



Volunteering at Birth Companions Recruitment Pack

Hello, and thank you for your interest in volunteering with us.

We are looking for volunteers to join our four-month training programme to become part of our team of highly dedicated and committed volunteers who deliver support to pregnant women and new mothers experiencing multiple disadvantage in the community in London.

Overall, we are looking for individuals who are non-judgemental, empathic and kind, with a genuine commitment to empowering women and supporting them in their choices around birth and early parenting. Our volunteers must be able to respect and accept the choices that women make and be respectful of cultural differences.

Our community support services primarily reach women in the North London boroughs of **Islington, Haringey, Hackney, and Enfield**. We are looking for volunteers who can readily access these areas within a reasonable travel time and cost. If you are able to do so, we encourage you to apply. Please be aware that although we also work within prisons, we are not currently seeking volunteers for prison-based support.

In this recruitment pack you will find the following information:

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1 About Birth Companions

Birth Companions is a registered charity that supports pregnant women and new mothers experiencing multiple disadvantage in London. We empower women to have positive perinatal and birthing experiences by providing compassionate, non-judgmental support during pregnancy, labour, birth, and the postnatal period.

Whilst our mission of a society where equity and justice are realities for all mothers and babies is a compelling one, delivering that mission requires a huge amount of effort from everyone committed to this cause. Although we now have 16 staff members and a dedicated team of volunteers, when Birth Companions started, it was run and delivered entirely by volunteers.

Volunteers who bring compassion, dedication, lived and learned experience, advocacy skills, and a commitment to supporting women facing multiple disadvantage, are key to our success. Being side-by-side with women who have no other reliable and safe person they can trust can make a profound difference during a critical life moment. Advocating for and amplifying women's voices during the perinatal period ensures their needs are recognised within the healthcare and social care system. Providing one-to-one or group support creates spaces where mothers can find someone to trust, listen to, and offer warm, reassuring, evidence-based guidance about their worries. Together, we can make that vision of a society where equity and justice are realities for all mothers and babies a reality.

"Birth Companions has helped me gain strength and confidence. Meeting other mothers and the volunteers at the group really reduced my stress."

2 Our Volunteering Programme

Newly recruited volunteers attend a comprehensive training programme that equips them with the knowledge and skills to provide evidence based and trauma-informed support. This includes accompanying women during labour and birth, offering emotional and practical support during pregnancy and the postnatal period through home or hospital visits or remotely via phone, and group-based support.

Birth Companions is committed to the wellbeing of all its staff and volunteers. We have established protocols to ensure volunteers feel safe and supported. Our Project Coordinators and Volunteer Manager provide ongoing support and guidance. Volunteers are encouraged to access debriefing sessions with their coordinator, annual reviews with our Volunteer Manager, team meetings for peer support, continuous learning and reflection. We also provide reflective practice group sessions for all volunteers.

At Birth Companions we value having a staff and volunteer team that represents a wide range of backgrounds and life experience, and we are committed to being a safe and supportive organisation for women from all racially marginalised groups, in which to work, volunteer or receive support.

We have a range of policies, and procedures in place to ensure we are a psychologically safe working environment for staff and volunteers from racially marginalised groups. These include:

Ensuring that staff and volunteers have clear processes to follow in order to feel safe and comfortable to report racist behaviour they experience or witness; and that such reports will be taken seriously and acted on in a timely way.

We recognise the need for and importance of a separate and safe space for black women and women of colour on our staff and volunteer teams to come together as group should they wish. If you would like to read more about our Anti racism journey, please see our website page:

<https://www.birthcompanions.org.uk/pages/114-anti-racism>

"Volunteering at Birth Companions perfectly aligns with my desire to contribute to a meaningful cause. All of the people involved are incredibly kind, creating a truly supportive and positive environment."

3 Volunteering Requirements, Responsibilities, and Commitment

Essential Skills and Qualities

- Strong empathy and a non-judgmental approach.
- Excellent communication and listening skills.
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team.
- Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity.
- Commitment to empowering women and respecting their choices.
- Willingness to commit to the training and at least one type of volunteering role.

Desirable Skills and Experience

- Experience of supporting women during pregnancy, birth, or early parenting.
- Understanding of trauma-informed working.
- Experience supporting others in complex circumstances.
- Training in infant-feeding support, birth support or antenatal education.
- Ability to use languages other than English.
- Previous volunteering experience.

Time Commitment and Expectations

- Complete a four-month **training** programme, including weekend sessions from July to October 2025, (there will be a reflective break in August.)
- **Regular** attendance at our **monthly Volunteers Team meetings** and **Reflective Practice sessions** from October 2025 onwards (at least twice per year).
- Attend one **shadowing** session with experienced volunteers or staff members per role through November.
- Able to start as an **active volunteer** at some point from November to January 2025.
- Commit to at least **two years** of active volunteering. Long-term volunteering is highly appreciated.
- DBS check required.
- Attend regular debriefing, annual supervision sessions and completing our annual Volunteer Experience survey.
- Please see individual role descriptions for more information about the amount of time needed for our various volunteering roles.

