

The Summer edition of BfN News

BfN News

Mums Supporting Mums

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

New BfN Website

**Happy Birthday BfN
Southampton & Stoke**

Thank You Volunteers

**JUNE 2023
SUMMER
ISSUE 88**

**the
breastfeeding
network**

EDITOR'S NOTE

JUNE 2023
SUMMER
ISSUE 88

Welcome to the Summer 2023 edition of BfN News.

Summer is here and the BfN have been busy bees! June is always a busy month with Scottish Breastfeeding Week, Volunteers' Week and busy schedules at local groups. It has been lovely to see some of the events that have been going on so far this summer on social media - I continue to be blown away by the enthusiasm, dedication and creativity of our staff and volunteers!

We have another jam-packed issue for you with lots of news from across the BfN. We say thank you to our volunteers, hear about the launch of our new website, celebrate some big milestones for some of our local groups, highlight the success of social media as a tool to provide NBH services and much more.

I hope you enjoy this issue and would love your feedback. If you have any comments or questions, please do get in touch and have a lovely summer!

claire.dorby@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk



Claire Dorby



CEO UPDATE

Wow. Just wow! The stories in this newsletter really highlight the force of nature that is the BfN and make for some very uplifting reading!

As we prepare to report on all that you - the volunteers, staff and supporters - have made possible this year, we've been gathering important figures that showcase the scale of and difference made by the BfN's work. One that really stood out for me was that in the year to April, volunteers have donated an amazing 33,000 hours of their time to support women and families through the BfN! This is all the more amazing because, as is highlighted in The National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) recent report, Time Well Spent and Volunteering Scotland's quarterly bulletins, across the UK there is a significant reduction in volunteering since before the pandemic.

It's not difficult to see why the BfN attracts so many outstanding and loyal volunteers. According to volunteers at NCVO, what members interviewed for Time Well Spent valued most about volunteering was the enjoyment of volunteering, making a difference and a sense of personal achievement.

Laughter, learning and cake in Derbyshire; the inspirational service user feedback we have received (featured on page 10); the opportunity to become a Director and part of our volunteer leadership; the endorsement of additional funding in Stoke and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; the superlative appreciation of service user families in Southampton, and the line-up of super star newly-qualified volunteers...all these stories and articles spell out the fun, phenomenal impact, friendship and the opportunity to grow at the BfN. Thank you so much to every one of you and thank you to BfN staff who - whatever their role in the BfN - scaffold the exceptional service that BfN volunteers provide.

The challenge for the BfN in the coming years is to welcome and support the mums who, according to Time Well Spent, don't currently feel they have the circumstances or time to volunteer, or who are under-represented in volunteering opportunities, to be part of this exceptional community.

This Volunteers Week, I raise a cuppa/mouthful of cake to each one of our fab volunteers. Thank you so much!

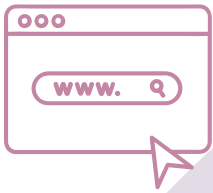
Catherine



Catherine Hine, CEO

**Read about our
incredible volunteers
throughout this
edition!**





Website Update

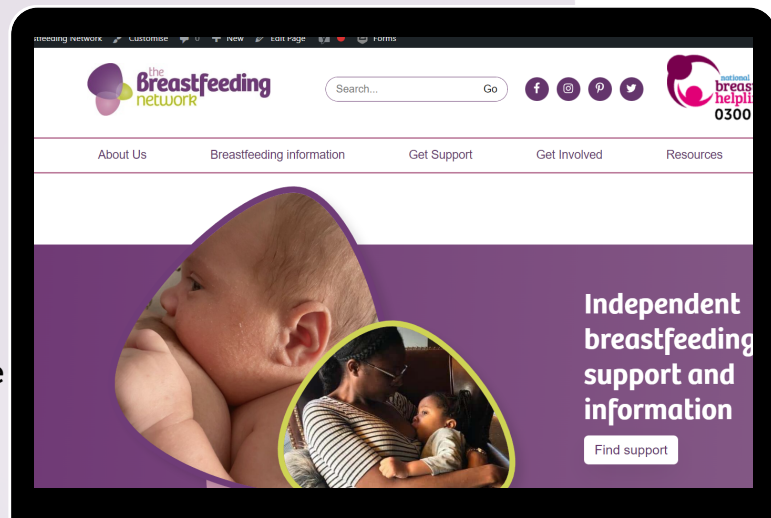
By Clare Farquhar

We have exciting news! Our long-awaited, new-look website is live - check it out [here](#)!

