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## CODE OF CONDUCT – April 2014

### PURPOSE

This document sets out the standard of conduct expected of Breastfeeding Network (BfN) Registered Breastfeeding Helpers, Supporters, Supervisors, Tutors and Trainers (collectively referred to from this point onwards as BfN Registered Volunteers).

### OUR VALUES

**BfN aims to be an independent source of support and information for breastfeeding women and others. This means all help and support offered by BfN volunteers and employees is offered free from commercial interests and free of charge to parents.**

This approach helps us to be:

- accessible when and where families need help
- inclusive of women who face barriers to breastfeeding

As well as being independent we have to be **seen to be independent**, and avoid any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest.

Our independence is so important to us that it is included in our constitution<sup>1</sup>. This means BfN must not benefit in any way from any links with companies involved in making or selling of infant formula, and any other breast milk substitute and products used when feeding babies such as feeding bottles, teats or dummies.

BfN as an organisation, does not enter into any financial agreement with companies which make, sell, or hire products used in feeding or soothing babies, for example:

- food or drinks marketed as suitable for children under the age of 3
- breast pumps
- sterilisers
- feeding bras, and special breastfeeding clothing
- medications and other remedies commonly used by babies or new mothers (e.g. 'colic' or teething remedies)
- nipple creams, breast shells, nipple shields, breast pads, breast soothers
- breast milk storage containers

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<sup>1</sup> BfN's constitution is called the Memorandum and Articles of Association. It includes a clause preventing us from entering into any financial relationship with any company which manufactures or distributes breast milk substitutes, teats or bottles.

To find your nearest Breastfeeding Supporter call the **National Breastfeeding Helpline 0300 100 0212**

*Calls provided by BT will be charged at 5 pence per minute. A call set-up fee of 3 pence per call applies to calls from BT residential lines. Mobile and other providers' charges may vary.*

- pillows, slings, feeding chairs
- items intended to soothe colicky or sleepless babies

Some of these products may be of great help to individual women in establishing or sustaining breastfeeding and individual BfN Registered Volunteers may well own such products for their personal use. However we feel we can best offer independent support and information to women and families if BfN as an organisation is not affiliated or thought to be affiliated with such products.

## **STANDARD OF CONDUCT**

As a BfN Registered Volunteer you are responsible for your practice.

Your role is to:

- encourage and support mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies
- create in parents an interest in breastfeeding
- respect and uphold the right of women to decide how to feed their babies

This means that you are answerable for your actions and omissions, regardless of advice or directions from anyone else. Your volunteering is valued and you are not expected to take on anything unless you feel you can cope with it and do it well. You should promote and protect this Code of Conduct.

**The families we support must be able to trust you. To justify that trust you must:**

- be open and honest and act with integrity
- be caring and supportive when working with parents
- protect confidential information
- co-operate with others in a spirit of mutual respect
- maintain personal and professional boundaries
- be responsible for maintaining your knowledge and competence
- be accountable for your practice

**These are the shared values of all BfN Registered Volunteers.**

You must also keep your registration up-to-date and wear your badge at all times when supporting mothers or when representing BfN.

## **BE OPEN AND HONEST AND ACT WITH INTEGRITY**

- you must behave in a way that upholds the reputation of the BfN.
- you must offer all support and information free of charge to parents.
- you must avoid conflicts of interest.
- you must not use your position as a BfN Registered Volunteer to reach families for your own personal gain or advantage.
- your BfN role must not be used for the promotion of party political, religious, sectarian or racial views.
- you must work within BfN's Equality and Diversity Policy to ensure that BfN's services and resources are available to all and that no service user, trainee, volunteer, job applicant or staff member will be discriminated against on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership,

pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or unrelated criminal activity or convictions.

## **BE CARING AND SUPPORTIVE WHEN WORKING WITH PARENTS**

- you should aim to increase a mother's own confidence in her own mothering abilities, and to enable her to make her own decisions.
- you should offer a personal and friendly approach.
- you should offer information and practical suggestions to enable the mother to make informed decisions.
- you should avoid being directive in your approach.
- a 'hands off' approach should be maintained. If the need arises and a mother specifically requests it then you may put your hands over the mother's hands to help guide the mother in positioning her baby.
- if a mother is unable to lift her baby herself, with her permission, you can lift her baby and give it to her.
- you should respect and support women however they decide to feed their babies.
- you should respect a mother's views about any aspect of parenting, however they differ from your own.

