



Policy	Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy
Implementation Date	June 2024
Signed off by Trustee Board	June 2024
Review Date	June 2024
Reviewed By	Denise Marshall – Designated Safeguarding Lead
Next review date	June 2025
Connecting Policies	Code of Conduct Policy Confidentiality and Communication Policy Dignity at Work Policy Equality and Diversity Policy GDPR Policy Health and Safety Policy & Procedures Homeworking Equipment and Security policy Management protocols for Staff Public Interest Disclosure Policy (Whistleblowing policy) Recruitment Policy Supervision of volunteers Policy Trauma Informed Working policy

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Legal responsibilities and guidance	2
Safeguarding practice in Birth Companions	4
Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding team	4
Policy, guidance, procedures and training.....	4
A trauma-informed approach	5
Safe recruitment practices and DBS checks	5
Recording Safeguarding concerns.....	6
Internal reporting, reflection and accountability	6
Good working practices.....	6
Risk assessments.....	6
Good information sharing where appropriate	7
Links with City and Hackney Child and Adult Safeguarding Board.....	7

Introduction

Birth Companions takes Safeguarding very seriously and is committed to providing safe and supportive environments for everyone who uses our services and who is involved with our organisation.

Birth Companions believes that everyone has the right to live free from abuse, harm, exploitation and neglect, regardless of age, ability or disability, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status.

We will ensure that our activities are delivered in a way that keeps children and adults safe by using safe recruitment practices and risk assessing all activities. We also work in a trauma informed way with the intention of creating a feeling of safety for those accessing our services.

Birth Companions will also take a proactive approach to safeguarding the welfare of all children and adults using our services, of all volunteers and staff involved with our organisation and any others who become known to us.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in Birth Companions. All members need to be able to recognise, respond to, report, escalate and record concerns. We all have a moral and legal duty to report any safeguarding concerns.

- Our Policy sets out how we work together in Birth Companions to keep people safe and ensure best practice in safeguarding; and what is expected from staff and volunteers.
- Our **Child** and **Adult** safeguarding documents cover different types of abuse and what to look out for; and prison-specific information.
- **Our Guidance - what to do** document covers what to do when dealing with a concern; good practice on asking for consent and sharing information; and how concerns will be dealt with.

Legal responsibilities and guidance

In Birth Companions, we work with women in the perinatal period and need to focus on both child and adult safeguarding.

The key guidance for child safeguarding is *Working Together to Safeguard Children (updated December 2023)*¹. This states that everyone working with children (including babies) has a responsibility for keeping them safe and that everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play in sharing information and identifying concerns. A child is defined as someone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Birth Companions has a responsibility to work together with other organisations and professionals, and to share information where this is in the interests of safeguarding a child or adult. Good multi-agency working is seen as key to good safeguarding practice (Department of Education 2023) and safeguarding concerns will always take precedence over confidentiality or data protection.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cb4349a7ded0000c79e4e1/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

*The Care Act (2014)*² extends safeguarding responsibilities to adults, and applies to a person over 18 who:

- a) Has needs for care and support and
- b) Is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect, and
- c) As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse and / or neglect.

Most women supported in Birth Companions will not come within this definition or within the scope of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, which deals with someone's ability to give informed consent. However, Birth Companions believes that experiences of trauma and disadvantage mean that the women we work with are at greater risk of harm and exploitation. Insecure housing and immigration status, domestic abuse and mental health challenges can all increase risk. For this reason, in Birth Companions, we think about safeguarding more broadly. This is part of our commitment to keeping women safe, but is also essential in the context of working with women in the perinatal period. Many of the women we are working with are caring for, or having contact with a baby or older child, and their safety will be inextricably linked together.

Furthermore, we have a duty to ensure the safety of our staff and volunteers working in prisons and the community; sometimes on their own.

The safeguarding duty for adults living in prisons or approved premises sits with the prison or institution in which the person resides. The Local Authority can often act as a Critical Friend in a supportive capacity, but they do not have jurisdiction to direct prisons or approved premises. The standard of care someone receives within a prison or approved premises should be the same as they would receive in the community. Birth Companions will always raise and follow up on the safeguarding concerns that we become aware of in the prisons where we are working.

*The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006*³ provides the legal framework for the work of the Disclosure and Barring Service. Under the Act it is an offence for organisations to recruit people to work with children and vulnerable adults that they know are barred. The Act also makes it clear that there is no distinction between paid work and voluntary work.

Birth Companions is committed to maintaining confidentiality, only collecting necessary personal information and keeping secure the information we are entrusted with. Our GDPR policy, privacy notices and Retention of Records policies all set out in detail how we approach the storage and retention of personal information and on what basis we would share information in line with the *General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR)*⁴. Our Confidentiality and Communication Policy and our Homeworking, Equipment and Security policy, set out clear guidelines for all our staff and volunteers about how we expect them to communicate and handle information. All our relevant policies are reviewed and updated

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/contents>

⁴ [https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/The+General+Protection+Data+Regulation+\(GDPR\)+-+Guidance+for+Members.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/The+General+Protection+Data+Regulation+(GDPR)+-+Guidance+for+Members.pdf)

to ensure they remain up to date.

Safeguarding practice in Birth Companions

We ensure good Safeguarding practice in Birth Companions by having

- A Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Safeguarding team who can advise and respond to concerns
- Robust Safeguarding policies and guidance
- Initial and regular refresher training to enable all members of Birth Companions to recognise and appropriately respond to, report and document concerns
- A trauma-informed approach to safeguarding
- Safe recruitment practices
- DBS checks of all Birth Companions staff, volunteers and trustees
- A secure system to record safeguarding concerns, which is reviewed regularly
- Robust internal safeguarding reporting, reflection and accountability processes
- Good working practices
- Risk assessments of all visits and activities
- Good information-sharing
- Links with Hackney Child and Adult Safeguarding Board

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding team

Denise Marshall (denise@birthcompanions.org.uk) is Designated Safeguarding Lead for the organisation and Tanya Tracey and Eppie Leese are Deputy Safeguarding Leads.

