



Complaints Policy

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Links or overlaps with other strategies/policies:			
Information Governance Policy (inc. Document Retention Schedule)			
4 C's webpage			
Disciplinary and Grievance Policy			
Social Media Policy			
Malpractice and maladministration Policy			

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1 Introduction

The Breastfeeding Network is committed to providing the highest quality information and support. This policy aims to ensure that all those who work and volunteer for the Breastfeeding Network (BfN) understand how people using our services can give feedback by giving comments, raising concerns or making a complaint about our services.

A printed copy of this policy and the 4C's webpage [Compliments, comments, concerns or complaints? - The Breastfeeding Network](#) must be included in the centre/drop-in/hospital ward folder and shown to anyone wishing to make a comment or raise concerns or complaints about our service.

We will try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible by responding in a clear and accessible manner. The policy forms an essential part of BfN's commitment to the protection of the public.

The policy will not apply if there is an allegation of child abuse or abuse of vulnerable adults by a BfN volunteer or member of staff. The matter would in this instance be referred to the BfN Safeguarding Policy.

1.1 Complaint or grievance?

This complaints policy is for service users, families and health professionals to report matters relating to any member of BfN staff or any BfN volunteer or relating to any of our services.

Any internal issues raised by a BfN volunteer or staff member would be handled under the Disciplinary and Grievance procedure.

1.2 Complaints which will not be accepted

The Breastfeeding Network is not responsible for dealing with complaints against:

Individuals who were not training or registered with BfN at the time of the alleged incident

BfN Registered Volunteers and staff who were clearly not working for or representing BfN in any capacity at the time of the alleged incident.

Previous BfN Registered Volunteers and staff who were no longer working for BfN at the time of the alleged incident.

It can be difficult to determine when someone is representing BfN and when they are not. This is especially true in relation to posts on personal social media pages. Our Social Media policy provides guidance on how to avoid any complaints relating to social media activity.

If a complaint cannot be accepted for the reasons outlined above then we would welcome reports of any concerns that may affect our reputation or call into question our quality standards, however they would be treated informally and not be subject to the terms of this policy. Please see our 4Cs page on our website for more information.

1.3 Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can make a complaint in respect of our service. Individuals can request others to act on their behalf.

1.4 Timescale for making a complaint

In order for us to provide the best possible response, a complaint should be lodged within one month of the incident. In some instances, and at the discretion of the relevant manager this time may be extended if it is deemed both necessary and possible to investigate the complaint after one month. For example, the cause for complaint may take some time to become apparent, or the person may be too ill to lodge a complaint at the time.

1.5 Expenses

The BfN is not responsible for travel or any other expenses incurred by the Complainant or their representative at any stage of the complaint.

1.6 Dual accountability

BfN may decide to hear a complaint against a BfN Registered Volunteer or Employee when another organisation is involved in a similar process arising out of the same substantive matters.

2 Resolution

Before making a complaint, the Complainant is expected to attempt to resolve the issue with the individual or through their local manager. The Complainant must demonstrate that all informal channels have been exhausted. If local resolution is impossible or inappropriate, BfN may ask the Complainant to explain this.

Any issues that are resolved locally by a Manager or Supervisor should be reported to the Central Support Manager and logged on the complaints log.

3 Making a complaint

The BfN complaints procedure has three stages:-

- Stage one - Informal Complaints Procedure
- Stage two - Formal Complaints Procedure
- Stage three - Review and Appeals Stage

3.1 Stage One - Informal Complaints

3.1.1. Oral complaints

Oral complaints should be made by telephone to the main BfN office by calling **08444 120 995**. Any comments or misgivings voiced will be listened to. Details of the complaint and contact details of the complainant will be recorded (using a Complaint Form appendix 1) and passed to the Central Support Manager.

3.1.2. Written complaints (email or letter)

Emails should be sent to 4cs@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk and letters should be posted to The Breastfeeding Network, PO Box 11126, Paisley PA2 8YB. The following information is required:

- Name and address of complainant
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Details of complaint including dates, where applicable

It is also possible to complete a Complaints Form on our website at the bottom of this page [Compliments, comments, concerns or complaints? - The Breastfeeding Network](#) .

