



Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice

Code of Conduct Policy

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Purpose

Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice is a group of bereaved families campaigning together for UK-wide and devolved public inquiries into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. We exist to ensure that lessons are learned in order to save lives. We run a UK-wide campaign and also have devolved nation, regional and issue-based branches who all campaign and take action within the parameters of the overall group.

These guidelines apply to how we behave with each other, our partners and external audiences.

We hope that by adhering to these guidelines we will be able to ensure a more positive experience for all of us involved with the campaign and ensure that it is as sustainable as possible for the future. The vast majority of us are personally bereaved and we have a very personal relationship to the subject matter, and for non-bereaved staff and volunteers, whether bereaved or not, working on this issue with the bereaved also takes an emotional toll. We hope that by following these guidelines, we will be doing all we can to make things as manageable as possible and reduce the emotional burden on everyone involved.

Policy Statement

This code of conduct applies to directors, members and staff. Actions and processes relating to breaches or alleged breaches of this code of conduct will be handled differently depending on whether they relate to volunteers / directors (voluntary) or staff in line with employment law.

Scope

This code of conduct applies to interactions with members, staff, volunteers and/or directors via email, phone, in video calls e.g. Zoom, on social media and in person and to behaviour when representing the group in the media, at events and meetings, and on social media.

What are our values?

The primary values of the campaign are justice and compassion. We are working to unearth the answers around the deaths of our loved ones, to secure accountability for the decision-makers that facilitated the nation's experience of Covid-19, and to ensure every measure is taken to prevent future loss as a result of this or any other pandemic. We are united by our individual losses and aim to create a compassionate space for us to experience our grief. We work to comfort each other in grief, memorialise our lost loved ones, compel the provision of Mental Health support resources and facilities. With the aid of allies, we seek to create measurable change for the better.

In order to uphold our values:

We treat each other with respect

This applies to interactions with members, staff, or volunteers and/or directors via email, via phone, via zooms, within the private Facebook groups, within Branch and subgroup meetings, in action network discussion rooms, and in person.

There may be differing opinions and we will hold them respectfully, always attempting to understand where one another is coming from and appreciating our right to hold differing views as long as those opinions do not mean they diverge from the purpose of the campaign or breach group rules. This includes, but is not limited to, rules around making unsubstantiated claims e.g. around the vaccine, hate speech and discrimination or being unkind and discourteous. We do not tolerate bullying or harassment of members, volunteers, directors, or staff. No group member can be excluded from activities for reasons other than these without consultation with the staff and wider campaign/branch team.

We give each other the benefit of the doubt

Our campaign aims to pack a punch far bigger than it ought to be able to, given its size. From time to time this will inevitably mean the number and scale of activities we are juggling won't always happen as ideally as we want them to. Our starting point should always be an assumption that everyone is trying their best and we are working to the same goals. When something doesn't go to plan, we will remain patient and courteous with each other.

We seek to resolve conflict constructively and in a way which is based on the principles of respect and giving each other the benefit of the doubt

We will always seek to be constructive in our criticisms and remain respectful in our communications with each other. All parties will aim to work things through in a way that moves things forward and, where possible, prevents further conflict in the future. If members, volunteers or staff feel they cannot work together, the Directors and/or Management Team will work proactively with them to resolve any differences or work on a way to minimise future conflict, so that the issue is never long term.

We aim to maintain strong lines of communication at all times

When things are busy communication can be the first thing to suffer. We will always try our best to communicate what is happening, where things may not happen as expected or may need to change and why. This communication will take place within a reasonable timescale, subject to need and availability. Inside working hours and with the exception of time off (planned or unplanned) or sickness, staff will endeavour to respond to non-urgent and urgent emails within a reasonable timeframe. For further information, please refer to the Communications Policy.

We will respect each other's boundaries and right to a work/life balance

Whether members, staff or volunteers, we are all juggling a huge amount. In order to avoid burning out, we all need to be able to take time and space when we need it and to have the right to downtime. All staff, volunteers and directors need to respect this right for each other and try to understand that we have different ways of balancing things e.g. if someone prefers to work on campaign matters in the late evening, it will be best to communicate with others via email so as not to create the sense of a need to respond at the same time.

We are not party political

Our criticisms (or where relevant praise) of and for governments are based on the issues at hand and we will never in a campaign capacity make comments which are party political in nature e.g. another party would have done better, the approach to Covid shows this party for who they are, this government should be voted out. Staff, volunteers and directors are entitled to publicly express political opinions outside of campaign activities. Where political activities e.g. running for election may represent a conflict of interest for the campaign, this should be declared to the Board of Directors for consideration.

