



Volunteer Handbook

A Guide to Volunteering with the Breastfeeding Network

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Acknowledgements

The BfN would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Volunteer Handbook Working Group consisting of BfN peer supporters, Clare Turner, Diana West, Erica Harris and Pat Little who volunteered their time and expertise in developing this volunteer handbook.

We welcome any queries or comments that will help to improve the volunteer handbook, please contact admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk and feel free to discuss with your tutor/supervisor.

Welcome from Shereen Fisher, CEO

The Breastfeeding Network (BfN) would not exist without its volunteers. An important reason for me joining the charity as Chief Executive was because of BfN's commitment to volunteering and the volunteers' commitment to the charity. It's mutually beneficial and inseparable and good for communities.

There are not many charities remaining that have retained such a strong belief in the voluntary role and the Breastfeeding Network is both a rare and shining example of an organisation where not only do volunteers play such a central part, but they should play a central part. At the heart of BfN is the offer of mother centred support and guidance from one woman to another – a deceptively simple but incredibly powerful approach through which we have made a lifetime of difference to so many families across the UK.

BfN is a single-issue charity but the issue – breastfeeding – cuts across a lot of agendas and it is not without controversy. Every day, you as volunteers walk across this territory, whether it be through talking to mums on the National Breastfeeding Helpline or volunteering in drop-ins, supporting women and families at a difficult and fragile time in their lives when stress levels can be high.

Research tells us that volunteering is good for the people who do it, boosting not only their health and wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem, but building their skills and offering those who want it a route into employment. You have told us this too, and we try our best to nurture this energy and commitment through providing access to supervision, good up-to-date guidance, events and training. This guidance has been proudly co-produced with volunteers. We hope it is comprehensive and helpful to you in your volunteering.

With thanks for all that you do supporting women to make breastfeeding possible.

Best Wishes



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shereen Fisher" with a horizontal line underneath.

Shereen Fisher, CEO
Breastfeeding Network

How to get the most from this handbook

This Handbook is designed to be a reference guide for BfN volunteers. We will update this handbook every two years and would welcome your views on how we can improve it along with your experience of volunteering for the BfN. It is non-contractual and for use within the Breastfeeding Network only.

If you have any comments or need a copy of this handbook in a different format, such as large print or dyslexia friendly text, or if you have any questions about the content please speak to your supervisor or tutor, or email admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

About The Breastfeeding Network

Our vision is a society where mums and families are able to make informed decisions about breastfeeding, access help when they need it and become confident in their choices. For a new mum deciding how to feed her baby, talking to a mum who knows about breastfeeding can make a crucial difference and the Breastfeeding Network strives to be the best we can be at providing peer support.

Our mission is to offer independent, evidence-based information and support, to help build awareness of breastfeeding to individuals and organisations and to support a mum in her choice to breastfeed.

You can read more about our values and achievements on our website here: <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/charitable-objectives/>

What we do at The Breastfeeding Network

The BfN develop and deliver training courses for mothers who have breastfeeding experience to enable them to provide skilled breastfeeding peer support (mother to mother support) in the community and via telephone helplines. The following sections in this volunteer handbook provide more information about the BfN and how we work and what we do. You can read more about the history of the BfN on our website here: <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/bfn-history/>

How we work

The Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors are all volunteers themselves and bring with them a wide range of experience and skills. The directors of the Breastfeeding Network are its Trustees for the purpose of charity law.

The Board works with staff and volunteers to ensure that the BfN meet its charitable objectives. They are dedicated and passionate about the work done by The Breastfeeding Network and are committed to growing the charity and to taking it from strength to strength.

You can find out more about the Board of Directors and other sub-committees on our website <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/about-us/whos-who/bfn-board-of-directors/>

Sub-committee Members

Another group of BfN volunteers that work closely with Board Members include Sub-Committee members, which give hours of their time to support the development of BfN training courses, supervision and the organisation as a whole.

Commissioned Services

Over the last 20 years, the BfN have increasingly been commissioned, by various organisations such as Public Health (local councils), NHS and children's centres, to deliver our training courses alongside co-ordination, as part of a peer support project. Our commissioned projects are varied and we have experience of providing support in a variety of settings using targeted and universal approaches with a mix of trained staff and volunteers. There are over 100 paid staff members as part of our commissioned projects, and we recognise the many hours that are volunteered alongside these roles.