## **PROTECTING CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

- BfN offers a confidential service so you must respect and protect information a mother shares with you. To understand your responsibilities in maintaining a confidential service you should complete the Information Governance training as part of your volunteer induction and annual updates. Contact your supervisor or volunteer coordinator if you require help arranging this and to confirm it has been completed.
- a mother's permission must be sought before information about her is shared with others providing care for her. However, in exceptional circumstances, where you feel that a mother's or baby's health is at serious risk, it may be necessary for you to inform health professionals without the mother's consent or knowledge. Except in an extreme emergency this must first be discussed with your Supervisor, Tutor or Volunteer Coordinator before any action is taken.
- you must maintain confidentiality in any written records you may have. Keep them safely in a secure place, and destroy them in accordance with the Information Governance Policy when the immediate need for the record is complete.
- BfN registered volunteers should not keep records which include mothers' or their baby's identifiable details electronically, for example on a computer, lap-top or mobile electronic media including mobile phone.
- if you are employed by BfN your Line Manager will ensure that you understand how to protect the confidentiality of mothers you support in your role as an employee of BfN.
- if you are a BfN tutor, registration information containing identifiable information of individual trainees should be emailed securely using password protected spreadsheets.
- during supervision, volunteers may share information on mothers and others they have supported without disclosing unnecessary personal details or identifiable

information. This is necessary in order to maintain the safety and competence to practice of BfN volunteers.

- where there is an issue of child protection, or you are supporting a vulnerable adult you must act at all times in accordance with the BfN Safeguarding Policy.

## **CO-OPERATE WITH OTHERS IN A SPIRIT OF MUTUAL RESPECT**

- you are expected to maintain friendly relationships and work co-operatively with others within BfN, with other organisations and health professionals.
- you must treat others fairly and without discrimination.
- you must not undermine a mother's confidence in her health professional and should encourage mothers to maintain good and open relationships with them.
- if local hospitals or health professionals have an unhelpful policy, you should try to work towards initiating change. Tact and understanding are far more likely eventually to achieve the desired attitudes and conditions than a negative or critical approach.
- responsibility for the health of the mother and baby remains with the mother and her healthcare professionals. Although you can provide information which enables a mother to reach her own decisions about breastfeeding, you cannot put yourself in a position in which you make decisions for her, or are perceived to do so, by the mother or healthcare professionals.
- if someone provides feedback about you, compliments or complaints, please let your Supervisor know. If it is a complaint she will follow the BfN Complaints Policy.
- you are expected to maintain friendly relationships and work cooperatively with others within BfN. This includes in person, in groups, when communicating electronically including using social media. If a difficulty is unresolved then you may need to refer to the BfN Grievance Procedure

## **MAINTAINING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES**

- if you are a Registered Helper; you must signpost any mother with breastfeeding problems, other than positioning and attachment (e.g. mastitis, thrush, slow/no weight gain), to a BfN Registered Breastfeeding Supporter or to a health professional (ideally one who specialises in breastfeeding support). Your supervisor will inform you who your contacts will be in your local area.
- you must not give medical advice or any drug recommendations. You may give clearly labelled evidence-based information (including information written by Wendy Jones and published by BfN about drugs in breastmilk) so the mother knows where it comes from and who published it.
- if you find it difficult to help a particular mother (it can be hard to support close friends and relatives in your BfN role), you can arrange for her to be contacted by another BfN Registered Volunteer.
- you must not recommend any goods or services to those you support. You may give information about relevant services which are available free of charge. You may discuss relevant products (eg. bras, pumps, creams, formula etc), but you must not recommend any particular brand, model or supplier of such products.
- when appropriate, you may signpost mothers to independent evidence-based information, this may include NHS information, for example the Department of Health's Bottle feeding leaflet.

