you?	
<b>5 (Attitudes of others)</b>	How would you describe the position/attitude of your company/employer/line manager/colleagues towards breastfeeding and return to work? [if appropriate]	[If relevant] How did these attitudes make you feel?
<b>6 (Well-being)</b>	Has your breastfeeding journey to date impacted your mental well being/mental health? [If not already cover/feels appropriate]	If so how?
<b>7</b>	In an ideal world: what would assist you regarding returning to work and continuing breastfeeding your child?	
<b>8</b>	What advice, guidance or resources do you think (or you have used) would be useful to help support you, or mothers in general, continuing to breastfeed upon return to work?	
<b>9</b>	Is there anything else you would like to add?	

Follow up interview questions after returning to work

	<b>Core question</b>	<b>Prompts</b>
<b>2 (return to work)</b>	Tell me about your return to work, how did you find it?  How did you feel about your return to work?	How did you find the run up to work? [if not mentioned]          What worked well/was positive for you/what did you enjoy? What did you find challenging?

<p><b>3 (infant feeding decisions and return to work)</b></p>	<p>How did combining work and breastfeeding work out for you? Was it as expected [or something to that effect – draw on any context from interview 1 e.g. did they have any concerns, if so did they materialise]</p> <p>Regarding feeding your child, how did the return to work influence your feeding practices? [Or vice versa] [If not already picked up or if feel appropriate]</p> <p>How did you feel about how your child was fed upon your return to work?</p> <p>Did you feel continuing to breastfeed upon return to work had any impact on your job [role] [duties] [responsibilities]? [As appropriate]</p>	<p>Did you find your child fed more over night when you returned to work?</p> <p>Did you feel any conflict between returning to work and how you wanted to feed your child?</p> <p>What did you find positive in this respect? What was perhaps more challenging?</p> <p>Do you feel continuing to breastfeed has disadvantaged [you in the workplace] [your job] in anyway? [if Appropriate]</p>
<p><b>4 (workplace support)</b></p>	<p>Did you feel supported upon return to work? What support did you get regarding your infant feeding choices upon return to work?</p>	<p>Who/what offered your most support and what kind of support? Where there any workplace policies or practices that were particularly supportive? [May depend on if they are self-employed] What were the challenges? [Discuss</p>

		<p>if not already mentioned in interview 1]</p> <p>Could ask if they had done any keep in touch days and if so, how their child was fed? [if not already discussed]</p> <p>Did you know what you were legally entitled to? Was this communicated in any way to you? [If not already asked in interview 1]</p>
<b>5 (Attitudes of others)</b>	<p>How would you describe the position/attitude of your company/employer/line manager/colleagues towards breastfeeding and return to work? [if not already covered; select as appropriate, might not be relevant if the individual is self-employed]</p>	<p>[If relevant] How did these attitudes make you feel?</p>
<b>6 (Well-being)</b>	<p>How satisfied were you with your return to work and/or any support you received?</p> <p>Did your return to work/combining breastfeeding and work/breastfeeding journey impact your mental well being/mental health in any way?</p>	<p>If so how?</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>In an ideal world: what would assist you best/better regarding return to work and breastfeeding your child?</p>	



8	What advice would you give to women who are just about to return to work and wish to continue breastfeeding	
9	Is there anything else you would like to add?	