For more information on our peer support services visit:

<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/train-to-be-a-registered-volunteer/peer-support-programmes/>

Central Team

The Chief Executive, Shereen Fisher, works with the support of a small team of staff who provide structure and support to the organisation. Central management is part of the Trustees' vision to ensure better accountability, leadership and day to day running of the charity.

Most members of the central team work remotely with a small number that are based in the Paisley office. You can find out more about the Central Team and their roles on our website

<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/about-us/whos-who/bfn-admin-central-team/>

Volunteers

The Breastfeeding Network is a volunteer organisation, we pride ourselves on the breastfeeding support that our volunteers offer families and other volunteers as trained Peer Supporters, Supervisors, Tutors and Board Members.

Volunteers are at the heart of what we do and we are proud to say we have around 600 BfN volunteers that give their time and skills in directly supporting mums and families in their communities and over the Helplines.

The charity has also received ad-hoc support from individuals giving their time in other ways such as fundraising. You can find out more about other ways to volunteer for the BfN at

<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/volunteer-for-us/>

Breastfeeding Support Services

Drugs in Breastmilk Service

The BfN are very proud of the Drugs in Breastmilk service which provides support and information to thousands of families and health professionals every year. Our highly experienced and trained pharmacist, Wendy Jones, offers breastfeeding support alongside evidence based information to anyone who is concerned about the effects of medication or treatments while breastfeeding.

You can find the range of information sheets and can contact the facebook page or email address on our website here:

<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/detailed-information/drugs-in-breastmilk/>

We would also like to acknowledge the huge effort and support we receive from the Friends of Drugs in Breastmilk:

<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/friends-drugs-breastmilk/>

National Breastfeeding Helpline (NBH) and Webchat Service

The National Breastfeeding Helpline (NBH) is open 9.30am-9.30pm every single day of the year (bank holidays included) on 0300 100 0212. We have Welsh and Polish language options (callers should dial our usual number then press option 1 for Welsh and option 2 for Polish).

The helpline offers non-judgmental, evidence based, independent, confidential, mother-centred breastfeeding support and information to mums, partners, family members, friends, health professionals or anyone else who needs it.

The helpline is managed by the Breastfeeding Network working in collaboration with the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers and all calls are answered by volunteers trained and supported by these two charities. All the volunteers are mums who have breastfed at least one baby and all have completed in depth and ongoing training with BfN or ABM.

Calls to the helpline cost the same as a local call and are included in most mobile phone 'free minutes' packages.

We answer around 12-15,000 calls per year and spend more than 3,000 hours per year (around 125 full days!) talking to callers. We receive around 40-50,000 calls every year on the helpline so with more volunteers we will be able to answer more calls.

Web chat offers exactly the same support from the same volunteers who answer helpline calls too, but it is all done via safe and secure instant messaging. Some mums prefer to seek support in this way rather than on the phone.

BfN Supporterline

BfN Supporterline was set-up by BfN before the National Breastfeeding Helpline started. Calls to Supporterline will be received by BfN registered Supporters via the NBH system.

BfN Supporterline in Bengali and Sylheti: 0300 456 2421 offers support for Bengali and Sylheti speakers. If a volunteer is not available to take the call, a message can be left. Lines are open 9:30 am to 9:30 pm, 7 days a week.

What does it mean to be a BfN volunteer?

Some people volunteer to give something back as a thank you for the breastfeeding support they received, others do it as they feel strongly that all women should receive sufficient support and be provided with evidence-based information to enable them to meet their feeding goals. Others do it to meet new people or gain experience that might help them find a job. Whatever your reasons we thank you. Our volunteers make us who we are and enable us to support thousands of families each year.

BfN training and volunteer roles

BfN Helper and Supporter courses are accredited through Open College Network (OCN) London. Skilled staff develop and deliver these qualifications. OCN London is regulated by the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The credits you will gain are nationally recognised and may help you with your career or to achieve a place in college or university.

Volunteering as a 'Helper' - Helper Training

The Helper training course is the first stage of training for volunteers. It consists of 12 x 2 hour sessions to complete the two modules, 'Peer support for breastfeeding mothers' and 'Skills to support the breastfeeding mother' to qualify as 6 units at level 2 OCN accreditation. The Helper course assessed Learner Assessment Log is completed in a variety of ways to suit different learning styles.

Roles of a 'Helper' Peer Supporter

As a Helper you will be able to provide emotional support to mothers and families, support mothers with positioning and attachment, and signpost mothers to get further information and support. You will play an important role in empowering new mothers and helping them gain the confidence they need to breastfeed for as long as they wish.