A written acknowledgement will be sent by the Central Support Manager via email, within two working days of receipt (unless there are exceptional circumstances such as staff absence).

3.1.3 Complaints made via Social Media

We are currently unable to accept ANY complaints via social media as confidentiality may be compromised. All complaints should be made using one of the methods outlined above. If someone does contact us via social media to make a complaint the response should be to acknowledge receipt of the message, signpost the Complainant to this policy and ask them to use one of the methods outlined above to report the complaint so that the agreed process can be followed.

Any complaints relating to social media activity should also be made in one of the ways outlined above, and not directly on social media. The Social Media policy should be referred to before deciding whether or not to make a complaint or raise a concern.

3.1.4 Serious complaints

If the complainant or a member of the BfN management team considers that the complaint is serious enough, it is possible to escalate the issue immediately to Stage 2, Formal Complaints procedure. This must be specified in writing with an explanation of the reasons for escalation.

3.1.5 Investigation

An investigation will be conducted to establish all the facts relating to the issue(s) raised. This will include the following steps:

1. An anonymised summary of the complaint will be sent to the line manager (for staff) or supervisor (for volunteers) of the person complained against
2. The person complained against will be asked to provide a written statement giving her/his version of events
3. A one to one discussion will take place between the person complained against and her/his line manager or supervisor
4. The line manager or supervisor will forward on a copy of the statement together with a summary of the discussion, including any agreed points of learning or follow-up actions, to the Central Support Manager

At this stage the complaint is still being dealt with informally. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and any subsequent actions that are to be taken. We will aim to provide this response within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible and a longer period of investigation is required, the complainant and the person complained against will be notified of the reasons and expected date of a decision.

If the complainant is satisfied with the response, or if no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 working days of the response being sent, the

issue will be closed. An anonymised written record may be kept to allow for future development and training of the organisation / individuals.

3.2 Stage Two: Formal Complaints Procedure

If a complaint about a BfN volunteer or member of staff is still unresolved following completion of our Informal Complaints procedure, or if a complaint is deemed serious enough to warrant immediate escalation, then the formal complaints procedure will apply. Formal complaints must be received in writing or by email and will be investigated using the same process as the informal complaints procedure, if this has not been done already. The complaint, details of the investigation and all available evidence will then be referred to the Compliments, Comments, Concerns or Complaints Panel.

3.2.1 The Compliments, Comments, Concerns or Complaints Panel

(hereafter referred to as "the panel") will be made up of members of BfN's management team and/or members of BfN's Board of Directors and will not be fewer than three people to hear the complaint. The Panel should be entirely neutral and should not have any connection to the person complained against or the complainant. Specific staff roles which could be involved are as follows:

- NBH Manager
- Programme Manager
- Social Media Officer
- Tutor and Supervisor Coordinator
- Local Supervisor
- Central Support Manager

The panel reserve the right to remain anonymous. Minutes should be taken at all panel meetings by someone experienced in minute-taking and agreed by all panel members before being shared with others involved in the investigation.

HR will aim to take a neutral role, providing support and guidance to the panel and anyone else involved in the complaints process.

3.2.2 Responding to a formal complaint

Once the Formal Complaints Procedure has commenced the Complainant and BfN staff member or Registered Volunteer will be notified in writing that the Formal Complaint Procedure is being implemented. The BfN Registered Volunteer's Supervisor or staff line manager will also be informed in writing.

All parties will receive copies of the Complaints Policy. The complainant will receive an acknowledgement, within 2 working days if this has not already been provided as part of the informal process.

A full copy of the formal complaint will be submitted to the staff member and her line manager or BfN Registered Volunteer and her Supervisor, who will have 20 working days to respond to the complaint. Any response to the complaint will be sent via the complaints panel. This may include written evidence and/ or submission of witness statements.

3.2.3 Suspension of duties as a BfN staff member or volunteer

At the discretion of the panel it may be necessary to suspend some or all of the BfN Registered Volunteer's or staff members work while the complaint is resolved. The BfN Registered Volunteer or staff member complained against will be written to and given details of her suspension.

Suspension is not a disciplinary action and will not be taken as an indication of guilt or to pre-empt the decision of the Panel, but to safeguard the public, the person complained against and/or the BfN.

