



Social Media Policy

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Related Policies
IT Policy
Information Governance Policy
Complaints Policy
BfN Code of Conduct
Safeguarding Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide information for BfN staff and volunteers about the use of social media and how to combine this with their BfN role. It covers some common situations that may arise when using social media either in a personal or BfN capacity, BUT it cannot cover every situation that may arise.

If you are in any doubt about how to proceed in a situation please contact your line manager or supervisor or the Social Media Officer or Online Support Officer who are the BfN leads for this policy.

We encourage you to refer to this policy regularly, and to provide feedback to the Social Media Officer or Online Support Officer if anything is found to be missing or needs updating.

What this policy covers:

- Current situation
- Code of Conduct
- Personal social media activity for BfN volunteers and staff
- Activity carried out in the name of BfN
- Activity carried out as official BfN output (either national or local)
- Formal supporting on BfN and NBH Pages
- Keeping safe
- Dealing with controversy on social media
- Membership of internal BfN Social Media Groups
- Allowing others to offer support
- Complaints
- Emergency Contacts

Current Situation

For the purposes of this policy 'social media' covers Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, any online forums e.g. Mumsnet, and any other online activity where BfN staff or volunteers may be active, e.g. blogging, Whatsapp, TikTok, SnapChat etc.

BfN supports volunteers to offer social and emotional support and signposting to other information or sources of support via social media e.g. helplines and breastfeeding centres.

BfN is currently offering support via Facebook message on its main BfN site www.facebook.com/thebreastfeedingnetworkuk, on the DIBM page www.facebook.com/BfNDrugsinBreastmilkinformation and on the National Breastfeeding Helpline page www.facebook.com/nationalbreastfeedinghelpline. We also offer support on the BfN and NBH Instagram pages via direct message. These pages are staffed by teams of trained BfN volunteers (and in the case of the NBH pages, ABM volunteers too), and no one individual is responsible for providing support. We do not offer breastfeeding support to individuals on the public areas of any national BfN or NBH social media site – instead asking people to contact us via message if they need support.

Other than via our official channels listed above, BfN currently recommends that individual volunteers do not offer in depth breastfeeding support via social media because of the difficulty of getting an accurate picture of the situation, and the risk of information given not being appropriate. Depth of support offered by volunteers should be determined by their training, skills, knowledge and experience of supporting, and all volunteers should operate within the boundaries of BfN training.

If you choose to give breastfeeding support via social media that are not BfN or NBH, you must **not** include your BfN qualification or suggest that the support is from BfN. This position will be frequently reviewed.

Code of Conduct

While representing BfN, you must be especially careful about posting comments or becoming involved in sites that have strong commercial links. Think what could be advertised alongside your comments and make sure you are not seen to promote any specific product. If in doubt check your code of conduct and guidance documents. The same rules apply on social media as in face to face or telephone support.

While representing BfN, you should never link to websites whose sole purpose is to profit from infant feeding (e.g. sites run or owned by formula companies or pump manufacturers), however on occasion you may wish to link to a site which may incidentally carry some non-code compliant advertising (e.g. an article on a parenting website). In this case, you should add the following disclaimer to the end of the post: (*'BfN is not responsible for any advertising or other marketing content which may appear on external sites. We do not promote or profit from brands which are non-compliant with the WHO Code, and our intention is never to direct traffic towards such brands'*.)

If there is a concern that a volunteer or staff member has broken the Code of Conduct or brought the BfN into disrepute by something they have said on social media then the normal complaints or disciplinary policies would be followed. These policies can be found on the website: www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance

The most important thing to remember is if you wouldn't say it to a parent you are supporting, at a group, in a training session, at work to a colleague or to one of our funders, don't say it online! Keep it friendly and positive and remember the BfN Code of Conduct at all times.

There are four areas of social media activity covered in this policy:

1. Your own personal activity, done for your friends and contacts, but not under or in the name of BfN (e.g. your own Facebook/Twitter profile/Mumsnet profile, your own blog etc)
2. Activity carried out officially in the name of BfN (e.g. posting information or support 'as a BfN member of staff/volunteer' on Facebook/Twitter/Mumsnet etc)
3. Activity of staff members or volunteers carried out as part of official BfN output (e.g. posting actually on a BfN/NBH Facebook (either national or local) page, writing a blog for BfN)
4. Formal volunteering on social media – supporting via messenger on a BfN or NBH social media page.

1. Personal Activity

Remember that even though you are acting in your own personal capacity, you are on show to your friends and anyone else who sees what you write (potentially the world!), as a representative of BfN. This means behaving sensibly and remembering what seems funny to you will not always be appreciated by others. If you are representing BfN and say something which causes offence or upset, this would come under our official complaints policy.

