



## Social Media Policy

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The purpose of this policy is to provide information for BfN staff and volunteers about 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 Felicity Lambert or Alyson Spicer who are the BfN leads for this policy.

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

Firstly – don't be scared to use social media – it is an important tool for us in reaching more mums and their families, and we shouldn't ignore it – trends may change in which site is most popular but as a whole social media is not going away, so we need to embrace it and make it work for us!

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](https://www.facebook.com/thebreastfeedingnetworkuk), on the DIBM page [www.facebook.com/BfNDrugsinBreastmilkinformation](https://www.facebook.com/BfNDrugsinBreastmilkinformation) and on the National Breastfeeding Helpline page [www.facebook.com/nationalbreastfeedinghelpline](https://www.facebook.com/nationalbreastfeedinghelpline)

We also offer support on the BfN and NBH Instagram pages via DM.

These pages are staffed by teams of BfN volunteers, and no one individual is responsible for providing support.

We do not offer breastfeeding support to individuals on the public areas of any BfN or NBH social media site – instead asking people to contact us via message if they need support.

BfN currently recommends that individual volunteers do not offer in depth breastfeeding support publicly 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 mothers, and all volunteers should operate within the boundaries of BfN training. If you choose to give breastfeeding support publicly via social media and not on a BfN branded page or group, you must not include your BfN qualification or suggest that the support is from BfN. This position will be frequently reviewed and our policy position will develop as we learn from running trials of offering online support.

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.

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](https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance)

The following statement should be used by BfN groups on 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 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.**

**The most important thing to remember is if you wouldn't say it to a mum 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 three 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)

### **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.
- 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 mums and children). But your name/title 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 criticize 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 mother or child.
- You might want to 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.

### **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 mums, 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 you 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.

### **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. The details should also be shared with members of your team or the central BfN team. There is a document on Sharepoint which details all the current BfN pages and admins (contact central support for details of how to find this). 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.
- Before you set up a new BfN social media account please get in touch with either BfN's PR & Comms Officer or Social Media Officer to get some useful hints and tips about how to get the most out of social media.

#### **Keeping safe**

- The usual common sense rules apply to keeping safe online – use a strong, unique password for each different account, 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. Think carefully about whether you want to share your own children's names. Never talk about specific mums 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).
- 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 recognized as a place mums feel comfortable approaching for support and information, whatever their infant feeding choices.
- 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.

### **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 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/5107743142/> (BfN group) and <https://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 BfN volunteers or staff to join any groups on social media and there should be no expectation of this.
- Important communications to members and staff should 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**

- We are currently unable to accept ANY complaints via social media as confidentiality may be compromised. All complaints should be made using one of the methods outlined in the BfN Complaints Policy (<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/compliments-comments-concerns-or-complaints/>)
- If someone does contact us via social media to make a complaint, the response should be to acknowledge receipt of the message, signpost the Complainant to the BfN complaints policy and ask them to use one of the methods outlined in the policy to report the complaint so that the agreed process can be followed.

- Any complaints relating to social media activity should also be made in one of the ways outlined in the complaints policy, and not directly on social media.

### **Allowing others to offer support**

- One of the major benefits of social media is that mums (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.

### **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](mailto:centralsupport@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk) or Felicity Lambert on 07979 872301 or send a direct message on twitter to @BfN\_UK and/or @nbhelpline or either of the BfN or NBH Facebook pages.