



LLL LEADERSHIP: IS IT FOR YOU?

Examining your options - a guide for interested mothers

We are delighted that you have an interest in helping other mothers and babies to share the wonderful benefits of breastfeeding. As mothers who have discovered the joy and satisfaction of breastfeeding, we want to pass on what we have learned about the art of breastfeeding so that other women and babies can experience it for themselves.

It may be that you turned to a friend or relation or perhaps an LLL Leader for help or reassurance with breastfeeding. Sometimes a 'sounding board' for a mother's worries is all that is needed to restore her confidence in her ability to breastfeed. At other times having access to specific information is required. Part of an LLL Leader's preparation involves learning where to go for further information or support if a mother's query is beyond her immediate resources.

The information provided here is intended to help you work out whether LLL leadership is right for you.

A form is available should you decide you would like to apply for leadership. Your group Leader can send it to you electronically, after you have explored various aspects of leadership and application during a discussion called "pre-application dialogue". If you do not live near an LLL group, you will be put in touch with a Leader for this dialogue.

You may decide, however, that now is not the right time for you or that you would feel happier helping your LLL group in another way.

You may have attended a few LLL meetings – these are a great introduction to what LLL is all about: mother-to-mother support, providing help and information (rather than advice), enabling mothers to make their own informed decisions based on their knowledge of their babies and their circumstances.

Working with the other Leaders in her group and with the support of the Leader Department, the Leader Applicant will find the best ways for her to fulfil the responsibilities of a Leader.

What does an LLL Leader do?

LLL Leaders:

- Fulfil LLL's mission which is "To help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.

They do it by fulfilling basic responsibilities in addition to/or in replacement for optional responsibilities.

- Basic responsibilities
 - Leads series meetings and/or cafe style meetings (in person or online)
 - manages an LLL group including keeping a record of helping situations.
 - Keeps up-to-date with breastfeeding information
 - Helps mothers one-to-one, e.g. by phone/email/post/social media
 - Works with Leader Applicants and mothers thinking about LLL leadership
- Optional responsibilities
 - Run antenatal breastfeeding classes
 - Raise funds for the group
 - Talk to school children on child development courses
 - Meet with teenage mothers
 - Attend meetings for breastfeeding support organisations and health professionals to plan joint programmes and events
 - Write articles for LLL publications
 - Help plan and organise LLL workshops, study days and conferences
 - Lead a session at an LLL District/National workshop or National Conference
 - Join a department of LLLGB or LLLI (such as Publication department, Leader Accreditation Department...)
- Communicate regularly with LLL, reporting their activities (stats), signing their Statement of Commitment annually and paying Leader fees.

Leaders are:

- Doing voluntary work (their expenses can be claimed from the group). Guidelines on payment and insurance are available from the Leader Department.
- Covered by a liability insurance
- Required to hold an Enhanced DBS check if in England or Wales

Definition of an active Leader

An active LLL Leader pursues the La Leche League mission through basic Leader responsibilities as defined in the Policies and Standing Rules Notebook and/or other

service to LLL. An active Leader's fees are current, she keeps up to date with Leader education, and she communicates regularly with the organization

What are the requirements to apply?

Requirements to apply for leadership are detailed in [LLL Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership](#)

La Leche League Leaders represent the organisation, La Leche League, a worldwide organisation operating under the same accreditation policy.

Prerequisites consist of:

- Personal Experience
- Organizational Experience
- Personal Skills

Central to LLL is its philosophy and Leaders demonstrate **LLL philosophy** in action. Talking with you about your breastfeeding and mothering experience, your supporting Leader will help you explore the extent to which your experience and ideas are a 'good match' with LLL philosophy.

LLL Concepts

Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.

Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply.

In the early years the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food.

Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.

For the healthy full-term baby breast milk is the only food necessary until baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.

Ideally the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the baby outgrows the need.

Alert, active participation in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.

Breastfeeding is enhanced and the nursing couple sustained by the loving support, help, and companionship of the baby's father. A father's unique relationship with his baby is an important element in the child's development from early infancy.

Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.

From infancy on, children need loving guidance which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.

There may be areas where you disagree or have questions. It is important to discuss these with your supporting Leader beforehand so that together you can work out whether you meet the 'Pre-requisites to applying for leadership' to represent La Leche League. If you do not, there are still ways in which you can help other mothers and stay involved in LLL (see *I don't think LLL leadership is for me, but I still want to help breastfeeding mothers*).

FAQ

How can I fit LLL leadership into my life?