Building on the high quality information that the BfN is known for, we have given the site a brand new look with the aim of making things easier for breastfeeding parents and others to find. We have added more images to represent the parents we support, our volunteers and staff and we have generally made the website more appealing and engaging.

Here are some of the main changes:

- ♥ New look homepage with details about how to find support, links to the DiBM factsheets, links to our blogs, details of current jobs, information on training and how to donate.
- ♥ Improved layout of the DiBM factsheets, with a search function and related links.
- ♥ A whole page about how to get support, in all the different ways and areas we work.
- ♥ Better organised pages containing information about breastfeeding.
- ♥ A new dedicated login area for members only. You will find a link to this at the bottom of every page. Members will receive the password separately. At the moment, this contains policies related to volunteering and details of how to renew membership but we have plans to expand this in the future!



Looks great - I especially love the new DiBM area!

I love, love, love the new website! Colours are gorgeous and so much easier to access!

Well done to all on the new website - what a lot of hard work!

We really hope you enjoy exploring our new website. Initial feedback has been really positive and we hope this brings you an improved user experience. If you have any feedback or comments please feel free to email website@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk.



Come Join Our Board!

by Sarah Turner

We are looking for two member directors to join our board!

Directors have an interesting and important role within the BfN. We are responsible for ensuring the charity runs effectively and setting its direction. It's a fascinating way to learn more about the charity, to meet and work with those who make everything happen – and to raise those issues that are important to you in a way that can have real impact.

The notion of being a director may feel like something requiring a lot of professional experience and a fancy CV - this is not the case. We have a requirement, as the BfN, to ensure that we are at least an equal split of member and non-member directors on the board, so that the views and experiences of volunteers – at any stage in their journey with the BfN – are appropriately represented. Non-member directors are typically appointed based upon specific skills and requirements (and indeed, we have a wonderful mix of knowledge and experience on the board), but the primary requirement of member directors is to have a desire to speak up for the volunteer community, to bring your experience to what is discussed and to have an interest in how the charity progresses. That, and a willingness to read the board papers and attend the meetings.

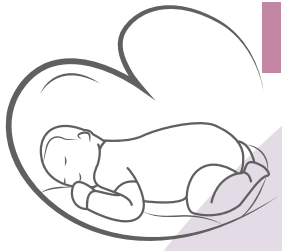
If you're at all interested in this, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at sarah.turner@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk, Joy Hastings joy.hastings@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk, or any of the directors (you can find information about all of us [here](#)). We'd be happy to talk you through what it is like to be a director and how to progress an application.

Special Edition of BfN News - We Need You!

This year's autumn edition of the BfN News is going to be an exciting one! We are publishing a special edition, marking the BfN's 25th year of providing essential support to women and families across the UK.

This is where you come in! We need your contributions to make the special edition as incredible as possible. We invite you to share your memories of the BfN, special events, feedback from families you've supported or anything else you think is relevant!

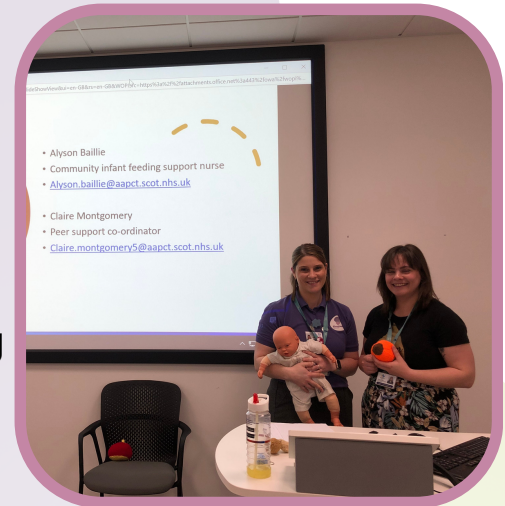
Please send submissions or questions to claire.dorby@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk and look out for them in the next issue...