General Responsibilities for all Volunteers:

- Once active, respond in a timely way to requests for support and availability.
- Maintain regular communication and contact with project coordinators to inform about availability, changes to circumstances etc.
- Read and respond to emails in a timely manner.
- Inform the team of any changes in availability.
- Offer evidence-based information and resources to help women make informed decisions about their care and the care of their babies.
- Contribute to a team-based approach, working alongside other volunteers and staff.
- Maintain regular communication with relevant staff and other volunteers.

- Attend monthly volunteer group meetings (in-person and online) for support, debriefing, ongoing learning, and reflective practice sessions (at least twice per year).
- Follow all Birth Companions' policies and procedures, including our Code of Practice, safeguarding, confidentiality, health and safety, and data protection.

4 Volunteer Support at Birth Companions

At Birth Companions our volunteers support women in a number of ways, each requiring specific skills, for which we provide comprehensive training:

1. [Perinatal support](#) one to one with women at home, hospital or another community space.
2. [Support during labour and birth.](#)
3. [Supporting and assisting at our Mother and Baby group.](#)
4. Being [part of our team of Birthline phoneholders](#) responding to women in labour and coordinating birth support, as well as offering over-the-phone help to other volunteers carrying over home and community visits to women.

Many volunteers undertake multiple types of support, depending on their availability through the year. Our training programme is set up to allow those who are interested to be able to do this.

Perinatal supporter

This includes one to one **antenatal or postnatal visits** to women at home, hospital or another community space, as well as some phone support when appropriate.

About the Role:

Volunteers provide vital support to women facing multiple challenges during their antenatal and early postnatal period. They offer emotional and practical support with visits to women, companionship during appointments, offering advice and support in infant feeding, neonatal care, recovery, and birth experience debriefing, and identifying additional support needs.

Key Responsibilities:

- Conduct antenatal and postnatal visits at home, in hospitals, or community venues.
- Provide ad hoc support to pregnant and postnatal women, offering company, listening and validating their experiences and offering evidence-based resources and advice to support their overall mental wellbeing and informed care for their babies.
- Offer information and resources to help women make informed decisions.

Administration and communication:

- Provide timely reports after visits, debrief with service coordinator and follow our lone working procedures.

Time Commitment and Expectations:

- Essential: Minimum of 3-5 hours monthly for a once-a-month activity consisting of 1 contact and the time required to complete a report.
- Desirable: Flexible availability to respond to early postnatal visits.

Birth supporter

About the Role:

Volunteers provide vital support to women facing multiple challenges during their birthing experiences and early postnatal period. They offer emotional and practical support, empowering women to make informed choices.

Key Responsibilities:

- Be part of a small team of volunteers providing continuous support during labour and birth, offering emotional reassurance and practical assistance.
- Offer information and resources to help women make informed decisions.

Administration and communication:

- Provide timely reports after visits, debrief with service coordinator and follow our lone working procedures.

Time Commitment and Expectations:

- Flexible availability to respond to births and early postnatal visits.
- Support during labour and birth is typically provided by individual volunteers who are part of small team of 3 or more volunteers, each volunteer usually stays with a woman for approx. 4-8 hours. We encourage volunteers to aim for a minimum of one birth support shift within three months.
- Maintain contact with our phoneholders while supporting a woman, provide timely reports after visits, debrief with service coordinator and follow our lone working procedures.

Mother and Baby Group supporter

About the Role:

Our weekly Community Mother & Baby Group in Islington provides a nurturing space for new mothers facing significant challenges. Volunteers create a warm, welcoming environment, assist with activities, provide empathetic support, and connect mothers with resources.

Key Responsibilities:

- Group Support: Assist with setup and tidy-up, food and drink preparation. Welcome and engage with mothers. Listen and provide empathetic support. Support activities (arts, baby massage, discussions). Assist with baby care. Contribute to activity planning.
- Information and Signposting: Provide information on early parenting. Offer one-on-one support.

Administration and Communication:

- Debrief with the Community Postnatal Coordinator. Review weekly group reports.

Time Commitment:

- Minimum of 3 hours on at least four Tuesdays per term (12-3pm). During school term time only

Birth Line Phoneholder

About the Role:

As a Birth Line Phoneholder, you play a vital role in providing immediate support to women in labour via our 24/7 **Birth line**. You will be part of a small team who are the first point of contact for women who we are providing with birth support when they go into labour, offering reassurance, contacting and coordinating a team of Birth Volunteers and arranging a taxi when she is ready to go to hospital. In addition, this role involves providing over-the-phone support to other volunteers who are lone working in the community over evenings and weekends. This role requires a responsible, empathetic, and highly organised individual. It's an excellent opportunity for someone who wishes to support women in labour and can't commit to attending births in person.

Key Responsibilities:

- Answering Calls and Coordinating Support: including assessing needs, arranging transportation, contacting Birth Volunteers, ensuring continuous support, maintaining contact with women and medical staff, and arranging postnatal visits when applicable.
- Supporting Volunteers: by conducting safety checks, check-in/out volunteers supporting women in labour, and provide debriefing for volunteers in some cases.