## **GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- you must maintain and update your knowledge, skills and understanding .
- when representing BfN you must state clearly that your opinions are not necessarily the opinions of BfN. You must ensure that you express views consistent with those of the Breastfeeding Network. You must not speak on behalf of BfN as an organisation, for example to the media, without the prior agreement of the Operations Manager.
- you should remember that, because of the vulnerability of babies and new parents, you must maintain reasonable standards of personal hygiene, complete the hand hygiene training as part of your volunteer induction, and annual updates.

## **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- BfN's Funding and Commissioning Coordinator must be involved at an early stage if you are seeking funding. Please ensure you comply with the BfN funding guidelines.

### **All money raised in the name of BfN must be paid into BfN's bank account.**

- If you obtain funding for your BfN work then it is essential that this is invoiced through BfN. Contact the Funding and Commissioning Coordinator for help with clarifying costs, including on-costs or administration charges.
- all expense claims should be submitted as soon as possible, and always within 3 months of the date the cost was incurred.

## **MAINTAINING EFFECTIVENESS**

- From time to time it may be necessary for you to take a break from your work, for example because of personal circumstances, illness or bereavement. Discuss this with your Supervisor who will help you decide what to do next. See the sheet on Guidelines for Sabbaticals.

## **REGISTERING AS A BfN REGISTERED BREASTFEEDING HELPER**

BfN Registered Breastfeeding Helpers must be registered every 6 months in order to be covered by Breastfeeding Network insurance and to benefit from ongoing networking, support and training offered by the Breastfeeding Network.

**In order to register every 6 months, as a Breastfeeding Helper you must maintain your knowledge and competence by:**

- 1) Promoting the aims of BfN by providing breastfeeding information and support to mothers.
- 2) Abiding by BfN's Code of Conduct and all policies.
- 3) Attending volunteer induction sessions and development updates as described in your Supervision Passport.
- 4) Attending monthly supervision sessions with your supervisor, a minimum of **4** in 6 months is required.

If you undergo further training you can become a BfN Registered Breastfeeding Supporter.

## **REGISTERING AS A BfN REGISTERED BREASTFEEDING SUPPORTER**

BfN Registered Breastfeeding Supporters must be registered every 12 months.

**In order to register every 12 months, as a Breastfeeding Supporter you must maintain your knowledge and competence by:**

- 1) Abiding by points 1 – 3 described above for Helpers

**And**

- 2) Receiving regular supervision from a named Supervisor, either in person or by telephone. This must take place a minimum of every **2 months** and on request from the BfN Directors.
- 3) Maintaining your knowledge and competence by gaining evidence of ongoing learning. This could be through attending a minimum of two study days each year or alternatives as explained in the Study days and ongoing learning requirements sheet. This should be discussed with your Supervisor.
- 4) Completing an annual return form and returning it to the appropriate nominated person. You are expected to take responsibility for your own record keeping.
- 5) Meeting regularly with other Breastfeeding Network volunteers for mutual support. Where this is not possible due to distance or other constraints, regular telephone and/ or email contact must be maintained.
- 6) To complete your probationary period as a Breastfeeding Supporter you will need to carry out a minimum amount of voluntary work supporting mothers. Please see sheet explaining Experience to be gained by Breastfeeding Supporters in the probationary period and record your voluntary work in the Experience Log. At the end of your probationary period you will have a final assessment.

**For all BfN Registered Volunteers**

It is your responsibility to ensure you have sufficient Supervision, and you are expected to seek extra Supervision as appropriate. If you know in advance that you will be unable to attend a Supervision session then it may be possible to arrange an alternative session with your Supervisor. If your named Supervisor is not available then you need to contact another Supervisor for Supervision. See sheet explaining Supervision requirements within the Breastfeeding Network.

**See website [www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance) for all policies**

For further clarification please contact the Operations Administrator at [admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk).

*BfN Helpers or Supporters registered before 1st June 2012 who were already working in roles related to breastfeeding for which they receive payments directly from families, or indirectly via another organisation which charges parents, may continue their registration with BfN, subject to satisfying all other requirements. However they must make sure that they do not advertise their services publicly and wherever possible avoid operating within the same area in which they are volunteering. They must refer to the document Guidelines for existing Registered Helpers and Supporters receiving direct payments from parents for work related to breastfeeding (Grandmother clause) for detailed guidance on separating their roles. They are not eligible to take part in further training within BfN.*

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