You will be able to volunteer alongside BfN 'Supporters' or health professionals, in a variety of different settings such as breastfeeding drop-in groups, in hospitals and health clinics. Helpers, usually with support within commissioned projects, can build their experience to provide

breastfeeding support independently, as described through Supporter course training below. You can find out more about our Helper training course here: <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/train-to-be-a-registered-volunteer/>

Have you completed your Helper course?

We appreciate that you may have had quite a journey to become a Helper – we realise that this can be a challenge especially when you may still have young children and a busy life, thank you for your commitment.

If you have finished your training, your tutor and/or local project coordinator, will confirm with you the necessary requirements needed to start actively volunteering. To summarise, you must have:

- Completed the training course and successful internal moderation of your Assessment log book/portfolio.
- Accepted the terms of the code of conduct (this can be done via our website <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/shop/membershipsubscription> and choose to register as a trainee member)

***Trainee Member** – if you have recently started training to be a BfN Helper you will receive two years complimentary membership after which time you will be required to pay the appropriate membership fee.*

- DBS check approved
- Two suitable references received
- Have a named supervisor <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/supervision-requirements-for-bfn-volunteers/>
- Received a BfN 'Helper' badge to wear when supporting mums

Congratulations you are now a BfN registered member

As a BfN member we offer essential training courses that are required to continue with ongoing membership.

In your first 6 months as a registered member you will need to attend regular supervision sessions (see Supervision section below) and complete the following training which will be available either locally or online:

- Completed Information Governance training
- Completed Safeguarding training
- Completed Hand Hygiene training
- Completed health and Safety (includes lone working) training

Volunteering as a 'Supporter' – Supporters course training

Many volunteers are happy volunteering in their BfN Helper role for as long as they choose. Others are interested in further training and this involves embarking on our Supporter course training.

The BfN's second stage of training for volunteers is the Supporters course. All aspects of training introduced in the breastfeeding 'Helpers' course are covered in more depth. The assignments can be completed in a variety of ways to suit your learning needs.

The Supporters course consists of 3 modules:

Module 1:

'Providing emotional support for breastfeeding mothers' consists of 7 sessions to achieve 6 credits at Level 3 (OCN London accreditation) Sessions are typically 2 hours long and with timely completion of associated assignments, the course should take around 3-4 months to complete.

Module 2:

'Influence of society and research on infant feeding choice' consists of 3 sessions to achieve 3 credits at Level 3 (OCN London accreditation.)

Module 3:

This last module looks at the role of groups and develops skills in self-reflection. This consists of 2 sessions which are not accredited with OCN but are integral to BfN training and the way in which we work.

Roles of a 'BfN Supporter' Peer Supporter

Depending on the modules you complete, this further training serves to develop your breastfeeding support skills to enable you to support in more complex situations and to work with more autonomy, enabling you to work independently in the following ways.

Module 1 – Helpline Supporter:

Module 1 is also known as the 'Helpline supporters course' which provides you with continued professional development to extend your skills in breastfeeding support and in so doing enabling

you to take calls on the National Breastfeeding Helpline and BfN Supporterline. The Helpline Supporters course (module 1) can be taken as part of a group face-to-face course or as a stand-alone 'Fast track Helpline' online course.

Thank you for your time and commitment to complete module 1, we hope you continue to develop and learn and enjoy the variety you get through taking calls on the helplines.

Have you completed your Helpline course?

Once this module is completed and assessed your tutor and NBH link worker will then work with you to fulfil the necessary requirements needed to start actively volunteering on the National Breastfeeding Helpline.

All Breastfeeding Network Supporters are assigned to an NBH Link Worker. You will be put in touch with your Link Worker during your Supporter training and she will talk you through using the virtual call centre. Your Link Worker is your first port of call if you have any questions about any aspect of the helpline. They will keep in touch with you on a regular basis and can provide you with details about how much time you have given on the helpline. They are assigned loosely by where you live, and you will be given a direct contact for your assigned link worker.

The Link Workers are only employed for a few hours per month – they are generally available most days and will get back to you as soon as they can, but they may not always be able to respond immediately to your queries. If you aren't sure who your Link Worker is, or if you need a quicker response, you can contact all the Link Workers and the Helpline Manager as a group on: linkworkers@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

To summarise, you need to have:

- Completed the training course and assignments have been internally moderated (lead internal moderator will notify your NBH Linkworker).
- Received an email 'welcome to the helplines' by your NBH Linkworker
- Received a call from your Linkworker to map you onto the National Breastfeeding and BfN helplines
- A BfN 'Helpline Supporter' badge
(Please note, if you are going on to complete modules 2 and 3 then you will only receive your badge at your next registration period)

Congratulations you are now a BfN 'Helpline Supporter'

Helpline volunteers receive awards for the number of calls they take. There are certificates for volunteers answering 50 calls, then a range of badges for volunteers answering 100, 250, 500, 750, 1000 and 2000 calls! These are usually awarded as part of our annual conference. Monthly spot prizes and other incentives are also offered from time to time to say thank you for volunteering on the helplines.

