



Birth Companions' environmental statement

Birth Companions acknowledges the urgent threat the climate and biodiversity emergency presents to human life, and in particular to the lives of the mothers and babies we have supported and will continue to support. We recognise we have a collective duty to act now to mitigate the impact of this crisis, as part of our commitment to providing mothers and babies with the best futures, whatever their circumstances.

We acknowledge that the negative impacts of climate change and biodiversity decline are disproportionately borne by persons and communities already in disadvantaged situations owing to geography, poverty, gender, age, disability, cultural or ethnic background. These are also the people who have historically contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions and the destruction of the natural world.

There are inextricable links between climate change and economic inequality, racism, and the restriction of reproductive rights. We therefore view efforts to address climate change and reverse the destruction of the natural world as an essential part of our work to achieve systemic change for women facing disadvantage and inequality.

Alongside our policy and campaigning work, Birth Companions is committed to ensuring our organisational and personal practices have a positive social and environmental impact. We recognise that staff have an important role to play in responding to the urgent challenge of climate change, and we aim to encourage our employees to 'walk the talk' when it comes to sustainability behaviour, in line with our organisational values and policies.

We have compiled some practical examples of actions Birth Companions have taken so far, which we hope can inspire others in the voluntary sector to reflect on their own organisational and personal practices. This is a working document, and will be updated as our thinking and practices evolve. We are also keen to hear from others in the sector – please contact us at info@birthcompanions.org.uk if you would like to discuss anything further.

Practical examples of actions Birth Companions has taken:

PramDepot

- Birth Companions follows a green purchasing policy that requires staff to judge any purchasing decisions on the basis of a green purchasing hierarchy: reduce, reuse, recycle. This applies to practical items we provide to the pregnant women, mothers and babies we support.

- A good example of this is our partnership with [PramDepot](#), an arts-led recycling project providing second-hand essential baby items and Baby Boxes filled with high quality recycled baby clothes and equipment to new mums facing disadvantage.

Climate Perks

- Birth Companions is proud to be a [Climate Perks](#) accredited employer. This means that we will give paid travel time where employees elect to travel via land or sea rather than air.
- We support and encourage staff to engage in sustainable holiday travel, and as such we offer staff up to two additional leave days a year to replace non-sustainable travel to and from holidays with sustainable modes of transport.
- Additional to our Climate Perks participation, Birth Companions has made the decision to not fund any staff travel that involves the use of air travel.

Remote working

- Birth Companions has chosen to remain a remote organisation with no central office building. This helps reduce our overall energy consumption and eliminates emissions normally associated with staff's daily commutes.
- Where travel is still essential for work – to visit women we are supporting in prisons and in the community; to attend staff meetings; to host and/or attend training days etc. – we encourage staff to take public transport options. Where there is a cost implication for staff using public transport instead of cars, we consider offering financial support in order to facilitate this.
- We acknowledge that, while reducing our energy consumption at an organisational level, asking our staff to work remotely can shift this consumption into their own home. As such, we provide all staff with advice on how to reduce their work-related energy consumption at home, and encourage staff to reflect on their energy consumption more generally. We have found the [ACEVO Working from home: starter sustainability tips guide](#) helpful in informing our work on this.

In-person working

- Where possible, Birth Companions selects venues for the in-person elements of our work (staff meetings, training days, community classes and groups, etc.) that are sustainably and ethically run.
- A good example of this is our regular use of the [Islington Ecology Centre](#), a visitor and education centre set within Gillespie Park, Islington's largest nature reserve, which is home to a wealth of wildlife, ponds, woodland and meadow areas, and provides the public with advice on wildlife, gardening and sustainable living.
- We also routinely use the [Resource for London](#) in Holloway and the [Shoreditch Trust's Healthy Living Centre](#) as venues for in-person work, both of which have ethical, ecological and community-minded values at their core.
- By choosing to use venues such as these, we aim to promote and financially support their existence, and to demonstrate the ways that issues of poverty, inequality and the environment interconnect.

Purchasing decisions

- Our sustainable purchasing policy requires staff to judge any purchasing decisions on the basis of a green purchasing hierarchy: reduce, reuse,

recycle. This applies to purchases of stationery, paper, printing and mailing products, and branded items for informational and promotional use.

- Where such items are necessary for our work, we make a concerted effort to source sustainable options; we opt for paper options over plastic; recycled over new; and seek out certified organic and/or Fair Trade products.
- We encourage all staff to consider their printing and postage use, though we acknowledge that these are often essential to our work particularly as a remote organisation.

ACEVO Climate Emergency Pledge

- We have signed up to the [ACEVO](#) (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations) Sustainability Leadership Principles.
- These principles, “the three As,” provide a shared commitment for leaders of voluntary organisations to acknowledge the scale of the climate crisis; to be ambitious in our pursuit of climate justice, both as leaders of individual organisations and as a collective voice for civil society; and to act wherever we can to create progress.
- Birth Companions, along with ACEVO and the other signatories, acknowledges that this is a journey, but this pledge provides a framework for progress and a community in which to share learning.
- The full list of seven principles, and information for other voluntary sector organisations on how to sign up to them, can be found [here](#).