International Day of the Midwife Celebrations

by Melanie Woodward

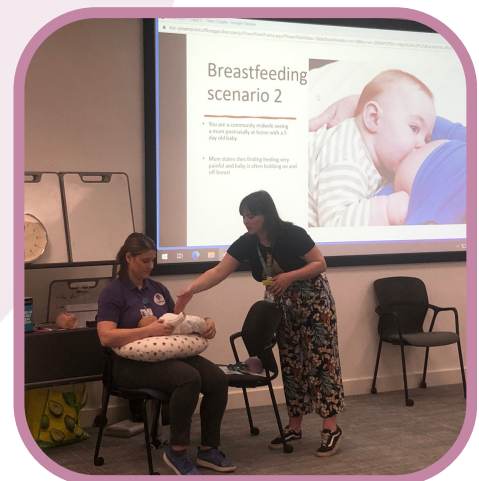
The BfN had the pleasure of joining midwives from the University of the West of Scotland for their International Day of the Midwife celebrations on 5th May. Jaki Lambert, RCM Director for Scotland, opened the annual event. This year's theme was 'Celebrating Togetherness, Kindness and Supporting Each Other'.



Alyson Baillie and Claire Montgomery from the Ayrshire Integrated Infant Feeding Team held a great workshop and presented to midwives on their role in supporting breastfeeding. Claire demonstrated the principles of good and poor PPAA in excellent airline staff fashion! The lucky participants left with a mini crocheted 'booble' keyring as a reminder of the session.



We also spoke to lots of midwives about what we do on the NBH and at our groups. We chatted about the different methods of support we offer online, via social media, our website and the DiBM service. It's always a privilege to attend these events and spread the word about how our incredible staff and volunteers work to support families in their feeding journeys. We are looking forward to next year already!



Happy 1st Birthday BfN Southampton!

by Eleanor Johnson

In April 2022 the Breastfeeding Network was commissioned to offer breastfeeding information and support in Southampton City.

In a very quick 12 months, the small but mighty team of Peer Supporters and volunteers have achieved amazing things, supporting over 435 families and raising awareness across communities via:

- Breastfeeding community groups
- Home visits
- Phone support
- Social media information and support across a range of media
- Peer Support on the wards at Princess Anne hospital
- A Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme, which now has over 56 businesses and community locations signed up
- Providing resources to local nurseries.



We are especially proud that 100% of the families who took our feedback survey said they would recommend us to others. You can find out more about the Southampton Project [here](#). Thank you and Happy Birthday to the team!

Happy 2nd Birthday BfN Stoke!

by Nikki Gallagher



In April 2023, BfN Stoke celebrated turning 2!



We are also about to launch recruitment for our 4th volunteer Helper course and have just welcomed Scarlet and Lisa to be our first paid antenatal Peer Supporters! Lisa and Scarlet have worked so tirelessly to make Stoke a success and that's been reflected in the large amount of Start4life funding we have secured. I really could not do this without them, they are exceptional volunteers and peer supporters!

Pictured (left to right) are Scarlet, Clare, Lisa, Emma and Nikki, celebrating Stoke's 2nd birthday at Tunstall's Children's Centre



National Breastfeeding Helpline Update

By Hester Schofield

Last issue I gave an update detailing that the NBH has had an uplift in funding. This time, I wanted to share with you what this means in practice.

Some of our new initiatives include:

- Having increased capacity in our fabulous voicemail team. This group ensures that if we don't get to a live call, the caller can leave a message which will be returned by one of our voicemail team within 24 hours.
- We have worked on a marketing strategy with the aim of increasing awareness of the helpline for those who need it and particularly those in under-represented groups. We are also looking to increase knowledge of the different ways we can be contacted such as our social media support.
- We are working hard to make better use of our data. For example, we are looking at the geographic reach of the helpline to better understand which areas know and use the helpline/DiBM service and where there is further work to be done to raise awareness of our services.
- We have been developing the Drugs in Breastmilk Information Service: The DiBM service has previously been funded through BfN reserves and we are really pleased that the Start for Life funding has supported this unique service. This investment has enabled us to increase the staffing hours on the service to support a new cohort of volunteer pharmacists as well as securing the Service and Development Manager Role. Exciting times are ahead for the DiBM Service!





