



# Whistleblowing Policy

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Board of Directors		February 2024	
Links or overlaps with other strategies/policies:			
Staff Handbook			
Volunteer Handbook			
Grievance and Disciplinary Policy			
Complaints Procedure			
Equality and Diversity policy			

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## Statement

If you are employed by BfN, this policy forms part of your staff handbook, which is part of your conditions of employment and may change from time to time. If you are a volunteer, this policy should be read alongside your volunteer handbook. This policy will be reviewed every 2 years and changes will be made in line with current best practice and legal requirements, and to ensure service needs are met.

## **Policy objective**

To ensure that all those who work and volunteer for The Breastfeeding Network (BfN) are able to raise concerns about safety, misconduct or malpractice in relation to the organisation and its activities.

## **Who is covered by this policy?**

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of The Breastfeeding Network.

## **Background to the policy**

Many of us have concerns at one time or other about what is happening at work or in our volunteering. Often these concerns can easily be resolved. However, when the concern feels serious because it is about a possible danger, professional misconduct or financial malpractice that might affect the mothers, parents, families, colleagues or the BfN itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such an issue and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling that it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, to managers or to the BfN.

You may have said something already but found that you have spoken to the wrong person or nothing has happened and you are not sure what to do next.

The Board of Directors of The Breastfeeding Network is committed to running the organisation in the best way possible and to do so we need your help.

## **Purpose of the policy**

The purpose of this policy is to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it is still a concern.

If something is troubling you which you think we should know about or look into, please use the following procedure. If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please refer to the BfN Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure and the section of the Staff Handbook on Bullying and Harassment. If you are a volunteer and you are concerned about the way you have been treated as a volunteer, please refer to the Complaints process on our [website](#).

## **Our commitment to you**

### **Your safety**

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job, volunteer role or suffering any detriment (such as a reprisal or victimisation).

Provided you are acting honestly; it does not matter if you are mistaken or if there is an innocent explanation for your concerns. So please do not think we will ask you to prove it.

We do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

### **Your confidence**

With these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Please note that if you do not tell us who you are it is likely to be more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or give you feedback. Accordingly, you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

### **How to raise a concern**

If you are unsure about raising a concern at any stage and you are an employee, you can get independent advice from a trade union representative, where relevant. Information and support are also available to staff and volunteers from Protect (see contact details under Independent advice below). There is also information [here](#) about your rights as a Whistleblower. Please remember that you do not need to have firm evidence before raising a concern. However, we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

### **Step one**

If you have a concern about a risk, malpractice or wrong-doing at work or in your volunteering, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your line manager or supervisor.

This may be done verbally or in writing.

## **Step two**

If you feel unable to raise the matter with your line manager or supervisor, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with BfN's HR Manager by email, [HR@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:HR@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk) or by telephone **08444 120 995**.

If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

## **Step three**

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of The Breastfeeding Network on [chairs@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:chairs@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk)

## **How we will handle the matter**

Once you have told us of your concern, we will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them, and what further assistance they may need from you. If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it and provide a timeframe for feedback.

If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing, please let us know. When you raise the concern it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, bullying and harassment, complaints or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy you will help us to achieve this.

## **External contacts**

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you want confidential advice at any stage, you may contact your union (if you are employed by BfN) or the independent whistleblowing charity [\*Protect\*](#) on 020 3117 2520 or via a [web form](#).

Their lawyers can talk you through your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice or wrongdoing at work or relating to your volunteering.

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report a concern to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raised a matter with the appropriate regulator than not at all. Your union or *Protect* will be able to advise you on such an option if you wish.

## **Monitoring oversight**

The BfN Board of Directors is responsible for this policy and will review it every two years. The HR team will monitor the daily operation of the policy and if you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the HR Manager on the telephone number or at the email address given above.