



Fair Work First Statement

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BfN's Commitment to Fair Work

The Breastfeeding Network (BfN) is a registered charity committed to supporting women and families in their infant feeding choices. We are an essential front-line source of evidence-based information and support, and an organisation whose services are developed and delivered by women and parents with lived experience of breastfeeding.

Fair Work is a foundation of increasing social and economic equality across society. It is vitally important to the new parents and families, which our infant feeding services target. As the Working Families Index (2023) shows, employer practice impacts whether new or early years parents stay or progress in employment, and can therefore affect the health and wellbeing of all family members and all families.

BfN's Board recognises the central role of Fair Work at the heart of our organisational strategy and, to date, has agreed:

- A Family Friendly Work Plan, to guide continual improvement in how we support all women, parents and families as an employer, and
- An Equalities and Inclusion Plan, which links our practice as an employer and volunteer-involving organisation, to continually improving the relevance, accessibility and take up of our services by under-served women and families that need them.

Our commitment to the Real Living Wage:

BfN is proud to be an accredited Real Living Wage employer. We negotiate with partners that finance our work to ensure this commitment is reflected in budgets for all employees.

As The WBG's Commission for a Gender Equal Economy highlighted, there is a strong link between caring activities such as breastfeeding, and economic exclusion in the UK. This makes fair pay an issue central to the achievement of our charitable object

The Commission's analysis highlights the importance of BfN's commitment to flexibility around parents' and carers' lives beyond their employment with us. It also emphasises the role that BfN plays

in its wider work in ensuring women's direct experience of breastfeeding is valued in UK economy and society, and can help them return to and progress in paid work.

What we want to achieve:

To serve all families and ensure that they access information they need and services they can trust, BfN is committed to remaining independent of commercial infant feeding interests. BfN prioritises financial inclusion so never asks women and parents we train to pay for the training they receive to deliver our services to families. This means that we depend upon commissioners and grant-makers to cover the full costs of delivering services and training. We have more work to do with funding partners so that employees can more consistently rely on secure, long-term contracts of employment, in addition to the real living wage and flexibility we already provide.

Our commitment to Effective Worker Voice:

At our core, BfN values the individual worker, the individual volunteer and their lived experience, informed by our peer support approach to infant feeding. This frontline experience means we recognise the role of listening to individual and collective experiences in creating safe environments in which individuals can thrive.

These are principles, which we translate into our working practices as an employer, and seek to continually improve.

At an individual level, we prioritise ongoing and consistent one-to-one interaction between line managers and employees as key to motivation, performance and effective employee engagement in the workplace. Feedback including from 1-2-1 meetings, and annual appraisals between employees and their direct line manager informs improvement action throughout the organisation.

Our trained volunteers and peer supporter-trained staff are members of BfN and benefit additionally from regular collective and individual supervision outside the management reporting line. This relationship supports continual learning and development and identification of areas of policy and practice improvement.

At a collective level, team meetings – including a central staff forum – take place throughout the organisation and are used to share information, learning, to raise concerns and problem solve.

HR and line management have clear channels and processes in place to deal with workplace disagreement and conflict, where these occur. Outcomes and learning from incidents and issues arising are monitored and used to drive improvements in policy and practice.

What we want to achieve:

BfN welcomes union membership, where this is the preference of employees. Whilst no collective bargaining agreement is currently in place or requested until now, we will use staff surveys to understand proactively if this is the preference of BfN staff in future, to ensure diverse employee voices inform BfN decision-making.

BfN will also begin to work with commissioners and grant-funders to better understand and to resource HR and union representation capacity needed to meaningfully impact employee experience.

Investment in workforce development

Our services depend on investment in training of Helpers, Supporters, Tutors and Supervisors and on continued professional development as part of their ongoing membership of BfN.

Through regular one-to-ones, line managers and employees review ongoing learning and development of all staff, whether employees are BfN members or not. Ongoing training for all staff includes mandatory training such as Unconscious Bias and Privilege, and Equality and Diversity, which encourage all employees to understand and take responsibility for a Fair Work culture.

What we want to achieve:

Our Employee Relations Manager will lead a review and support the development of our learning resources, exploring potential to formalise effective succession planning that supports the nurturing of internal talent, and our development as a learning organisation.