NBH Social Media Update

by Hester Schofield

One way in which we use social media to provide support to families is through the National Breastfeeding Helpline. This is an area which has grown organically and each year we support more and more families via social media. An evaluation of the helpline gave us some really important insights into the effectiveness of social media support:

Social media is now a really important way of accessing the NBH: 12.79% of those who used social media support felt that calling the helpline would have been too difficult for reasons such as caring responsibilities and 11.25% preferred to use online methods due to a lack of confidence in using the phone.



Social media has a slightly different demographic reach: users of social media were more likely to be younger (under 24 years) and to be educated to A level or below. Whereas callers to the helpline were more likely to be over the age of 35 years and to be educated to degree level or above.

Social media support had equally high satisfaction scores from users as other methods of contacting the helpline. For example, when asked whether they would use the same service again, out of over 450 people who responded to our survey on social media use, only one said they would not use the service again.



Callers to social media felt that volunteers listened and understood, promoted positive wellbeing and were knowledgeable about breastfeeding.

Celebrating our Volunteers

by **Claire Dorby**

Volunteers' Week takes place in June each year and is a fantastic opportunity to say 'thank you' to our volunteers, who are an integral part of the work we do at the BfN. This year, we focused on celebrating the different ways the BfN provides support, including local groups, the NBH and the DiBM Service. What better way to illustrate their incredible impact than to hear from families about their experiences? Thank you to all of our volunteers, past and present, for helping make the BfN what it is. We couldn't do it without you!

Your pharmacists are so helpful, they helped me out so quickly when I emailed for advice on some medication the GP prescribed me. The GP told me to stop breastfeeding but it turns out the medication was fine to use while breastfeeding. Still breastfeeding at 22 months!

They signposted me and gave me the resources I needed to continue breastfeeding. They helped me understand ALL the benefits of breastfeeding to baby and me. Thank you. I am eternally grateful and I know my daughter is too!

Without a BfN Supporter - the first person to take me seriously when struggling to feed my 3rd child - I would likely not have been able to continue.

This is such a valuable service. A friend of mine asked a pharmacist for advice, was told to go to the GP, and the GP just looked it up on the Breastfeeding Network. So now I'll just go straight there and save loads of time!

Thank you particularly to the mums of the BfN who answered questions and virtually held my hand when I needed it!

I just called one of your volunteers after an exhausting few days and my confidence plummeted, I wish I'd done it sooner. Massive thanks to the friendly voice who gave me a mini therapy session and definitely went above and beyond.





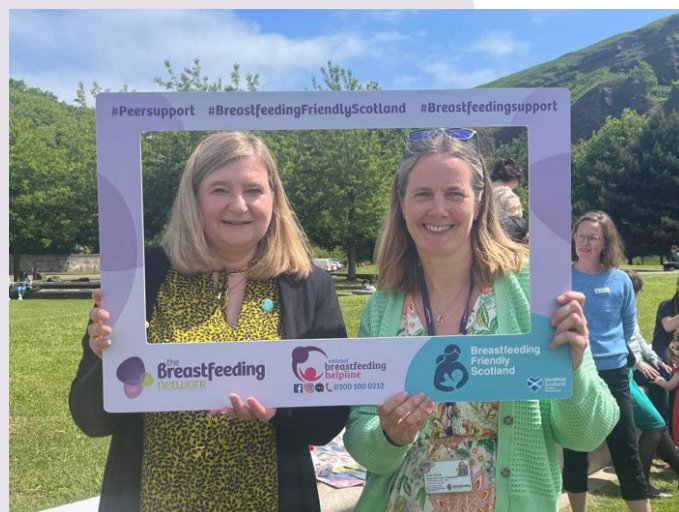
Scottish Breastfeeding Week 2023

by Claire Dorby

Scottish Breastfeeding Week took place on 5th - 11th June this year! Scottish Breastfeeding Week aims to celebrate the work being carried out to support, promote and protect breastfeeding across Scotland and to normalise infant behaviour.

