



Volunteer Birth Companion: Role Description

About Amma

Amma Birth Companions is a Glasgow charity that provides care, information, and advocacy to pregnant people and new parents with limited support. Our services are free and include birth and postnatal companionship, peer support, and education.

Our clients include those who are seeking asylum, refugees, survivors of human trafficking, and individuals from other marginalised groups.

We aim to create a nurturing space where individuals feel seen, informed, and empowered in all aspects of their birth and early parenting experiences.

Role

The role of the Birth Companion (BC) is integral to Amma's work. Birth companions offer voluntary emotional and practical support during pregnancy and birth, and for a short period following birth.

Clients are typically assigned a small team of companion volunteers according to their individual needs and preferences. Each case is overseen and coordinated by a Perinatal Team Leader, who will ensure that safe, appropriate and trauma informed support is always provided. All volunteers are managed by our Volunteer Manager. Across the organisation, we have several experienced doulas, midwives and infant feeding experts who can assist as necessary.

Birth companions support clients in their homes, at hospital appointments, and during birth. Birth companions are typically expected to be on-call from the 37th week of their client's pregnancy until birth. We will, however, consider a limited number of applications from those who are unable to be on call but can offer specific support during pregnancy (e.g., birth planning and preparation).

Support is tailored to each client and would usually include:

- Building a relationship of trust and a safe space for open discussion
- Working in collaboration with the parent to create a birth plan
- Providing emotional and practical support before, during and after birth
- Providing information about rights, processes, and choices in relation to birth
- Offering emotional support and/or advocacy at hospital appointments
- Support to establish infant feeding
- Informing the staff team when onward referrals are necessary to ensure clients' needs are met by the most appropriate agency
- Shopping for essential items in an emergency
- Supporting a seamless transition from birth to postnatal companionship following birth
- Linking parents with Amma's peer support group and other local supports and activities as appropriate
- Using an interpreter to overcome language barriers



- Keeping thorough records using our client database

Process and Time Commitment

- We request that each BC support a minimum of three clients per year, working as part of a team. Due to the level of training provided, we ask that BCs commit to a minimum of one year of volunteering.
- Although people can be referred to Amma at any point in their pregnancies, BC support typically starts in the last trimester. Clients are paired with a small team of companions based on language, experience, and availability.
- BCs can share the support for the client including the on-call commitment. BCs are on call from 37th week of pregnancy until birth.
- BCs are there to support clients throughout labour and birth. If a person is induced or having a C-section, the BC will be present as appropriate.
- BCs carry out an average of 10 hours of support in the home before the birth.
- If there are barriers to attending Amma's antenatal classes, BCs may be asked to provide 1:1 birth preparation.
- BCs typically visit parents 1-2 times after the baby is born before ending the one-to-one service or transitioning care to the postnatal companions as appropriate.

Qualities and Skills

Essential:

- A caring, compassionate, non-judgmental, and calm disposition
- Confidence to advocate when necessary
- Ability to manage confidentiality and boundaries
- Good spoken and written English
- Available to be on call from the 37th week of pregnancy to birth. This involves keeping your Amma phone on and being able to drop everything and go when labour starts.
- Able to attend approximately 40 hours of face-to-face induction training supplemented with self-directed online learning
- Able to write up clear notes on a computer
- Committed to attending monthly peer support and ongoing group learning sessions
- Belief in Amma's values including a commitment to anti-racism and inclusivity
- Self-motivation, emotional resilience, a flexible approach, and the ability to effectively manage your own wellbeing
- Ability and willingness to travel to appointments and births
- Ability and willingness to attend births during antisocial hours
- Willingness to follow health and safety guidance including government guidance on Covid-19
- Ability to physically support people during labour and birth, often over long hours. This may include weight bearing and standing for long periods. This also includes volunteering in homes that are only accessible by stairs.
- Willingness to provide hands-on care such as physical touch and massage
- Willingness to support people within a home setting and within other accommodation across the city
- Glasgow area resident



Desirable:

- Ability to speak languages spoken by Amma's client group
- Knowledge of refugee/immigration issues
- Knowledge and/or experience of pregnancy and birth
- Experience of supporting people facing issues related to the asylum process, mental health and/or trauma
- Relevant lived experience of our client group

Training, Support and Supervision

Reflective and supported practice are essential for the safety and wellbeing of both BCs and the clients they support. Whilst this is a very fulfilling role, the emotional impact of supporting parents with complex needs can be significant.

Therefore, we put the following in place:

- Essential induction of approximately 40 hours of face-to-face induction training supplemented with self-directed online learning
- A period of shadowing before the BC starts to actively support clients
- Ongoing support from an experienced mentor
- Monthly peer support sessions led by a clinical supervisor
- Ongoing skills development opportunities
- Regular opportunities to connect with and befriend other Amma volunteers
- The provision of an Amma phone to enable safe and boundaried working

Expenses

Amma will cover reasonable out of pocket expenses for travel and food and (in exceptional circumstances) childcare.

Become a certified trauma skilled Amma Doula

Our birth and postnatal companions are trained to deliver trauma skilled support to clients with highly complex needs. The skills, knowledge and experience gained through Amma goes beyond what many doula training programmes can offer. In recognition of this and knowing that many of our volunteers also wish to support birthing people outside of Amma, we offer Amma Doula certification to volunteers who:

- Complete Amma's induction training programme
- Attend 70% of supervision sessions over a one-year period
- Attend 70% of group learning sessions over a one-year period
- Have provided 1-1 support to a minimum of three birth or postnatal clients
- Complete a reflective assignment