There is also private NBH facebook group for volunteers as well as a Whatsapp group, and we send a quarterly e-newsletter to all NBH volunteers. Please contact your linkworker to join these groups.

Module 2 and Module 3 – Probationary Supporter:

Modules 2 and 3 look at protecting and supporting breastfeeding, understanding research, working within groups and self-reflection. Once these modules are completed, assessed and module 2 internally moderated, you are ready to embark on supporting mums to enable you to complete your Probationary period. Your supervisor will support you through this probationary period and will be able to confirm with registrations that you will receive your full 'Supporter' badge.

Have you completed your Supporter course?

You are expected to do at least 48 units of BfN Supporting before completion of the probationary period. At least 24 of these units must be National Breastfeeding Helpline units. Half of the helpline units can consist of time on web-chat.

A unit of BfN Supporting is:

- 2 hours on Supporterline or NBH being available to answer calls or webchat.
These do not need to be consecutive hours. Each hour counts as half a unit as long as at least one call/chat has been taken during the hour.
- Writing a response sent to the BfN facebook group.
- Visiting 1 mother at home (excluding friends and family).
- Running or helping to run a breastfeeding drop-in centre (approx. 2 hours plus preparation and tidying away).
- Giving information and/or support to mums at a Child Health Clinic or antenatal clinic (approx. 2 hours plus preparation and tidying away).
- Supporting mothers in hospital postnatal or antenatal wards (excluding friends and family) (approx. 2 hours).
- Teaching an antenatal class about breastfeeding.
- Giving a talk about breastfeeding.

- Attending a meeting as a BfN Supporter (e.g. MVP, health trust, Children's Centre, planning meeting).
- Half a day helping to organize a BfN study day/set up a centre etc.
- Half a day developing new BfN resources e.g. leaflets, information for website.
- Other activities as agreed between you and your Supervisor

Congratulations you are now a BfN 'Supporter'

Volunteering as a Full Supporter.

You have come a long way since your Helpers course and we recognise the work involved in becoming a full Supporter. This is a huge achievement and wish to take this opportunity to thank you for all your time and commitment that you have so far given to supporting mums and families as a BfN member, helping us to achieve the charity's visions and aims. <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/charitable-objectives/>

BfN Tutor and Supervisor training

Tutors and Supervisors are the backbone of BfN's work. They provide the high quality training and on-going supervision that BfN are so proud of. The tutor/supervisor training course is undertaken by BfN 'Supporters' that have completed equivalent to 5 days training that involves face-to-face training and online learning, assessed by practical and written assignments. The training is split into a supervisor training course and a tutor training course, most people do both although you may prefer just to do the supervisor training course.

Supervision at Breastfeeding Network

Every BfN member should have a named Supervisor who can provide supervision. If you don't know who your supervisor is, please contact registrations@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

You can find out more about supervision and your supervision (and registration) requirements here: <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/supervision-within-the-breastfeeding-network/>

Supervision provides a space for support, learning and reflection. It is an opportunity for a two-way discussion to ensure that practical and emotional support can be given to volunteers, ideas can be discussed, training identified, up-to-date information shared and practice/personal matters raised

and dealt with appropriately. We feel that it is BfN's commitment to supervision that makes the charity stand out and distinguishes our approach to peer support.

BfN supervisors are all trained BfN volunteers who have completed our level two (supporter) training and then completed an additional training course to develop their skills to offer supervision to others. Your Supervisor will be a key point of contact for you during your journey with the BfN. Depending on the level of training, BfN supervision (and registration) requirements differ.