- It is a balancing act! Just as you wondered how you would cope with a baby, and then perhaps a second baby and toddler, you discover how to juggle many different things in your life. If LLL is important to you, it can become one of those balls in the air.
- "Family First" is something we firmly believe in, and we understand how family needs often must take priority. This does not mean that LLL comes last, and we hope that your Leader application will prove to be an important priority for you too.
- LLL does take time: planning meetings, answering queries, getting together with your co-Leaders to plan for and make decisions related to your LLL group, liaising with the Leader Department, attending workshops and conferences. We hope you will find that these activities enrich your life, providing a wonderful network of friends and support for your breastfeeding and parenting choices, both now and as your children grow older.

How can I become an LLL Leader?

As you can read in [LLL Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership, Appendix 18 to LLL Policies and Standing Rules Notebook](#), you will need a recommendation from a LLL Leader, which means you will need to contact her and discuss various aspects of leadership and preparation through a "pre-application dialogue".

If you both decide to take a step forward, you will apply by sending your application and recommendation forms to the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD).

Once your application has been accepted, you will explore different aspects of leadership with your "supporting Leader" (usually your group Leader who has recommended you) and a representative of LAD.

You will be accredited as an LLL Leader after completing accreditation criteria, as described in Appendix 18, which your local Leader will be able to show you.

How long does the preparation to leadership take?

- Many Leader Applicants find that they can complete the required application work in around six months.

- Some applicants may need more – or less – time; it depends on the individual.
- It is not a race – we want you to go at your own pace, but we are also there to help you keep up the momentum and enable you to reach your goal of LLL leadership.
- Each mother’s situation is individual – you may have a very active toddler – or maybe twins! – or you may be expecting another baby. Or there may be other events, such as a house move or illness, that prolong the application period.
- Communicating with your LAD representative is the key to progressing at a pace that suits you, just let her know if you need more time to respond.

What does Leader accreditation involve?

If you decide to apply for leadership and your application is accepted, you will be known as a Leader Applicant and work towards Leader accreditation. Leader Applicants communicate on a regular basis with the Leaders they are working with. We often use the word “dialogue” to refer to these conversations, which can take place by email, telephone, Skype, postal mail or in person. When an application for leadership begins, you will:

- Receive a range of application resources, including a *Leader Applicant Handbook* and sample set of LLLGB information sheets; you will also need to have access to a copy of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* and the *Leader’s Handbook (available online)*.
- Dialogue with a member of the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) about your breastfeeding and mothering experience and reflect on this in relation to LLL philosophy. Your LAD representative (called “CLA”) may ask you to explore some areas more fully. She may share extra reading material with you to enhance your understanding of some aspect/s of the application. She wants to work with you as flexibly as possible, taking account of your preferred learning style. Each Leader application is unique.
- Work with your supporting Leader (usually the group Leader who recommends you and helps you through your application). Together you will discuss aspects of LLL leadership and practise how to help mothers who will contact you for information or support.

What will I do during the application?

To meet LLLI criteria of accreditation described in Appendix 18, you will:

- Dialogue about your personal experience of breastfeeding and mothering.
- Explore your understanding and acceptance of LLL philosophy as expressed in *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*.
- Learn about such topics as breastfeeding management and challenges to breastfeeding.
- Use the *Leader Applicant Handbook* to guide your learning.
- Read a range of books and other publications.
- Practise active listening and counselling skills with your supporting Leader.

- Learn about La Leche League as an organisation at local, national and international levels.
- Learn about leading LLL Series Meetings and about fulfilling other Leader responsibilities.
- We encourage Leader Applicants to attend LLL National Conferences, District/National Workshops and LLL Communication Skills workshops.

What is the cost of the preparation to leadership?

Application fees are £100 which include access to the Leader Applicant Handbook and various resources. You will also need to be an LLL member. After accreditation, you will pay Leader dues instead of LLL membership.

What about if I have only one child?

Every mother in LLL brings her unique experience, her warmth and empathy and other skills to her LLL work, whether she has had one baby or several.

I don't think I have experienced enough breastfeeding situations (eg tandem nursing, caesarean birth, cosleeping, I gave solids too soon as I was advised to...), do I meet the prerequisites?

There may be one or other areas where you feel you do not meet the prerequisites to applying for leadership. You are not alone! Many of us Leaders have had similar concerns. The important thing is to talk over your situation with your group Leader.

If it turns out that you are unable to proceed with an application at this time, do consider some of the suggested options in *"I don't think LLL leadership is for me, but I still want to help breastfeeding mothers"*

What happens if I don't have a group near me?

It is best to make contact with a local LLL group and Leader and discuss your situation with her. However, if this is not an option, it is possible to work through the application as an "isolated Leader Applicant" with only the support of a LAD representative.

