



The Breastfeeding Network

All correspondence to:

The Breastfeeding Network
PO Box 11126, Paisley PA2 8YB
Tel: 0844 412 0995
e-mail: admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

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Complaints Policy

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Lead: Sarah Saunby, Operations Manager

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Registered office Alexander Sloan, Chartered Accountants, 38 Cadogan Street, Glasgow, G2 7HF
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The Breastfeeding Network (BfN) Complaints Policy

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The Breastfeeding Network (BfN) Complaints Policy

Part 1: Introduction

The Breastfeeding Network is committed to providing the highest quality help, information and support. This policy aims to ensure that all those who work and volunteer for the Breastfeeding Network (BfN) understand how people using our services can give feedback by giving comments, raising concerns or making a complaint about our services.

Details of how to make a complaint can be found in the BfN Compliments, Comments, Concerns or Complaints leaflet (4C's) leaflet which can be found in the centres where we operate or by contacting one of our members of staff.

A copy of the policy and the 4C's leaflet must be included in the centre / drop-in folder and shown to anyone wishing to raise concerns or complaints about our service.

We will try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible responding in a clear and accessible manner. The policy forms an essential part of BfN's commitment to the protection of the public.

The policy will not apply if there is an allegation of child abuse by a BfN volunteer or member of staff. The matter would in this instance be referred to the BfN Safeguarding Policy.

Complaint or grievance?

The BfN's Grievance Procedure covers any internal concern or grievance about BfN work or relationship with colleagues. The complaints policy is for service users. In the event of it being unclear whether an issue should be considered under the Complaints Policy or the Grievance Procedure the Senior Management Team will take the final decision.

Complaints which will not be accepted

The Breastfeeding Network is not responsible for dealing with complaints against:

- I.) Individuals who are not training or registered with BfN.
- II.) BfN Registered Volunteers and staff who were not working in their BfN role at the time of the complaint.
- III.) Previous BfN Registered Volunteers and staff who were no longer working for BfN at the time of the complaint.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can make a complaint in respect of our service. Individuals can request others to act on their behalf.

Timescale for making a complaint

A complaint must be lodged within one year of the incident. In some instances and at the discretion of the panel this time may be extended if it is deemed both necessary and possible to investigate the complaint after 1 year. For example the cause for

complaint may take some time to become apparent, or the person may be too ill to lodge a complaint at the time.

All records will be kept for a period of two years only. Exceptions will be details of a formal complaint, the formal response, the decision of the panel, any appeal decision and sanction records, which will be kept for five years.

Expenses

The BfN is not responsible for travel or any other expenses incurred by the Complainant or their representative at any stage of the complaint.

Dual accountability

BfN may decide to hear a complaint against a BfN Registered Volunteer or Employee when another organisation is involved in a similar process arising out of the same substantive matters.

Resolution

Before making a complaint, the Complainant is expected to attempt to resolve the issue with the individual or, through their supervisor or nominated supervisor with BfN. The Complainant must demonstrate that all informal channels have been exhausted. If local resolution is impossible or inappropriate, an explanation will be required.

Part 2: Making a complaint

The BfN complaints procedure has three stages:-

- Stage one - Informal Complaints Procedure
- Stage two - Formal Complaints Procedure
- Stage three - Review and Appeals Stage

Stage One - Informal Complaints Procedure

1.1. Oral complaints

Any comments or misgivings voiced will be listened to sympathetically, even if they appear trivial.

1.2. Written complaints (email or letter)

Emails and letters will be dealt with informally in the first instance unless the complainant specifically states that they are making a formal complaint. A written acknowledgement will be sent in the same format as that in which it was sent, within 21 days of receipt.

The matter will be referred to the complaints panel when:-

- The frontline volunteer or staff needs to seek assistance or clarity from the panel.
- The comment or misgiving is considered potentially serious.
- The complainant does not appear to be satisfied with on the spot resolution.

At this stage the complaint is still being dealt with informally.

An anonymised written record may be kept to allow for future development and training of the organisation / individuals.

Stage Two: Formal Complaints Procedure

Formal complaints will be heard by BfN's Compliments, Comments, Concerns or Complaints Panel

The Compliments, Comments, Concerns or Complaints Panel

(hereafter referred to as "the panel" will be made up of members of BfN's senior management team and representatives from Supervision Leadership Group and will not be less than three persons to hear the complaint.

Responding to a formal complaint

Once the Formal Complaints Procedure has commenced the Complainant and BfN Registered Volunteer or Employee will be notified in writing that the Complaint Procedure is being implemented. The BfN Registered Volunteer's Supervisor or Employee's Line Manager will also be informed in writing.

All parties will receive copies of the **Complaints Policy**. The complainant will receive an acknowledgement, within **21 days**.

A full copy of the formal complaint will be submitted to the BfN Registered Volunteer and her Supervisor or Employee and Line Manager, who will have **28 days** to respond to the complaint. Any response to the complaint will be sent via the complaints panel. This may include written evidence and/ or submission of witness statements.

Suspension of duties as a BfN volunteer or employment

At the discretion of the Senior Leadership Team it may be necessary to suspend some or all of the BfN Registered Volunteer's or Employee's work while the complaint is resolved. The BfN Registered Volunteer or Employee complained against will be written to and given details of her suspension.

Suspension is not a disciplinary action and will not be taken as an indication of guilt or to pre-empt the decision of the Panel, but to safeguard the public, the person complained against and/or the BfN.

No liability for any loss suffered, or expenses incurred, will attach to the BfN for the suspension of her practice even where a complaint is not upheld.

The **Complaints Panel** will advise the BfN Registered Volunteer or Employee Complained Against and her Supervisor or Line Manager of any decision made in writing.

The decision of the **Complaints Panel** is final.

Stage 3 - Review and Appeals

Formal appeals procedure

If either party wish to appeal, the complaints panel will nominate a secondary group to meet and reconsider the submission. This group (**The Appeal panel**), will include a BfN Director and where possible a neutral third party.

An appeal will be considered on any of the following grounds:

- I.) The conclusion was incorrect.
- II.) That the sanction is disproportionate to the finding of the Complaints Panel and is unjust in all the circumstances.
- III.) An error was made during the complaints process which may have had a significant effect on the finding and decision of the Complaints Panel.

If there is insufficient evidence to satisfy any of the grounds for appeal, the appellant will be notified in writing by the complaints team. This decision will be final.

Publication

The Breastfeeding Network reserves the right to publish such details of complaints as it considers appropriate.

The termination of membership under the Complaints Procedure may be published in the BfN Newsletter

Any notification that the BfN under these Procedures, is entitled to publish in its newsletter, may, at its discretion, be published elsewhere by the BfN.

Lessons learnt

All complaints will be recorded and monitored to allow lessons to be learned. Where appropriate, changes to procedures or systems will be put in place to minimise the risk of similar complaints occurring. Training needs will also be actioned.

Monitoring Complaints

The Senior Management Team will monitor the number and the type of complaints made against our services across the organisation.

As part of local contracts we maybe required to submit information in relation to complaints. It is important these are monitored and collated. Concerns will also be discussed at formal contract monitoring meetings.

The Senior Management Team and Supervision Leadership Group will monitor the outcome of complaints to see if there has been a positive change to the service. Complaints about the Senior Management Team and Supervision Leadership Group will be monitored and used when reviewing practices, policies and procedures.