No liability for any loss suffered, or expenses incurred, will attach to the BfN for the suspension of her practice even where a complaint is not upheld.

3.2.4 Response

The Complaints Panel will advise the Complainant and the BfN Registered Volunteer or staff member complained against and her Supervisor/Line Manager of any decision made in writing.

The Panel will aim to provide this decision within 10 working days of receipt of the response from the person complained against. If this is not possible, the person complained against and the complainant will be notified of the reasons and expected date for a decision.

3.3 Stage 3 - Review and Appeals

3.3.1 Formal appeals procedure

If the Complainant wishes to appeal, this must be notified in writing to the Panel within 10 working days of receipt of the original outcome. The complaints panel will nominate a secondary group to meet (either face to face or by video conference/telephone) and reconsider the submission within 20 working days. This group (The Appeal panel), will include a member of BfN's Board and where possible a neutral third party.

An appeal will be considered on any of the following grounds:

1. That the sanction is disproportionate to the finding of the Complaints Panel and is unjust in all the circumstances.
2. An error was made during the complaints process which may have had a significant effect on the finding and decision of the Complaints Panel.
3. A significant piece of new evidence has become available

3.3.2 Response

If there is insufficient evidence to satisfy any of the grounds for appeal, the appellant will be notified in writing by the complaints team. This decision will be final.

If there are sufficient grounds for the appeal, The Appeal Panel will advise the Complainant and the BfN Registered Volunteer or staff member complained against and her Supervisor/Line Manager of any decision made in writing.

The Panel will aim to provide this decision within 10 working days of the panel meeting. If this is not possible, the person complained against and the complainant will be notified of the reasons and expected date for a decision.

4 Timescales

The timescales given above will be adhered to as closely as possible. However, BfN and members of the panel cannot be held responsible for any delays out-with our control, for example, when awaiting information from a complainant or difficulties in forming a panel during peak holiday times. Every effort shall be made to keep all relevant parties updated on the progress of the complaint.

5 Communication

Any conversations relating to a complaint, with the complainant, the person complained against, any member of staff or volunteer should be followed up with an email to confirm and agree the key points of what was said. This can form part of the evidence reviewed by the panel.

5 Publication and Lessons Learnt

The Breastfeeding Network reserves the right to publish such details of complaints in relation to lessons learnt as it considers appropriate. This will be done in line with our Information Governance policy.

All complaints will be recorded and monitored to allow lessons to be learned. Where appropriate, changes to procedures or systems will be put in place to minimise the risk of similar complaints occurring. Training needs will also be actioned. The Complainant will be informed of any such outcomes.

6 Monitoring Complaints

BfN will monitor the number and the type of complaints made about our services across the organisation. The Complaints Log is maintained by the Central Support Manager and a report will be provided to the Board on an annual basis.

The outcome and lessons learned resulting from any complaints will also be reported to and assessed by the FAR committee and will be used when reviewing practices, policies, procedures and training.

As part of local contracts we may be required to submit information in relation to complaints. These are monitored and collated by the relevant Programme Manager. Concerns will also be discussed at formal contract monitoring meetings.

All records will be kept for a period of eight years from completion of any action, in accordance with our Document Retention schedule.

Appendix 1



Complaint Monitoring Form

Complainant Information

Name of Complainant:	
Tel. no.:	
Email address:	
Capacity of Complainant:	

Informal Complaint Details

Complaint Date:	
Complaint received by:	
Complaint Details:	
Line Manager/Supervisor:	
Programme Manager:	
Details of first response:	
Details of Investigation:	
Details of corrective actions and persons responsible:	
Details of second response:	
Complainant satisfied:	Yes/No

Formal Complaints Procedure

Date formal complaint received:	
Complainant and Volunteer/Staff member notified:	
Names of complaints panel:	
Date of panel meeting:	
Outcome:	
Follow-up actions and persons responsible:	
Actions completed:	
All parties notified:	
Complainant satisfied:	Yes/No

Appeal Procedure

Date appeal received:	
Complainant and Volunteer/Staff member notified:	
Names of appeal panel:	
Date of panel meeting:	
Outcome:	
Follow-up actions and persons responsible:	
Actions completed:	
All parties notified:	
Complainant satisfied:	Yes/No