- It's fine to say that you work or volunteer for BfN, and you can discuss BfN publicly (although of course, staying within BfN confidentiality boundaries around your work with families and children). But your name/title/handle should not contain BfN in any form – for example @BfNVolunteerClaire would not be allowed. If you mention BfN in your profile, you should make clear that the views expressed are personal, and not those of BfN.
- Don't be seduced by the informality of social media - Think how what you say might reflect on BfN, don't criticise other volunteers or colleagues e.g. NHS or children's centre staff. Don't reveal confidential or sensitive information especially when it could identify a parent or child.
- Staff and volunteers must not post or endorse views which are contrary to the position of BfN. For example, we encourage everyone to be vaccinated against coronavirus so staff and volunteers must not contradict that position on social media.
- You should think carefully about accepting friend requests from families you are supporting through BfN. It is OK to turn down a friend request to help keep your work and personal life separate. Volunteers should feel under no obligation to offer support to families in a personal capacity, and doing so is discouraged by BfN. We would instead encourage volunteers to signpost families to official channels of support instead.'

2. Activity carried out in the name of BfN

- This can be a good thing to do, especially if we want to reach more people with the BfN name and what we do. Feel free to post wherever you feel is suitable to reach more families, but be wary of getting involved in any breast vs formula debates, and think about who advertises on sites you're using and what messages may appear next to your posts. Always think about the BfN Code of Conduct and abiding by the WHO code. If in doubt, ask someone else or do not comment.
- Ideally discuss where you might be posting and what sort of topics you might be commenting on with your line manager or Supervisor, who ideally needs to know in advance of anything you are proposing to do.
- Remember that the internet is a public domain. Even private groups, message areas and forums can have screen shots taken and these can be used out of context or shared elsewhere on the internet. Screen shots of comments could also be used to show BfN in a negative light online or in the press or used in complaints against your personally or against the BfN as an organisation.
- Keep in mind the importance of offering evidence-based information, not advice, and to be sensitive and acknowledge other viewpoints in all interactions. Avoid sharing personal experiences in the same way you would in your role as a volunteer.
- Be conscious at all times of your boundaries and remember these apply on social media as in other types of support. Keep in mind the usefulness of signposting to evidence-based sources of information and face to face support such as the helplines or breastfeeding groups where that may be useful. Sometimes sharing a link to a reputable source of information is the best option. As with any support situation keep in mind the need not to give medical information but to signpost to other sources of medical advice as appropriate e.g. GP/Midwife.
- Advertising – if your project is considering using paid for social media advertising, please contact the BfN Marketing Officer (Leanne Rayner) for support and more information.

The following statement should be used by BfN groups in the 'about' section on their social media pages wherever possible:

Any opinions given in this group are made by individuals and are not necessarily those held by the BfN. Any information given in response to a query will be most relevant to that query and that individual alone and will be based on evidence that is up to date at the time of posting. The information provided is provided as a guideline only. No responsibility can be taken by the author or the Breastfeeding Network for the way in which the information is used.

3. Activity carried out as official BfN output (either national or local)

- The golden rule is that whatever is published – on Twitter, Facebook or anywhere else – must wherever possible have a second pair of eyes from BfN prior to publication. A second check might well avoid you saying or linking to something which could be against our Code of Conduct.
- Think about practicalities, if you start a new social media account, who is going to do it, how much time will it take? Who will be the author, who is the second pair of eyes? Can this be fitted into your schedules? Can you do it justice? Will you still want to be doing it in two months' time? Are you doing it just for the sake of it or do you think it will actually help you achieve your aims?

- Log in names and passwords for all social media accounts and any other service that you set up to automate the activity (e.g. forwards from Twitter to Facebook) should be stored securely (see [IT Policy](#)). Passwords should be strong and unique (ideally following guidance such as the [National Cyber Security Centre's three random words](#)). The details should also be shared with members of your team or the central BfN team. All members of the team should be aware of how to store passwords safely and should also be aware of how everything works: if you move to do a different job or are off sick, someone else will have to take over. Make sure you always have at least two people with full admin rights for each account in case someone leaves.
- BfN central team should have a full list of all BfN official social media accounts (ideally with all log in details etc). Please inform BfN head office when a new profile is set up. The BfN website should link to local BfN social media accounts as far as possible. If you are updating BfN social media accounts on a mobile device where you also have personal accounts, be very careful about switching between accounts, and with others accessing the device (see [IT Policy](#)). In particular there should be a process in place to log into the social media platform, log out all devices, and reset the password in the event that any individual loses a device that is used to run a BfN-related social media account.
- Before you set up a new BfN social media account please refer to the social media guidelines on Sharepoint to get some useful hints and tips about how to get the most out of social media. You should also familiarise yourself and any other team members who will be posting, with BfN's positional statements (contact the BfN Comms team for details of these) to ensure you are sticking to our organisational positions.