Across the week, information was shared on a number of topics including: Scottish breastfeeding figures, available support, peer supporters, normal infant behaviour and the Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland Scheme. As usual, our groups in Scotland came out in force, together with the NBH, to spread the word about the amazing work being done across the country to support, promote and protect breastfeeding.

A massive well done to everyone involved in making this year's Scottish Breastfeeding Week a success!



The BfN attended the 'Picnic at Parliament' event where they discussed how Scotland can become more breastfeeding friendly. Pictured are Sarah Edwards (BfN) and Jenni Minto (MSP).



BfN Ayrshire and Arran ran several events designed to hear from families about their experiences.
Pictured are Dr Ruth Campbell (Consultant Dietician) and Emma Turner (Peer Supporter).



The NBH team attended the V&A museum in Dundee with NHS Tayside for a celebration event.
Pictured is Cara Jamieson (NBH) and her knitted boob!

Derbyshire Host First In-Person Helper Training

by Alexandra Dilkes



During the pandemic, our Helper peer support training courses began being hosted online and we continued with this approach, partly as Derbyshire has almost 1000 square miles, so choosing a location that is convenient for all our trainees is really tricky!

However, in March we decided to host an in-person session at a venue in the centre of the county and our trainees absolutely loved being together and, despite the long journey for most of them, requested a second session in April!

As you might expect, there was lots of laughter, learning, cake and, along with young children playing, a couple of emergency nappy changes!



Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Update

by Emily Evans

The Breastfeeding Network in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin has some exciting news!

The project has been awarded funding under the Start for Life programme with Telford & Wrekin Council. This will enable us to purchase more resources (including books for local libraries), train more local parents to offer peer support, start antenatal classes and introduce volunteers within the hospital. We are looking forward to working closely on the development of Family Hubs and with other organisations such as Homestart, the 0-19 service and our local hospital trust to ensure services are accessible to all. The Family Hubs and Start for Life project launched at an event on the 22nd May held by Telford and Wrekin Council which was attended by stakeholders and local families.





Weaning from the Breast - Emma Pickett's Blog

review by Claire Dorby

A topic we are asked about regularly in groups, online and via the NBH is weaning from the breast. Many mums approach us for support when they are coming to the end of their breastfeeding journey and we have received feedback that indicates they think this topic is not something the BfN provides support with. It was crucial therefore that we provided evidence based, non-judgemental advice for those who require it, to ensure women are given all the information they need to make an informed decision around weaning.

This, of course, is something we support women with regularly across the BfN, but we wanted to provide something that gave a comprehensive summary of information and could be accessed at any time via our website. Luckily for us, Emma Pickett IBCLC has written a book on this very subject, due to be published soon, and agreed to write an article for our blog which was published at the end of May.

The article is comprehensive, compassionate and full of relevant research evidence. It addresses the common reasons you may hear for having to wean your baby and urges the reader to reach out to us to talk through and reflect on their decision. The article provides practical information about weaning before and after 12 months, discussing how older children can be meaningfully involved in the process.

This really is a fantastic article and I am sure it will be valued greatly by women and families considering the next step in their breastfeeding journeys - thank you Emma! Emma's book, "Supporting the Transition from Breastfeeding: A Guide to Weaning for Professionals, Supporters and Parents" will be published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers soon.



A really easy way to help raise vital funds for the Breastfeeding Network, at no extra cost to you, while you shop online is by signing up to Easy Fundraising or Give as you Live. So far, we have raised £1092 via Easy Fundraising and £175 via Give as You Live at no extra cost to our supporters!

Interested? Find out how to sign up to Easy Fundraising [here](#) or Give as you Live [here](#).



South Hampshire Update

By Sacha Brooks & Madeleine Hildrew

BfN Veteran to bow out as newbie Madeleine takes up the breastfeeding baton in South Hampshire

It's a case of out with the old and in with the new, as Madeleine Hildrew joins the Breastfeeding Network Southern Hampshire bench while breastfeeding (and military) veteran Sacha Brooks, a BfN Helper of eight and half years and mum of four, moves to pastures new this summer following her departure from full-time Navy Service.

