



Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

**ABM PEER SUPPORTER &  
BREASTFEEDING COUNSELLOR  
TRAINING INFORMATION**

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Person responsible: Caroline Bolton



## ABM PEER SUPPORTER AND ABM BREASTFEEDING COUNSELLOR TRAINING

The ABM has been supporting new families for 40 years and we're excited that you are joining us. We offer several different training options. This information tells you about training as an ABM Peer Supporter (PS) and an ABM Breastfeeding Counsellor (BFC).

**Train from home:** Our ABM PS module is completed online. Our team of markers are experienced ABM Breastfeeding Counsellors. Some of them are lactation consultants (IBCLC) and/or health professionals.

**Voluntary work:** Our training courses are not intended to offer a pathway to paid employment. Job opportunities for BFC are rare and usually require further extensive training.

**ABM membership:** We don't ask you to pay anything until you've been accepted for training but you're very welcome to become a member at any time at [www.abm.me.uk/abm-membership/](http://www.abm.me.uk/abm-membership/)

**Outside UK:** Please note PS / BFC status is not valid outside of the UK. If a PS / BFC changes their residency to outside the UK or is temporarily out of the UK for longer than three months, then their status is no longer valid and is revoked. This applies to training status also.

## ABM PEER SUPPORTER COURSE

### WHAT DOES A PEER SUPPORTER DO?

As an ABM PS, you'll offer the knowledge and support of an informed friend to breastfeeding families in your community. You'll be able to signpost to up to date, evidence-based resources and offer practical suggestions to parents with normal breast/chestfeeding experiences. You won't be expected to solve complex breastfeeding problems, but you'll recognise when someone needs to be referred to a BFC, IBCLC or health professional. ABM volunteers provide information, but we never give advice.

As an ABM PS, you may help at a local support group, or your local maternity unit (if they would welcome this). Or you might like to use your knowledge to offer support to friends and family who are breastfeeding. It's your choice. You'll have the confidence you need to support breastfeeding in your community.

### WHAT DOES THE PS COURSE COVER?

#### Course units:

- Why is breastfeeding important?
- How breastfeeding works
- Early days of breastfeeding
- Night times, positioning and attachment

- Breastfeeding challenges
- Drugs, medication and illness
- Starting solid foods
- Expressing breast milk
- Myth busting
- Communication skills
- Exploring scenarios and appropriate referrals
- Your role as a PS
- The International Code of marketing of breast milk substitutes
- UK breastfeeding support

The course also asks you to observe two breastfeeds and reflect on your own breastfeeding experience.

It's essential that you've breastfed for at least six months before applying so that you've already met and coped with major stages. We expect that you would have thought about starting, and introduced at least some, solid foods to your baby by the time you complete the course so that you have personal experience of this stage.

### **WHAT SUPPORT WILL I HAVE?**

During your training you have the support of the ABM PS Training Team, and once you have passed the ABM PS Course, you'll be allocated a Peer Supporter Coordinator (PSC) and in some cases a Peer Supporter Mentor (PSM). You'll also find support from others on our dedicated ABM Trained and Training Facebook Group.

The PS course is accessed via the ABM Learn app and online platform. This is a guided learning platform that allows you to move between devices and learn at a time and pace that suits you.

The course consists of 11 learning pathways and two feeding observations. As you move through each pathway, you'll access evidence-based research articles, exclusive audio/film clips, and recommended online resources. You'll be able to demonstrate your new knowledge through games and quizzes. Each pathway contains a worksheet containing questions that will ask you to reflect or go into more depth. When you have successfully completed all the pathways in the PS course, you'll receive a congratulations email with a printable copy of your Pass Certificate.

We anticipate that the 11 pathways and two breastfeeding observations will need approximately 35 hours study time. Plan to spend a minimum of three hours per week to keep on track. Much of the course is self-marking which should allow you to feel confident as you move through the course content. All work should be submitted by the course deadline given to you on enrolment (but does not need to have been marked by that date).

### **HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE THE PS COURSE?**

**You have 12 weeks to complete the course** so please take this into consideration when deciding when to enrol on the course, thinking carefully about upcoming events in your family's life. Extensions may be considered by the course manager in exceptional, unforeseen circumstances, and may be subject to an additional administration fee.

### **WHAT DOES THE PS COURSE COST?**

PS training costs £25 plus our annual £20 membership fee (or £15 membership fee for households on a low income).

As a charity, the ABM is required to hold professional indemnity insurance for all ABM-qualified volunteers. The ABM PS course is for parents who want to support other breastfeeding families voluntarily. It isn't an appropriate course for anyone who is a health professional in the field of infant feeding, or anyone who works in an infant-related job. This may also apply to people who work privately in postnatal support, doulas, baby massage, hypnobirthing and other jobs supporting new mothers/parents. Please ask about our alternative Foundation and Advanced training courses if you fall into these categories.

