

Code of Conduct: questions about avoiding conflicts of interest

BfN Registered Volunteers must not use their BfN registration to make money from parents.

Conflicts of interest happen when individuals find their judgment is tested because of competing interests, whether this involves money, or other personal interests or because of divided loyalties (Richter 2005).

This means that mothers and anyone you come into contact with needs to be entirely clear about which role you are acting in at any time. And parents should also feel confident that you will not gain from any feeding choices they may make.

If you are considering training with BfN please discuss any queries you might have about a conflict of interest with the course tutor and disclose these in the enrolment form. This could avoid the disappointment of finding you are ineligible to complete the course.

If you would like to discuss this further clarification please contact the CEO@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk.

The following questions will help you decide whether you can sign the Code of Conduct and register as a BfN volunteer.

A) Potential conflicts involving selling products

1. I work in a supermarket/ shop/ chemist, and people buy baby items.

Does this mean I cannot volunteer with BfN?

You can volunteer, this is not a problem as you are neither promoting the items nor profiting from peoples choices.

For further guidance about situations involving promotions or active marketing of products covered by the WHO code contact BfN via the CEO.email address above.

2. I work for a company which makes infant formula or baby feeding equipment

This decision needs to be made by BfN directors as this depends on your level of responsibility within the company.

3. I run my own business / act as a sole trader selling baby feeding products or breastfeeding products

This decision needs to be made by BfN directors. BfN volunteers must avoid gaining financially from products which might be suggested as a way of overcoming a breastfeeding difficulty, or which might affect how a mother feeds her baby. This includes slings, pumps, nursing bras, milk boosting foods, breastfeeding reminder bracelets etc.

For business which are solely internet based, the decision will include assessment of whether you are identifiable on the website or include reference to your BfN qualification.

B) Potential conflicts when providing services

Roles related to breastfeeding

It can be very hard for new mothers, who may be feeling tired & vulnerable, to distinguish between different roles when combined by one person. It is a particular concern when one of these roles requires payment from the family, and conflicts of interest can arise.

4. I plan to work with another organisation as a BfN volunteer or I already work for the NHS/ Children's Centre/ Early Years/ Local Authority. Services are free of charge to parents.

Yes, you can volunteer. BfN works with other organisations, such as Homestart, to provide breastfeeding support. You will be a BfN volunteer and working within our Code of Conduct as well as that set by Homestart, Barnardos or Birth Companions within a prison.

The points discussed in the annex to the Code of Conduct may help you consider ways you can keep your work role separate from volunteering.

5. I receive payments directly from families for services related to breastfeeding.

This includes work in any role where you are paid directly by a family, or indirectly via another organisation which charges parents, for work related to breastfeeding, e.g. private lactation consultant, doula, private midwives, antenatal teacher or postnatal discussion leaders.

This should be discussed with your tutor/ supervisor before registering or re-registering as a BfN Registered Volunteer. There is more potential for confusion between these competing roles however we have now piloted these dual roles and those involved have worked hard to keep their roles separate. See the Code of Conduct annex

6. I intend to work for another breastfeeding organisation.

This includes any role that you may combine working as a BfN Registered Volunteer and work as a breastfeeding supporter within another organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, ABM Counsellor, LLL Leader, NCT Breastfeeding Counsellor or Families and Babies peer supporter.

This should be discussed with your tutor/ supervisor before registering/ re-registering as a BfN Registered Volunteer to consider if it is possible to find ways to keep the two roles separate and whether there are implications of working within two different Codes of Conduct.

Even if you can clearly separate your different roles in your own mind, it is important to avoid the possibility of parents or colleagues confusing which role you might be acting in. This is as much about the mothers' perceptions not your own ability to separate roles.