Commenting on her enduring support to the Breastfeeding Network Sacha said, "It's been a fantastic eight-plus years with the Breastfeeding Network, volunteering alongside some amazing women and finding that the whole experience contributed to my own personal development, well-being and self-esteem"

"Over the years I have contributed my time supporting mummy and baby groups, coffee meet-ups, antenatal education, one-to-ones over Zoom and more recently, volunteering at the Portsmouth Maternity Centre (PMC) situated at St Mary's Hospital. I have also donated monthly to BfN Southern Hampshire for several years, growing their coffers a bit, thereby giving them a bit extra in their budget to get the breastfeeding message out.



Sacha Brooks
BfN Helper of 8.5 years

"When I did my Helper course back in 2014, I was taking six months maternity leave from Naval Service. I did the course as I felt I wanted to meet new people and also because a Health Visitor had noted my conviction and commitment to breastfeeding during a home visit. Having already fed two babies for 24 months each and having just started on my third child, I received a call from El Johnson, BfN Tutor for the course at the time, and I was sold! Little was I to know that that would expose me to a whole new set of rewarding personal development and interpersonal experiences, or that I would devote so many years to Portsmouth-area families!"

"I really felt that I wanted to give back and offer support and a listening ear to parents at any stage of their feeding journey." Madeleine

Looking back over her commitment to the BfN, she reflected, "The best bits were really feeling that in some way I had at least been able to give mummies, who might be doubting themselves, or feeling low or guilty, a bit of a boost during our time together. The BfN has also been very flexible, I was able to deploy with work to Bahrain for seven months in 2016/17 and keep 'in-date' for the BfN.

Cont...



Madeleine Hildrew
Newly Qualified BfN Helper

She adds, "Over the years I have been recognised a few times in the street by mamas that I helped just one time and profusely thanked for the support I gave them. It's always quite moving to think that I was able to assist them a bit, and that my seemingly very small contribution to their breastfeeding journey was well-remembered.

It's not all been plain sailing though, "The most challenging occasion was the time I was supporting a mum who wanted to re-lactate, over Zoom calls - she could only speak French (and my French is OK but really rusty). Fortunately I had my francophone husband (off-camera) to translate the more 'technical' phrases. I am not sure she was able to ever regain her milk flow back to level she wanted, but I think she was able to take away that she had tried her very best, and that the support and commitment had been there for her.

As she looks forward to a new life in Cambridge, she wished newly qualified Helper Madeleine and the whole of the BfN Southern Hampshire collective all the very best for the future supporting mummies, infants, and their families. She said, "I plan to continue my breastfeeding volunteering when I move to the east of the country later this summer. I'd like to convey my heartfelt thanks to all those involved in running the Network in Southern Hampshire over the years, they have done an amazing job both for local families but also the volunteers. The commitment shown has always been first class."

New Helper Madeleine says, "I recently became a helper with the Breastfeeding Network and already can't imagine not being a part of it! I have two young children and I became passionate about offering breast feeding support after my daughter was tube fed for the first month of her life, after which I worked hard to establish breastfeeding. I really felt that I wanted to give back and offer support and a listening ear to parents at any stage of their feeding journey.

"I volunteer at the PMC so often get to see very new parents who might be feeling overwhelmed and most certainly over tired! It's an absolute privilege to speak with families and to listen to any concerns they might have - nothing describes the feeling when we've been able to work through worries and baby then has a lovely feed."

"Over the years I have been recognised a few times in the street by mamas that I helped just one time, and profusely thanked for the support I gave them." Sacha

Thank you so much to Sacha for your time, dedication and enthusiasm over the years, we will miss you and wish you all the best. We are very much looking forward to working with Madeleine and look forward to an exciting future at the BfN South Hampshire!



Social Media Update

by Claire Dorby

We heard earlier about the positive impact the use of social media is having on families who come to the NBH looking for support and information. Social media is a key tool at the BfN's disposal in reaching a wide audience with information about our services, achievements and impact while sharing evidence based breastfeeding information. Over the last 12 months, our reach and engagement across our social media platforms has increased significantly and steadily, allowing us to reach more women and families.