4. Formal supporting on BfN and NBH Pages

- Volunteers offering support via messenger on any national BfN or NBH site should complete the social media support training. There is separate, specific training for volunteers offering support on the BfN DIBM pages. All volunteers on all these pages should adhere to the [guidance](#) provided by the Online Support Officer.
- As a UK registered charity with volunteers trained and insured to support families in the UK only we are unable to support individuals outside of the UK. We aim to minimise the number of enquiries we receive from outside the UK and will signpost any non UK enquiries to local support.
- Safeguarding concerns - If you have safeguarding concerns about someone contacting us via social media, please follow our standard [BfN safeguarding procedures](#).

Keeping safe

The usual common sense rules apply to keeping safe online – use a strong, unique password for each different account, ([see IT Policy](#)) have personal rather than shared accounts and be very careful about switching between accounts, don't reveal any personal details such as full name, address, date of birth. Never talk about specific parents or children you have worked with or give any information which could identify them.

If you are a BfN employee, it is OK to share your work email address or work place address if necessary (although still best to give it via private message wherever possible).

Dealing with controversy online

Breastfeeding is an issue which can stir up passionate responses, take care not to get drawn into any online arguments, and be careful not to share or link to any posts which may appear judgemental. Remember we want BfN to be recognised as a place mums feel comfortable approaching for support and information, whatever their infant feeding choices.

- Make sure you have read and familiarised yourself with BfN's positional statements [link] on a range of potentially contentious issues that you may encounter online.
- When speaking about individuals or families, take care not to generalise or homogenise them – experiences are not universal and we cannot (and should not) assume that all breastfeeding families are the same, or that they will all think, act or feel the same way.
- If a controversial exchange or debate is taking place on your page (or if you are tagged for comment on another feed), consider the following:
 - Remain as polite and neutral as possible, and take care not to be drawn into an argument.
 - If you are not sure what to do for the best, contact your line manager or supervisor, or the Social Media Officer, for guidance.
 - You may moderate or delete comments which are abusive or which link to non-evidence based sources. You may wish to block users who repeatedly post such comments.
 - Post a link to the appropriate positional statement, to show BfN's standpoint on the subject.
 - If you are aware that information shared is inaccurate or non-evidence based, share a link to the correct information from a reputable source. Please note this should not be done in a way which is judgmental of others' opinions or feeding choices, but instead should just gently correct any factual inaccuracies.
 - If breastfeeding women or families are being homogenised or generalised, you may wish to point out the diversity of experiences and opinions and that no two breastfeeding families are the same.
 - Sometimes we find ourselves in a stalemate, where it appears there will be no particular end to the debate. In this case it's fine to withdraw from commenting further – just post a link to our positional statement, where appropriate, and leave it at that.
 - If needed, follow the platform's own procedures for reporting abusive or offensive behaviour.
- If you have any concerns about conversations on social media relating to BfN or breastfeeding and involving yourself or other BfN staff/volunteers please get in touch with your line manager or supervisor. If you have posted something you now regret speak to your supervisor or line manager.

Allowing others to offer support

- One of the major benefits of social media is that parents (and families) are able to access support from each other at all times of day and night. Just like in a face to face group support situation, a BfN volunteer doesn't always need to be involved in every conversation.
- It can be useful to signpost to evidence based information to support any comments you make on social media and to also remember the value of signposting families to face to face support at groups and telephone support via the National Breastfeeding Helpline.

Membership of internal BfN Social Media Groups

BfN have a number of official closed or private groups on Facebook specifically for members and volunteers – for example www.facebook.com/groups/5107743142/ (BfN group) and

www.facebook.com/groups/1072152699463731/ (NBH volunteers group). There are also groups for tutors and supervisors and volunteers in specific areas.

- There is no obligation for any general BfN volunteers or staff to join any groups on social media and there should be no expectation of this. The *only* exception to this is for volunteers specifically offering support via social media on the national BfN, NBH or BfN DIBM pages, for which there are social media groups that they do need to be part of.
- Important communications to members and staff must be made available in a variety of formats, for example by email and e-newsletter and not only via social media.
- We recognise that these groups provide a good platform for volunteers to support each other and this is to be encouraged, however in the interest of confidentiality, no identifiable information about individuals or specific support situations should be discussed in these groups.
- Also in the interests of confidentiality, Individuals who are no longer members of BfN should remove themselves from any of these groups, or will be removed periodically by admins.

Complaints

The Breastfeeding Network is committed to providing the highest quality information and support. However, if we fall short of this standard then we welcome feedback, comments, details of the concern of complaint by emailing 4cs@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk. You can read more about this in our [BfN Complaints Policy](#). Unfortunately we are unable to respond to complaints on social media because of confidentiality and capacity. However, we will acknowledge all complaints as quickly as we can and ensure that they can be signposted on so we can work to resolve them.

Emergency contact:

If there is an issue relating to social media that requires urgent action please contact the Central Support team on **08444 120 995** or centralsupport@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk or send a direct message on twitter to [@BfN_UK](#) and/or [@nbhelpline](#) or either of the BfN or NBH Facebook pages.