Administrative and Communication:

- Accessing online files, updating and maintaining logs, communicating with team members.

Time Commitment and Expectations:

- Monthly availability on a rotating schedule.
- Availability for 6-10 months per year.
- Our Birth line is usually a dedicated team of four phoneholder volunteers and staff members, so there is always someone who can respond to women in immediate need of labour support.
- When you are actively volunteering, phoneholders are expected to be available to answer the phone at any time. You will receive an outline of upcoming births and real-time updates from our Coordinators.
- We would expect to support 1-3 women per month through the Birth line.

"Absolutely amazing the support I have received from the team and volunteers at Birth Companions, without them I wouldn't have had the confidence to give birth. I am so grateful that there is a service that offers women a voice and support."

5 Application Process

We're delighted you're interested in volunteering with Birth Companions! Here's a step-by-step overview of what you can expect:

- 1. Informative Online Session:** We'll host an online session to provide further details about our volunteering model, the application pack, and answer any questions you may have about the recruitment, training, and induction process. This is a great opportunity to learn more and meet the team, including other volunteers.

Date: **Thursday 24th April from 1:30 to 3:00 PM.**

Please register [here](#) to attend this informative session.

- 2. Applicant-Friendly Application Form:** Our application form is designed to be easy to complete, focusing on your motivations and relevant skills.

Please submit your application before: **Monday 5th May at 9pm.**

- 3. Selection Process:** We used anonymised scoring to review all our applicants and decide who to invite for interview – scoring is based on the answers you give on your application form about your skills and experience. We're committed to a fair and transparent process.

- 4. Prompt and Consistent Communication:** We will keep you informed at every stage of the process, providing clear timelines and updates.

- 5. Interviews:** If your application is successful, you'll be invited to an interview. This will allow us to learn more about your personal background, motivations for volunteering, experience supporting individuals facing significant challenges, and understanding of key issues such as safeguarding, social and health inequalities and confidentiality. We encourage you to ask questions during the interview. It's a chance for us to get to know each other and ensure it's the right fit for both of us.

- **Dates for interviews:** Monday 19th May, Wednesday 21st May, Wednesday 28th May, Monday 2nd June and Wednesday 4th June.
- **Transparent Interview Process:** We'll provide you with an outline of the interview questions in advance, so you can prepare and feel confident.
- **Our interviewing panel:** While we strive to organise interview panels that reflect a broad range of backgrounds, we recognise this may not always be possible. Regardless, our aim is to ensure a safe and welcoming interview experience for every candidate. Our commitment to anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion is ongoing; all our staff receive training on unconscious bias, micro-aggressions, and subtle acts of exclusion. We encourage open and honest dialogue about race and diversity during our interviews, as we know this might be useful when responding to or asking a question to the panel.

- 6. Final Selection:** Following the interviews, our team will make the final selection of volunteers to join our training program.



6 Volunteer Training Programme

Birth Companions provides a comprehensive training program for all volunteers. This program consists of a foundational core training and specialised role-specific training.

Essential Training Sessions for ALL Volunteers:

Training Modules	Dates and Times
Module 1. Introduction to Birth Companions, Values and Projects	Saturday 28th of June, 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Module 2. Support skills and understanding inequality and disadvantages of pregnant and perinatal women	Sunday 29th of June 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Module 3. Safeguarding and looking after yourself while supporting others	Saturday 12th of July 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Module 4. Trauma-Informed Principles and Reflective Practice. Applying Trauma-Informed and Reflective Practice Principles	Sunday 13th July Online session 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Reflective break and assignment Reflective Assignment Submission Deadline	From 14 th July to be completed 28 th of August
Reflective Practice Session for Trainees	Friday 29 th of August Online Session 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM
Module 5. Antiracism training Online and self-paced	Access from: 1 st of August to completed by Sunday 31 st of August 9:00 PM
Module 6. Infant-feeding Support	Saturday 20th September 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Module 7. Lone working	Saturday 18th October 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM

"Volunteering at Birth Companions is a lovely experience.

The reason I got involved in was giving back and supporting women who haven't got what I had."

Support-Specific Training Sessions

We encourage trainees and existing volunteers to attend as much specific training as possible, that will allow them to perform one or more volunteering roles according to their interests or changes in availability.

Training Module	Perinatal Support	Birth Support	Postnatal Group Support	Birthline Phoneholder	Dates and times
Module 8. Supporting women in labour	E= Essential, D=Desirable				
	E	E	D	E	Day 1: Physiology of Birth. Saturday 27th September 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM ----- Day 2: Supporting labour and birth. Sunday 28th September 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM
Module 9. Birthline Protocols and guidance for Phoneholders	D	D	-	E	Saturday 18th October 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Module 10. Supporting women and young babies at our Mother and Baby group.	D	D	E	-	Sunday 19th October 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

All of your reasonable travel expenses **within London** will be reimbursed by Birth Companions, this will need to be agreed in advance and the training we provide is free.

We appreciate your interest in joining our team and look forward to receiving your application!

