

## Experience to be gained by BfN Breastfeeding Supporters/Helpline Supporters to become full Helpline Supporters/Supporters.

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### Purpose of the probationary period

In order to gain the breadth and depth of experience required to work confidently and safely as a fully-qualified breastfeeding supporter, you are expected to complete a probationary period once you are registered as either a Helpline Supporter or Supporter. Your probationary period is about practising and developing the skills you learnt during the training as well as supporting families with a wider variety of scenarios than we can include in the course. This also helps BfN support more families.

### What experience is required as part of the probationary period?

You are expected to do at least **100 units** of supporting during this time. At least **40** of these units should be National Breastfeeding Helpline units. Half of the helpline units can consist of time on web-chat or social media the rest should be answering calls on the helpline (20 calls). If you are not able to answer calls on the helpline please discuss this with your Supervisor and other ways of gaining relevant experience will be agreed so that you can still become a full Helpline Supporter/Supporter.

### When does the probationary period begin?

You can start your record of experience as soon as you have completed module 1 of the Supporter course or you complete the Mum to Helpline course and you qualify as a Helpline Supporter. **You only need to complete your record of experience once.** This means if you complete module 2 of the Supporter course at a later date you do not need to do another probationary period. If you are doing a full Supporter course you can choose to start your record of experience once you are registered as a Helpline Supporter or wait until the end of the course when you are registered as a Supporter.

### How do I complete my probationary period?

Once you are registered as a Helpline Supporter or Supporter please start using the Record of Experience form to record the experience you are gaining supporting families. You should have been given this form as part of your training course, if not please ask your supervisor for a copy. You should discuss the form and the experience you are gaining on a regular basis with your supervisor to allow for learning and reflection. At the end of your probationary period you will need to arrange a specific supervision session with your supervisor to discuss the experience you have gained and to get your form signed off.

If you completed your training in the past but have not yet started your probationary period please speak to your supervisor about how to complete it. You can use any experience gained since you completed your training even if it was a while ago. If you are using previous experience you do not need to record every date you volunteered. For example, if you completed your training in 2019 you could find out from your Helpline Volunteer Coordinator how many NBH calls/webchat you have done since then and just record them on one line on the form. *E.g. 2019 – 80 calls taken on NBH.* You can also record other volunteering or experience in this way, for example if you know you attended a weekly breastfeeding group or went to antenatal classes you can record the year or month and how many units it covers. *E.g. 2020 – 6 Zoom antenatal classes or June to December 2018 – 7 breastfeeding groups (1 per month)*

### How long will it take?

Most people work through the units needed to become a full Helpline Supporter/Supporter over 6-12 months. Some people who are doing a lot of volunteering or working for BfN may gather the experience a bit quicker and others may take longer. There is no specific time limit to complete it in but your Supervisor will discuss how things are going with recording your experience around the time you submit your annual return each year. We would anticipate that everyone would be able to complete their probationary period within three years of qualifying as a Helpline Supporter/ or Supporter.

### How is a unit of supporting measured?

**A unit of BfN Supporting is:**

- Answering 1 call or webchat on NBH
- Replying to 1 message thread offering support to a mum or other 'caller' on the NBH, DIBM or BfN facebook pages. This might involve multiple replies to one person.
- Replying to one message thread offering breastfeeding support to parents on local facebook pages. These should be messages offering support not sharing information about local groups/sharing Zoom links etc
- Answer 1 email offering breastfeeding support to a mum via local services email addresses. This should be an email offering support not sharing information about local groups etc.
- Offering support to a mum/family via video call or phone call to offer support (not your own friends and family)
- Visiting new parents at home (excluding friends and family).
- Running or helping to run a breastfeeding drop-in centre or BfN Walking group (approx. 1-2 hours plus preparation and tidying away). This can be online or face to face
- Giving information and/or support to mums at a Child Health Clinic, postnatal or antenatal clinic (approx. 1-2 hours plus preparation and tidying away).
- Supporting mothers in hospital postnatal, neonatal or antenatal wards (excluding friends and family) (approx. 1 hour).
- Teaching an antenatal class about breastfeeding.

- Doing 1 Facebook live or other online activity talking to parents or others about infant feeding e.g. webinars, via Instagram etc
- Giving a talk about breastfeeding (online or face to face) such as delivering the First Milk Matters training or another awareness/information type session. For example, to school/nursery staff, health care professionals, local community groups etc.
- Attending a meeting as a BfN Supporter (e.g. MVP, health trust, Children's Centre, planning meeting).
- Half a day helping to organize a BfN study day or event, setting up a new breastfeeding centre, promoting a local breastfeeding welcome/friendly scheme etc.
- Delivering one of the school lesson plans to children or young people in a school or nursery
- Half a day developing new BfN resources (in discussion with the central team) e.g. leaflets, information for website or helping translate materials into different languages
- Other activities as agreed between you and your Supervisor