

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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You asked for the Committee's advice about taking up an appointment with Maternity Action having left Government in May 2015.

Maternity Action

At Maternity Action you would act as Chair, helping the charity to campaign for the rights of pregnant women and new parents. The charity works to influence MPs, Government Ministers and service providers, to improve legislation and services. Your role may include advocacy, media work and attending events where ministers may be present. This is a part-time unpaid appointment, for 24 days per year, which arose after existing trustees of the charity encouraged you to apply.

When considering your application, the Committee took into account that you had some dealings with Maternity Action, when it argued for changes to the law on breastfeeding at work and helped to communicate changes on shared parental leave. The Committee also considered the fact that Maternity Action maintains an active relationship with your former departments. With this in mind, the Committee would like to draw your attention, in particular, to the restriction in the Business Appointments Rules on lobbying and its implications, which are set out in more detail at the end of this letter.

Taking into account all the circumstances, and having sought the opinion of your former departments, the Committee sees no reason why you should not take up the appointment, subject to the following conditions

- you should not draw on privileged information available to you from your time in Government;
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of Maternity Action.

It might be helpful if I add that the Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that former Ministers "should not engage in communication with Government – including Ministers, special advisers and officials – with a view to influencing a Government decision or policy [including applications for awards or grants] in relation to their own interests, or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted".

I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up the commission, or if it is

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announced that you will do so, either by returning the enclosed form or by emailing the office at the above address. We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries, since we do not release information about appointments which have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether you had complied with the Ministerial Code. Similarly, I should be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change your role with Maternity Action as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and include the main details of the application, together with the Advisory Committee's advice, in the regularly updated consolidated list on our website and in the next annual report.

Baroness Browning

Jo Swinson

Members:

Mark Addison CB, Sir Alex Allan KCB, Baroness Browning (Chair),
Lord German OBE, Mary Jo Jacobi, Terence Jagger CBE,
Rt Hon Baroness Liddell of Coatdyke, John Wood