

## 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 volunteer Birth Companion (BC) is integral to Amma's work. Birth companions offer emotional and practical support during labour and birth to clients who might otherwise give birth alone.

BCs will sometimes work as part of a small team of companion volunteers but may offer standalone support. 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.

BCs support clients primarily during labour and birth but will ideally meet the client at least once before giving birth. BCs are expected to be on-call from the 37<sup>th</sup> week of their client's pregnancy until birth.

Support is tailored to each client but may include:

- Providing emotional and hands-on support during labour and birth
- Providing information about rights, processes, and choices in relation to birth and advocating on behalf of the client to ensure their rights are respected
- Support immediately following birth to establish infant feeding
- Informing the staff team when onward referrals are necessary to ensure clients' needs are met by the most appropriate agency
- Supporting a seamless transition from birth to postnatal companionship following birth
- Using an interpreter to overcome language barriers
- Keeping thorough records using our client database

### Process and Time Commitment

**Becoming a BC requires a great deal of flexibility and availability. BCs go on-call from the 37<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and could be on-call for up to five weeks. Please consider the following before applying to the role:**



- We request that each BC support a minimum of **two clients per year** (up to a maximum of four clients per year). Due to the level of training and ongoing support provided, **we ask that BCs commit to a minimum of one year of volunteering.**
- BCs go on-call from 37th week of pregnancy until birth, which could extend to 42 weeks+.
- 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 will typically meet the client at least once before they give birth. However, this is not always possible if the client is referred to us especially late in their pregnancy.
- Attending a birth can take 8 hours or more.

## Qualities and Skills

### Essential:

- A caring, compassionate, non-judgmental, and calm disposition
- Ability to work as part of a team
- 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 50 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 (taxis are provided to attend 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
- Able to support individuals safely and confidently with an extensive history of trauma (if you are currently undergoing recovery from trauma, please consider your own wellbeing before applying to this role)
- Glasgow area resident

### Desirable:

- Ability to speak other languages
- 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 50 hours of face-to-face induction training supplemented with self-directed online learning
- A period of shadowing before starting to independently support clients
- Ongoing support from an experienced mentor
- Monthly supervision sessions led by a mental health professional
- Access to individual mental health support if needed
- 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 clients
- Complete a reflective assignment