If your nearest group is too far away for you to attend meetings regularly, perhaps you can arrange to borrow books from their group library, or at least attend a few meetings so that you know what happens at an LLL meeting.

If there is no local LLL group near you, one way of showing your commitment to LLL is simply by joining the charity. You can also show your commitment in such ways as reading as much LLL material as you can and, if possible, by attending LLL workshops or conferences.

Should you decide to apply, with no LLL group near you, please email lad@laleche.org.uk with subject line 'Isolated member'.

Please tell us what contact you have had with LLL and whether and where you have attended an LLL meeting or talked with a Leader. We will let you know as soon as there is a supporting Leader for you to work with and begin your pre-application dialogue. This can be conducted by phone, email, online communication.

I am still interested, but do not think the time is right for me

You can:

- talk to your local Leader about helping with the group (in person or online).
- still attend District/National Workshops and Communication Skills workshops, which are open to mothers interested in leadership,
- read as many books and LLL publications as you can on the subjects of breastfeeding and parenting. Ask your group Leader to recommend publications, which may be available from your group library or ordered from the LLLGB SHOP www.lllgbbooks.co.uk - this can be very worthwhile preparation before applying for leadership,
- ask your group Leader about Evaluation Meetings. Taking part in these meetings is an excellent way of keeping involved with your group and gaining an insight into the role of an LLL Leader.

I don't think I meet the prerequisites to applying for leadership

- Talk to your group Leader. She will be happy to discuss any questions you might have.
- Might there come a time when you would meet the pre-requisites for applying for leadership? Perhaps you could delay making your application until a later date.

"I feel so disappointed. I really thought LLL leadership would be a way for me to help mothers and 'pay back' all the support I have received."

LLL recognises that women in your position have a great deal to offer other breastfeeding women. We hope you will stay involved with your local LLL group and know that we value the contribution you make.

I don't think LLL leadership is for me, but I still want to help breastfeeding mothers

- You can still be a tremendous support by being active in your LLL group: perhaps you could take on a group job, such as librarian or treasurer.
- Attending LLL Series Meetings and offering your experience is of enormous help to a new mother whether it's in person or online.

- Offer to host a Series Meeting or other meeting.
- Perhaps you could help by publicising your group, distributing meeting notices to clinics and surgeries.
- Helping to raise funds for your group could help provide more LLL information sheets, booklets and books for your group library.
- Some health authorities provide training for breastfeeding peer supporters.
- We would ideally love to help you find a place within LLL for your enthusiasm to help other breastfeeding mothers. You may decide, however, that breastfeeding counselling is what you are drawn to but for one reason or another LLL leadership is not the way to reach your goal. You might find that another breastfeeding support organisation would enable you to do so. Many breastfeeding counsellors with other organisations are members of their local LLL group and work cooperatively with LLL Leaders at both local and national level.
- Perhaps a more academic course appeals to you, leading to a health professional qualification: the IBLCE (International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners) provides training for Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs). For more information about Lactation Consultants in Great Britain (LCGB) contact www.lcgb.org or email info@lcgb.org

Yes, I definitely want to apply! What do I do now??

1. Meet with your group Leader and explore the prerequisites, as described in Appendix 18. She will ask you to describe your breastfeeding and mothering experience. She will also explain in detail what a Leader does, so you are fully aware of what you will be committing to.
 Make sure you discuss any questions you have in detail with the LLL Leader who will be recommending you. The pre-application dialogue is the perfect moment to address them so you can make an informed choice. We want to make sure becoming an LLL Leader is what you are looking for.
 Usually the Leader who recommends you will be the one working with you during your application period and she is referred to as your supporting Leader.
2. Ask your supporting Leader to send you the **Application form** (she can download it from the Leader area on the LLLGB website <https://www.laleche.org.uk/>)
 Complete it as an e-form and send it back to your supporting Leader (or directly to lad@laleche.org.uk)
 Your supporting Leader needs to fill in a **Leader Recommendation form**. She will send it together with your application form to the Leader Accreditation Department of LLLGB (LAD LLLGB).

Sometimes more background information or further pre-application dialogue is needed before your application can be accepted.

3. If your application is accepted, you will receive an email from a LAD member and be invoiced for your application fee (£100, non-refundable).
When this payment is received, the application can begin. The LAD will allocate a LAD representative (called a CLA) to work with you.
4. All La Leche League GB Leaders in England and Wales are required to hold an Enhanced DBS check. If you are already registered with the update service we can access this with your permission instead of carrying out a new check. If you do not already have a check then we will ask you to complete the relevant paperwork part way through your application process.

THANK YOU for taking the time to read this information about LLL leadership. We hope that you now feel positive about whatever choice you make, whether or not LLL leadership is the right direction for you just now.