We currently have a combined social media following of almost 85000 across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (which grows each day) with our posts regularly reaching over 100k people on Facebook alone! Our most popular posts include our 'Just for Fun' series, information posts including 'Mythbusting May' and breastfeeding infographics, job adverts and invitations for families to share their experiences.

We are absolutely delighted that all of our local groups are now active on Facebook! This is an excellent way of reaching local communities and it is fantastic to see such engaging and relevant content being created and shared across the UK. We also have 14 groups who have ventured onto Instagram and 5 spreading the word on Twitter. Thank you for your hard work, enthusiasm and for recognising the power of social media!



#BfNConf23
07.10.23

Don't forget to save the date for the annual
BfN Conference 2023!

More details to follow soon - keep an eye
on our social media...

CONGRATULATIONS!

A huge thank you to everyone who helps make BfN what it is. Let's take a minute to congratulate our newly qualified volunteers - thank you!

★ HELPERS ★

Shireen Akhtar
Sue Boughton-Mills
Pippa Hill
Lucy Knights
Farah Sher
Elisa Ursich
Rujina Ahmed
Lana Rowlett
Mimi Ndreca
and their tutor:
Joy Jones

Natasha Groves
Kendall Jones
Becky Higgins
and their Tutor:
Eleanor Johnson

Siân Maxwell
Beckie Rogers
and their Tutors:
Sally Carter / Crystal
Golding-Smith

Steph Richards
and her Tutor:
Kirstin Worsley

Emma Griffin
and her Tutors:
Sarah Edwards / Fiona
McLean

Arielle Garton
Katie Phillips
and their Tutors:
Joy Hastings / Timea
Bakaja-Dezsi

Angie Halfhide
Sammy Britten
and their Tutor:
Crystal Golding-Smith

Syeda Kaniz Fatima
and her Tutors:
Timea Bakaja-Dezsi /
Jane Taylor

Joanna Francis
Barbara Moonan
Veneta Kolarova
Caroline Perez
and their Tutor:
Joy Hastings

Bethany Edgar
Rebecca King
Rachael Mendel
Megan Wilce
Lauren Farrelly
Katherine Greaves
and their Tutor:
Alys Vaughan-Williams

Cara McDermott
and her Tutors:
Marie-Claire Ronaldson /
Carolanne Lamont

Alice Stratton
and her Tutors:
Joy Jones / Sally Carter

Ylenia Bruguera Badia
Rachel Cameron
Catherine Lamont
Kasia Sergiel
Sarah Kelly
Corrine Spencer
Carrie Woods
and their tutors:
Marie-Claire Ronaldson /
Carolanne Lamont

Amy Sedgeley
Gabriella Clark
Nicola Manford
Sarah Neat
Katie Harris
Laura Baker
Siobhan Barwell
Emma Henderson
Kate Hook
Frances ClayStacey
Baugh
Holly Brown
Jade Ellis
Jasmine Nicholls
Rebecca Skelton
Caprice Smith
Ruth Wildrianne
Kate Lyth
and their Tutor:
Naomi Waters

Katie Nelson
Megan Wildman
and their Tutor:
Eleanor Johnson

★ PROBATIONARY SUPPORTERS ★

Catherine Mackay
Rebecca Till
Jes Johal
Nina Adams
and their Tutor:
Lydia Murtagh

Phillipa Rewaj
Katy Stockwell
and their Tutor:
Eleanor Johnson

HELPLINE
Kayleigh Lindsay
and her Tutor:
Eleanor Johnson

★ SUPPORTERS ★

Phillipa Rewaj
and her Tutor:
Kirsten Worsley

HELPLINE
Melissa Kallat
and her Tutor:
Kirstin Worsley

★ DiBM HELPERS ★

Yvonne Beaverstock
Vicky Hoskins
Siobhan McGuinness
Maya Motova
Kate Taylor
Rebekah Verheul
Jessica Yeung
Kirpa Gudhka
and their Tutor:
Kirstin Worsley

★ MUM 2 MUM CHAMPION ★

Olufunso Ayodele-Raji
and her Tutor:
Sarah Edwards

If your name is missing from this list, please accept our apologies and contact us so you can be added next time.

Everyone listed here has completed their training within the last 3 months, enabling them to support families across the UK as a volunteer.