Volunteers, staff and directors have a responsibility to stick to agreed campaign messaging

We will not make public statements which contradict our objectives or which do not fall within the remit of the campaign. We will not speak on issues where there is no existing campaign policy (agreed by either the campaign team or the branch) without consulting with the staff team and relevant team or branch. By consulting with others, we will ensure that there is oversight across what is being said and that any potential risks are averted, as well as protecting individuals from criticism if there is any disagreement from within the group or externally. We must also represent the Campaign in a Covid safe way, which includes abiding by social distancing policies where applicable, especially when doing media work for the group, to uphold our aims and stance and prevent them being undermined.

We will individually and collectively uphold group rules and principles

These include:

- Being kind and courteous to one another and our members
- Duty of candour. Best endeavours to be made when asking and answering questions, as well as general interactions.
- Not making unsubstantiated claims in relation to Covid-19
- Not making blanket comments against frontline staff and ensuring that criticisms are focused on structures and systems which have led to poor outcomes
- Not making discriminatory or hateful remarks or threats on the basis of someone's identity. This includes, but is not limited to, direct or indirect discrimination of someone based on their sex, gender, age, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, being married/in a civil partnership, class or caring responsibilities.

We maintain confidentiality

We will not share sensitive communications involving volunteers, directors, or staff with the other members, the general, public, or media without prior consent. We will not share any member information that we are given access to as part of our role nor use said information in a manner other than they have previously agreed to without prior consent. Further, should we leave our role, we will relinquish our access to said information and remove any copies that may

have been made. We will also not criticise other volunteers, directors or staff members in conversations with wider group members, the public or the media as this will serve to reduce confidence in the campaign and therefore reduce our ability to make change. Our approach to confidentiality relating to personal data is set out in the volunteer confidentiality and data protection agreement, which everyone who has access to personal data must agree to. This is not to be seen to be to the detriment of anyone feeling they cannot speak openly, the guidance here is to try to do so constructively.

Ways of working

Working hours

Staff are not expected to respond to messages outside their working hours (which is based on standard office hours) or when they are on leave, though they may choose to if they feel able to or if the need arises. When contacting staff outside of working hours, we would encourage volunteers and directors to make contact via email in order to promote work life balance for the team. On occasion it may be necessary to make contact via WhatsApp or text outside of these times if an emergency situation arises which requires an immediate response. These situations are relatively unusual. If a message is sent outside of working hours, a response should not be expected until the staff member is back at work.

Time off

All volunteers and directors are entitled to take time off whether planned or unplanned and while we are all hugely motivated by what our campaign seeks to achieve, we should never feel guilty for looking after ourselves. Time off is necessary, even more so in our campaign given the emotional nature of what we are working on and what we are all going through. Where possible, time off should be communicated to others so that they are able to pick up anything that would otherwise have been dealt with by you. If you receive messages you're unable to deal with while taking time out, if able, please forward these on to others.

Dealing with issues

Where there is a potential breach of the Code of Conduct, depending on the severity of the breach, we would encourage staff, volunteers and directors to do either or both:

- Remind the individual in question of our agreed ways of working
- Report the breach to the Board of Directors for consideration of action which may need to be taken

Actions in relation to volunteers and directors may include but are not limited to:

- Verbal or written reminders
- Verbal or written warnings
- Sanctions, such as reduced or restricted access to systems
- Removal from role

Where breaches relate to members of staff, this will be addressed through relevant policies and procedures in line with employment law.

Through the Governance Review, we intend to create a formal complaints procedure to set out the way in which complaints will be handled.

Guide to Complaints/Grievance Process

In the first instance complaints/grievances should be discussed with the lead contact for your group/branch to be resolved informally where possible.

If there is no satisfactory resolution or if not appropriate The Operations and Organisational Development Manager should be contacted to investigate and resolve.

The complaint/grievance may be escalated to directors where appropriate.

The process will at all times be:

- Accessible
- Open
- Inclusive process
- Dealt with fairly and consistently
- Dealt with in a Timely manner

All parties will be kept updated throughout the process.

APPEALS PROCESS

A person may appeal against any decision and must do so within five working days of receiving notification of such a decision. The appeal must be made in writing and outline the grounds for the appeal. The appeal will be chaired by a senior manager who was not involved in the original decision. The decision made at the appeal hearing will be final.

Other Relevant Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our organisation, the following policies are also included under our [policy] umbrella:

Complaints Policy	
EDI Policy	
Grievance Policy	