What you can expect from BfN

- Initial 2 years free membership upon successful completion of Helpers course and necessary requirements
- Voting rights at your AGM
- Insurance for volunteers to support mums
- Free accredited peer support training courses
- Free online safeguarding and information governance training.
- Named Supervisor and access to supervision
- National access to networking and support from other BfN peer supporters via our Facebook page for BfN members.
- Detailed and up-to-date policies
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance/>
- Breastfeeding information and resources via our website or ask your supervisor.
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/drugs-factsheets/>
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/breastfeeding-help/>
- Regular updates <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/newsletter-copies>

What the BfN expect from you

- To abide by the Code of Conduct
- Stay up to date with and understand BfN policies and guidelines for registered volunteers. These include but are not limited to safeguarding policy, health and safety policy (including hand hygiene, safe lone working/home visiting) and Information governance policy.
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance/>
- Ensure you have an up-to-date DBS (within last 3 years) and renew your DBS check promptly when required

- To seek and attend supervision and mandatory training necessary for on-going registration
- Maintain confidentiality
- Complete call record forms for calls taken on the Helplines
- Maintain your annual membership subscriptions (please check as this may be organised via a local project co-ordinator) <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/become-a-member/>

Learn and Develop with us

Supervision

Supervision provides a regular opportunity to receive and share information and feedback, and to develop new understandings about your work. Supervision is a place where ongoing learning and professional development can be planned and monitored.

Peer support training

Please get in touch with your supervisor or project co-ordinator to express your interest in further peer support training courses.

We do not charge volunteers for our training courses, and thus availability of courses is dependent on local funding.

BfN are working to provide more of our training online, such as through development of the online Helper course, which we hope will improve accessibility for all.

Safeguarding and Information Governance training

You are required to complete IG training every year and the safeguarding training every 3 years. You are also required to attend a safeguarding supervision session every year. If you are unable to access free local safeguarding training, we offer free online courses for Safeguarding through virtual college. Please contact your supervisor or project co-ordinator who can arrange for you to be registered for both courses and deliver supervision. Your login details will then be sent direct to your email address.

Study days

The BfN holds an annual conference and AGM that we hope members will attend. There are also a number of local study days that are held across the UK. For NBH volunteers there is access to regular online webinars.

Help us develop as a Charity

- We welcome your feedback and suggestions, which you can email to admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
- Please register and come along to our annual conference and have your say at our AGM.
- We are always seeking extra support via our sub-committees and working groups, so please look out for requests via our newsletter, Central Line and social media sites.
- We are also always very happy to hear from people with specialist skills that they would be willing to offer free of charge to support us. This might include video/film making, writing funding applications, research/evaluation skills amongst others.
<https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/volunteer-for-us/>
- If you have an idea or would like to offer some time or a specific skill or just for more information please email admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

Keeping in touch

You can stay in touch and keep up to date in the following ways:

- Join our Facebook page - your supervisor can provide you with this information or contact admin@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk
- Subscribe to Central Line – Updates from the Chair of the Board of Directors and the CEO
- Subscribe to our Newsletter – News and stories related to breastfeeding and BfN activity across the UK. Please email nina.adams@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk to receive Central Line and to receive the Newsletter. <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/newsletter-copies/>
- Attend the AGM and conference; a great opportunity to meet other BfN members across the country.
- Or contact our Paisley office via post, telephone (0844 412 0995) or email <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/contact-us/>

Fundraising

We hold two big fundraising events each year.

Mums Milk Run

The Mums' Milk Run is all about being active, having fun and raising money. You can walk, run, swim, cycle or Zumba (or any other activity you enjoy!) and you can do it as an individual or as a group of volunteers. Get your community involved by inviting local friends, family and neighbours to

take part as well. The Mums' Milk Run is held in Spring/Summer and raises money that supports different aims of the charity and local areas.

BfN Big Tea Break

The Big Tea Break is all about having fun, taking a break and sharing tea and cake. The event is held in Autumn and specifically supports the Drugs in breastmilk helpline and information service.

For more information on these fundraising events or to find out other ways you can fundraise for us visit our website <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/fundraising/>

Please also refer to our 'Fundraising for BfN' policy and guidelines <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance/>

For further enquiries email: fundraising@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

Stopping/taking a break from volunteering

We recognise that you might need to take a break from volunteering for different reasons. Please discuss with your supervisor your requirements with regards to supervision and re-registration.

You can also request a reference from us by getting in touch with your supervisor or tutor. However, it is worth bearing in mind that in general, only following a period of volunteering work after you have trained would we consider being able to write a reference for you.

If there is a problem

There may be occasions when you are unhappy with an aspect of your work with BfN. In the first instance we hope you feel able to discuss the issue with your supervisor or project co-ordinator.

The BfN Grievance policy and procedure is in place to address any concern a BfN volunteer may have about the organisation or with BfN Colleagues. The BfN Grievance policy can be found here: <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/governance/>