Fiona McLean, a young mother of two from Ayr, had been trying to get home quickly to feed her five-month-old baby girl, Noa, who was beginning to show distress because she was hungry, when her car broke down at a busy roundabout in Ayr town centre.

Fiona says: “I was having a really bad day - my car broke down at the roundabout right outside of Ayr Community Fire Station as I was trying to get home quickly to feed my hungry baby girl, Noa.

“I was stressed about my car breaking down at such a busy roundabout and Noa was crying because she was so hungry. To make it even worse, it was raining, so I had to get somewhere quickly.

“I had remembered hearing a few years ago that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in Ayr had signed up to the ‘Breastfeed happily here’ campaign. I had joked at the time about why anyone would need to use a fire station to feed their baby. I wasn’t sure whether they were still signed up.”

The ‘Breastfeed happily here’ campaign is an NHS initiative, which is promoted by the Breastfeeding Network as a way of ensuring that mums feel welcomed to breastfeed when they are out and about in the community. Businesses who sign up
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for the scheme display their ‘Breastfeed happily here’ sticker to let customers know that they welcome breastfeeding mums. It is a voluntary scheme which does not involve any changes to facilities. All that is needed is a positive attitude towards breastfeeding mums.

Fiona added: “It was honestly the best choice I could possibly have made. The fire officers allowed Noa and me to get settled in a nice quiet room with a cup of tea and biscuits (the special chocolate ones from Station Manager Derek’s desk). They all truly made me feel comfortable so that I could get my little girl fed and happy again.

“The firefighters then closed off the road and pushed my car into their car park, Derek even drove me home.

“Although it might seem like a small act of kindness, it was a huge thing for us and I am very grateful to the crew at Ayr Fire Station.”

The Breastfeeding etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 means that it is illegal to stop a mother feeding her baby breast or formula milk in premises where the public has general access. There are still, however, occasions where breastfeeding mums receive negative reactions.

Ruth Campbell, Consultant Dietitian in Public Health Nutrition explains: “Breastfeeding is the most natural and healthy way to feed a baby. The longer a mum breastfeeds, the more health benefits there are for mother and baby.
“It is important that public organisations, local businesses and members of the public make mums feel comfortable to breastfeed in public and the ‘Breastfeed happily here’ stickers are a great way of doing this.”

Station Manager Derek Davidson, the commander of Ayr Community Fire Station, said: “Helping people is central to everything the fire and rescue service does and providing a mum with a comfortable place to feed her baby really isn’t any trouble.

“Our crews are at the heart of the communities they serve and we were happy to make Fiona feel at home in the station.

“Along with our fellow members of the South Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership we’re fully behind the ‘Breastfeed happily here’ scheme and I would encourage everyone who operates premises to help mums feed their babies in comfort and without feeling embarrassed.

“I know most people won’t be surprised that their firefighters went a little further and also made sure both Fiona and baby Noa got home safely afterwards.”

More than 70 venues across Ayrshire and Arran have now signed up to the scheme - including, all NHS Ayrshire & Arran buildings, Stagecoach bus stations at Ayr and Kilmarnock, all local authority offices, and various local cafes, restaurants, sports centres, libraries, nurseries and opticians – and are proud to display the sticker.
If you would like to find out which venues have signed up to the ‘Breastfeed happily here’ campaign, or you are a business owner who would like to display a sticker, please contact julie.peterkin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk or contact the Breastfeeding Network Facebook page by searching for ‘Breastfeed Happily Here Ayrshire’.

If you are a mother looking for breastfeeding advice and support, you can visit https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk or call National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212.

Ends

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Photograph: 20151014bffs1: left to right: Liam Finnigan, James McHattie, Watch Manager Rodney Anderson, baby Noa McLean with mum Fiona McLean, Chris Jackson and Stephen Nimmo.

Photograph: 20151014bffs5: left to right: Watch Manager Rodney Anderson with little Noa McLean and mum, Fiona McLean.
For further media enquiries about this topic, please contact:

**Notes to editors**

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