



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 Peer Supporter module is completed online. There are online study sessions available throughout the year. Our team of markers are experienced ABM Breastfeeding Counsellors. Many of them are lactation consultants (IBCLC) and/or health professionals.

Voluntary work: Our training courses aren't intended to offer a pathway to paid employment. Job opportunities for breastfeeding counsellors are extremely 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/

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their residency to outside the UK or is temporarily out of the UK for longer than three months, then their status is no longer valid and is revoked.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

(An online course)

The ABM's Peer Supporter course is having a makeover! You may see it referred to by the old title of 'Mother Supporter/MS' or its new name, 'Peer Supporter/PS'. Rest assured that the application process, core content and level of qualification are the same, whichever name you see in front of you.

WHAT DOES A PEER SUPPORTER DO?

As an ABM Peer Supporter, you'll offer the knowledge and support of an informed friend to breastfeeding families in your community. You'll be able to signpost to good resources and offer practical evidence-based 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 Breastfeeding Counsellor, Lactation Consultant or health professional. ABM volunteers provide information, but we never give advice.

As an ABM Peer Supporter, 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 mother supporter
- 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 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?

The course provides you with resources including evidence-based research articles, exclusive audio/film clips, and recommended further reading. You'll have a regional Peer Supporter Coordinator (PSC) and you'll be allocated a mentor who will have a special interest in supporting you through your training. You'll also find support from trainees and counsellors on our dedicated Facebook ABM Trained and Training Group.

When you've completed the lessons in each section, you'll be able to demonstrate your knowledge through a question and answer quiz. Some questions will be multiple choice while others will ask you to reflect or go into more depth. The lessons contain trusted resources which you'll need to use for this course. When you've completed each multiple-choice section, you'll know whether you need to look at your answers again or if you can move forward to the next section.

When you've completed the whole course, the marking team will assess the more complex reflections and longer answers. Your feedback may include a request for extra work, and then possibly a further second set of revisions. If the second request for extra work does not reach the standard required, this will mean you are not considered ready for the role of ABM Peer Supporter. You are welcome to reflect on your feedback, and if you feel you are ready, to reapply. When you have successfully passed the Peer Supporter module, you'll receive a congratulations email with a printable copy of your Pass Certificate.

We anticipate that the 14 lecture sections and two breastfeeding observations will need approximately 35 hours study time, plus another few hours once the marker has sent any extra work. 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.

HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE THE PS COURSE?

We expect you to complete the course within 12 weeks 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 ONGOING SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

A regional mentor will be available to offer you guidance as you work through the course. Your mentor will contact you up to four times a year to check in, but, of course, you're welcome to contact them any time you feel that you need support or a nudge in the right direction to find the information you're looking for. After you've qualified as an ABM Peer Supporter, you need to complete an annual update to enhance your initial training and ensure your practice is current and evidence-based. Please see the Update Training Guidelines for options.

WHAT DOES THE PS COURSE COST?

Peer Supporter 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 Peer Supporter 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, baby massage, hypnobirthing and other jobs supporting new mothers. Please ask about our alternative Breastfeeding Support (Foundation and Advanced) training courses.

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ABM BREASTFEEDING COUNSELLOR TRAINING (BFC)

(An email modular course – not online)

You must pass our basic Peer Supporter module before you can apply to train as a Breastfeeding Counsellor. If you've already done peer support training, it's bound to be useful as you complete this initial module but it's not possible to bypass the Peer Supporter module.

ABM Breastfeeding Counsellor 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, and how to resolve them with counselling and listening skills.

At the start and midway through your training, you'll be asked to find a few local 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 – Practice Call 1
- 2d – Practical Assessment 1 (Positioning and Attachment)

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 – Practice Call 3
- 6d – Practical Assessment 2 (Hand Expressing and Breast Compressions)

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 and relevant journals. You will need to complete annual updates as per our update policy.

HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE THE COURSE?

ABM Breastfeeding Counsellor training takes approximately two years to complete, after the initial Peer Supporter module. **You have eight weeks to complete each module.** 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 counsellors through our dedicated Facebook page.

HELPLINE COMMITMENT

After qualifying, you'll answer calls to the NBH (from your own home) for a minimum of two years. Our helpline is open from 9.30am till 10.30pm every day. With our phone system, you can log in and out to be available for calls when convenient to you.

Counsellors with heavy employment and/or family commitments can find it hard to fit in helpline calls. We ask you to consider carefully whether you'll be able to devote the necessary time to the ABM and national helplines.

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. Once you have successfully completed your six-month commitment on the helpline, you'll receive your official certificate. You can then use the title Breastfeeding Counsellor. You'll stay in close contact with your regional BFCC so they can discuss any concerns you may have.

HOW MUCH DOES THE BFC COURSE COST?

The administrative cost of breastfeeding counsellor training is £100 which can be paid in two instalments. The ABM is a peer-to-peer organisation and the role of a Breastfeeding Counsellor 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 Breastfeeding Support (Advanced) training. Ask for details.