## ABM BREASTFEEDING COUNSELLOR TRAINING

(An email modular course – not online)

You must pass our PS course before you can apply to train as a BFC. If you've already completed peer support training with another organisation it's not possible to bypass the PS module.

ABM BFC training is based around eight modules which are sent to you by email. You'll complete them by studying at home and return your module by email to our training team for assessment. The training programme includes anatomy and physiology, management of breastfeeding, assessing and evaluating problems, counselling and listening skills.

At the start and midway through your training, you'll be asked to find a few local/online people willing to let you watch them breastfeed to help with your training. You'll get several opportunities to practise taking a helpline call with your Breastfeeding Counsellor Coordinator (BFCC) before you start taking calls on the NBH. There are also practical assessments throughout the course.

## WHAT DOES THE BFC COURSE COVER?

### ABM BFC Training Modules

#### Module 1

- 1a – How Breastfeeding Works
- 1b – Positioning and Attachment and **Observation (<6mo)**
- 1c – Diversity and Inclusion
- 1d - Reflection

#### Module 2

- 2a – Breast and Nipple Problems
- 2b – Counselling Skills
- 2c – **Practical Assessment 1 (Positioning and Attachment)**
- 2d – **Practice Call 1**

#### Module 3

- 3a – The Importance of Breastfeeding
- 3b – Factors that Support or Hinder Breastfeeding
- 3c – The Environmental Impact of Infant Feeding
- 3d – The WHO Code

#### Module 4

- 4a - Newborn Baby Behaviour, Crying, Colic and Reflux, and Responsive Feeding
- 4b - Sleep and Night-time Breastfeeding
- 4c - Breast Refusal
- 4d - **Practice Call 2**

#### Module 5

- 5a – Expressing and Storing Breastmilk
- 5b – Combination Feeding
- 5c – Introducing Solid Food
- 5d – Breastfeeding an Older Baby and **Observation (>6mo)**

#### Module 6

- 6a – Milk Supply
- 6b – Relactation and Induced Lactation
- 6c – **Practical Assessment 2 (Hand Expressing and Breast Compressions)**
- 6d – **Practice Call 3**

#### Module 7

- 7a – Drugs in Breastmilk
- 7b – Mental Health
- 7c – Safeguarding and **Safeguarding Course Certificate**
- 7d – Becoming a Breastfeeding Counsellor

#### Module 8

- 8a – Premature Babies
- 8b – Twins and Multiples
- 8c – Pregnant and Tandem Breastfeeding
- 8d – **Practice Call 4**

We can't cover all the counselling questions you might meet, but after completing our training modules you'll have a good knowledge of breastfeeding and know how to find further information if you need it. We encourage trainees to study up to date breastfeeding books, online resources and relevant journals. You will need to complete an Annual Registration in accordance with the Update Guidance and mandatory requirements which include at least two supervision sessions.

#### HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE THE COURSE?

ABM BFC training takes approximately two years to complete, after the initial PS course. **You have eight weeks to complete each module, and each module will be marked within four weeks unless the marker gets in touch with you** Our training requires substantial self-directed reading and research. The course is demanding and not suitable for anyone already engaged in further learning.

All trainees have a BFCC who will support them throughout training and beyond, and you can access support from other trainees and BFC through our dedicated Facebook page.

### **HELPLINE COMMITMENT**

After qualifying, you'll answer calls to the National Breastfeeding Helpline (NBH) from your own home, for a minimum of two years. Our helpline is open 24 hours a day, with volunteers only taking calls between 9.30 am and 9.30pm. With our phone system, you can log in and out to be available for calls when convenient to you.

Those with heavy employment and/or family commitments can find it hard to fit in NBH calls. We ask you to consider carefully whether you'll be able to devote the necessary time to the ABM and NBH. There may be the opportunity after your probationary period to join the NBH social media or webchat teams.

In the first six months after qualifying, you are committed to take 50 calls and another 50 in the following six months, and another 100 in the second year.

### **PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

For the first six months you will be a Probationary Breastfeeding Counsellor (pBFC). Once you have successfully completed your six-month commitment on the NBH, you'll receive your official certificate. You can then use the title BFC. You'll stay in close contact with your BFCC so they can discuss any concerns you may have.

### **HOW MUCH DOES THE BFC COURSE COST?**

The administrative cost of BFC training is £100 which can be paid in two instalments. The ABM is a peer-to-peer organisation, and the role of a BFC is not suitable for those in a paid health professional or breastfeeding role. If you can't join our helpline team, we offer similar non-subsidised training to the same standard with our Advanced Course. Ask for details.