Naomi Delap (naomi@birthcompanions.org.uk) is the next point of contact in the safeguarding team.

The Safeguarding team and other staff have expertise in different areas:
Tanya Tracey (tanya@birthcompanions.org.uk)- Criminal Justice Services
Eppie Leese (eppie@birthcompanions.org.uk) - Community Services
Kate Chivers (kate@birthcompanions.org.uk)- Participation and Lived Experience Team
Helen Benson-Reynolds (helen@birthcompanions.org.uk)- Social Services Lead

The DSL and Safeguarding team are available for staff to approach and discuss concerns as they arise. The team work to embed and promote a transparent safeguarding culture where everyone is valued, listened to, respected, and is comfortable to discuss and share concerns.

All Trustees share a responsibility for Safeguarding but Klare Meyer currently acts as the main Trustee points of contact for Safeguarding.

Policy, guidance, procedures and training

Birth Companions' Safeguarding policy, guidance and procedure is reviewed once a year and updated to include learning from safeguarding situations that have arisen within BC; our yearly audit; local authority case reviews and any changes in legislation and good practice.

Our training is based on our policy, guidance and procedure and ensures that all in Birth Companions know how to deal with a concern. Trustees undergo a training specific to their safeguarding duties as trustees. Staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training as part of their induction. Staff are also trained to record safeguarding incidents in our database; and have annual safeguarding refresher training. Volunteers have refresher training every 2 years.

The Safeguarding team attend external training with City and Hackney Child Safeguarding board. All are encouraged to access a range of courses run by CHCSB.

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to attend and keep up with Birth Companions safeguarding training requirements; and to read and sign the policy when requested to do so.

A trauma-informed approach

We will work in a way that respects and promotes the rights, wishes and feelings of children and adults and will apply trauma-informed principles to our safeguarding work. This means that we will seek to understand women's situations and behaviour, and will work collaboratively, where possible, to achieve best outcomes for mothers and babies. We will raise concerning behaviours with the person (unless this increases risk to others) before taking further action. However, we will not let our trauma informed and woman-centred approach prevent us from recognising and acting on concerns.

Safe recruitment practices and DBS checks

Each stage of our recruitment process is designed to ensure safe recruitment of staff and volunteers in the following ways:

- Clear statements about our approach to safeguarding included in information sent to applicants and in job descriptions.
- A self-disclosure form on which applicants are required to indicate if they have any previous convictions relevant to the post applied for.
- Questions about safeguarding during interview to assist us in ensuring a full and correct understanding and attitude to safeguarding.
- References from two referees from previous employers including the most recent employer must be received before applicants can join Birth Companions in either a staff or volunteer role. A question about safeguarding is included in the reference request.
- All our staff, volunteers and trustees are subject to enhanced DBS check at the level appropriate for their role, before they begin support work in the prison, hospital or community settings.
- All DBS certificates are registered with the update service and their status checked every two years.
- Any previous convictions we become aware of as result of a DBS check will be discussed by a panel consisting of the appropriate staff member, Director and a trustee. Decisions about whether

the candidate can work or volunteers with Birth Companions will be taken on a case by case basis, considering factors such as the type of offence, time elapsed since the offence and whether the candidate had already informed us of the conviction.

Recording Safeguarding concerns

All concerns are recorded and updated in our database (Lamplight) and are stored securely. Concerns are discussed in regular team and individual meetings and are reviewed at least once a month by the DSL and another member of the safeguarding team. They are also reviewed in the quarterly Safeguarding subcommittee meetings.

Internal reporting, reflection and accountability

The safeguarding leads meet monthly to review recent safeguarding cases and discuss safeguarding practice. Safeguarding is discussed in every relevant staff supervision.

The board's Safeguarding subcommittee meets quarterly to review safeguarding concerns, reflect on them and discuss any learning. The subcommittee also monitors DBS and safeguarding records to ensure that these are up to date.

The Subcommittee is made up of the DSL, and other staff and trustee members of the Safeguarding team. The DSL reports quarterly to Trustees on safeguarding incidents and work, and also produces an annual report. A trustee member of the Safeguarding team does an annual audit of safeguarding in the organisation.

Discussion about and reflection on safeguarding happens across the organisation in volunteer and staff meetings. There is a culture of openness and learning from situations.

Good working practices

All staff and volunteers are bound by our code of practice, which is revisited every year. We also have a lone worker policy and procedures for working in prisons and in the community which are designed to keep people safe. Volunteers and staff have a responsibility to follow these so that they do not put themselves or others at risk. Staff and volunteers also have access to supervision, clinical supervision, reflective practice and check-ins, as appropriate to their work. Volunteers are encouraged to debrief after support.

Risk assessments

A risk assessment is carried out for all activities in Birth Companions. Women's homes are also assessed by the Coordinator/Staff member in advance of volunteers visiting. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated as necessary for each visit or activity with any changes. Our Lone worker policy and procedures for working in prisons and in the community are designed to keep staff and volunteers safe.

Good information sharing where appropriate

Birth Companions is committed to maintaining confidentiality, only collecting necessary personal information and keeping the information we are entrusted with secure. However, safeguarding overrides confidentiality and confidentiality cannot be offered where a situation involves the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Birth Companions will follow the guidance on sharing information and having a multi-agency approach to safeguarding.

Links with City and Hackney Child and Adult Safeguarding Board

The Safeguarding team receive updates from CHCAB and all in Birth Companions have access to their training.