



Livingston James



POSITION PROFILE

Chair of the Board



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Amma Birth Companions (Amma) is a Glasgow charity (SCIO) that provides information, care, and advocacy to those who face barriers to support during pregnancy, birth and early parenthood. Our services include birth and postnatal companionship, peer support, and education.

Amma believes that everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or socioeconomic circumstances should be supported to birth and parent with confidence.

Our services include birth and postnatal companionship, peer support, antenatal education and advocacy:

- 1. Providing Birth and Postnatal Companionship:** including training volunteers to deliver specialist, trauma-informed, nurturing and culturally competent care through the perinatal period
- 2. Peer Support:** supporting our clients to develop friendships, increase confidence and well-being and learn parenting skills.
- 3. Antenatal Education:** providing clients with a comprehensive and holistic understanding of how to prepare for birth and life with a new baby
- 4. Advocacy:** supporting our clients to become their own best advocates. Amma helps to make sure that the client's needs are asserted particularly when there are language or ability barriers

In 2021 – 2022 Amma provided 94 people with one-to-one support during the perinatal period, with an average of 28 hours of support given to each client. Since inception in 2019, Amma has supported nearly 200 clients.

Having recently recruited our first Chief Executive, Amma's current strategic priorities include:

- Expanding our reach to include underserved birthing populations in Glasgow by creating referral pathways that will enable them to reach new client groups
- Diversifying our service delivery model to include more tailored packages of support whilst also creating more transparency with clients and referrers about the support Amma provides
- Increasing engagement in the Amma Family Programme that encompasses peer support, learning, and wellbeing activities
- Fostering a positive workplace culture where all staff understand the vision for the organisation and our role in helping to achieve it
- Strengthening the capacity and overall resilience of birth and postnatal companion teams to ensure that Amma strengthens the capacity of our volunteers to meet both current and future demand for our services



When Albright arrived in Glasgow at the height of the pandemic, she was concerned about facing pregnancy and birth alone. She felt deep sense of isolation, with no friends or family here to talk to or share her experience.

But a referral to Amma “changed everything”, says Albright, whose birth companions were there to support her through the final stages of pregnancy and during birth. “They made everything easy for me,” Albright explains. “Knowing my birth companion was there helped me to stop having negative thoughts about missing my mum. It made me feel like I had a family member looking after me.”



The support Albright received from her birth companions included birth preparation. “My birth companions helped me understand what to expect during labour and birth and explained what choices I had. It gave me the confidence to tell midwives what I didn’t want,” recounts Albright.

“I was offered an induction, but I said no. I went into labour on my own and gave birth naturally, with no pain medication. I was nervous at the start of labour, but as soon as I saw my birth companion, I felt relief.” She describes her birth experience as “very positive”, in large part due to the support her companion provided.

Following birth, Albright had a postnatal companion who helped her settle into her role as a new parent. “We would go for walks and chat — it was really nice having her around.”

Today, Albright is an active member of the Amma Family peer support programme, which she attends with her beautiful baby girl. She says, “I wasn’t used to being around lots of new people, but now seeing all the mums and babies every week makes me so happy. Now, I don’t feel alone anymore.”



When Angelina Edwin arrived in Glasgow seeking asylum from Sri Lanka, she didn't know that her experience would see her support new parents as they found their own feet in a new country.

"When I heard about Amma I was able to connect myself to it – people in a new country with a new language, all alone with other support lacking. You don't know where to go", she said.

Amma's comprehensive training exposed the stark differences between giving birth in Scotland compared to Sri Lanka.

"Mostly everything was new to me. It's a total system change. One major thing here is the mums have the final say. In Sri Lanka it's not like that. You can't speak a lot and your consent is not required at all."



As a postnatal companion, Angelina has walked beside eight clients during the intense first days of new parenthood. She recognises the need to tailor support to each individual she serves.

"You have to be willing to fit into their situations. Some are confident and very flexible and some are rigid but everyone is welcoming. It's an honour to be with them during this time." The support that Angelina gives out is returned to her through supervision, mentoring and her fellow volunteers and Amma staff.

She said: "When we get together, we share our experience and difficulties and challenges; when we speak it's like you realise you are on the right path and that builds confidence. The support goes both ways."

Volunteering has been a positive experience for Angelina: "The satisfaction you feel when you support a mum and you see them happy and you know how you helped is amazing.

"When you are an asylum seeker you can feel devastated and not worthy sometimes, so when you support another person, you feel confident and part of something good. I can't work, so with Amma I have a purpose."



Position Overview

The Chair of the Board will hold the Board and Chief Executive to account for the Charity's mission and vision. They will provide inclusive leadership to the Board of Trustees, ensuring that each trustee fulfils their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity. The Chair will also support and, where appropriate, challenge the Chief Executive to ensure the achievement of agreed strategic priorities and objectives.

Amma's current vision, mission and values were created when it was first formed and the organisation has evolved significantly with the introduction of new services, new client groups, and a greater focus on cultural competency and advocacy. The staff team has also grown to include a diverse team of people with expertise in birth and the postnatal period. Reflecting this and working closely with the recently appointed Chief Executive and fellow Board members, the new Chair of the Board will oversee the process to develop and embed a new strategic vision and values for the charity that is consistently communicated and cascaded to staff, volunteers, funders and other stakeholders alike. Other key priorities of the role include:

- Ensuring Amma has a clear vision, mission and strategic plan and that there is a common understanding of these by the Chief Executive and Board of Trustees.
- Ensuring the Chief Executive's annual objectives directly support the achievement of the strategic objectives/priorities
- Ensuring the ongoing and long-term sustainability of the charity, directly supporting the ongoing evolution of our fundraising strategy. This includes the continued diversification of revenue streams, to support Amma's future organisational growth
- Developing and embedding a more robust approach to governance, including the creation of a board sub-committee structure and development of an organisational wide risk register
- Encouraging a dynamic, pro-active, committed, inclusive and forward-looking Board culture; promoting informed, constructive and critical decision-making and participation
- Develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship with the Chief Executive whilst also providing support and acting as an effective sounding board

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Provide leadership of the charity and the Board, ensuring that the group has maximum impact for our beneficiaries
- Ensure that the Board operates within our charitable objectives, and provides a clear strategic direction for the charity
- Ensure that the Board regularly reviews major risks and associated opportunities
- Ensure that the Board fulfils its duties to ensure sound financial health of the charity with systems in place to ensure financial accountability



- Ensure continued focus, with regular review, on the organisation's overall mission, vision and strategic priorities

External Relations

- Act as an ambassador for the charity
- Develop, as appropriate, relationships with key external stakeholders
- Act as a spokesperson for the organisation when appropriate
- Represent the charity at external functions, meetings and events
- Facilitate change and address any potential conflict with external stakeholders

Governance

- Ensure that Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity and our sub-committees, and that they remain compliant with charity and company regulation
- Ensure that the Board of Trustees reflects the wider population, while encompassing the right balance of skills, knowledge, and experience needed to govern and lead the charity effectively
- Ensure that the governance arrangements are working in the most effective and efficient way for the charity
- Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board of Trustees
- Encourage positive change where appropriate, address and resolve any conflicts within the Board
- Appraise the performance of the Trustees on an annual basis
- Work within any agreed policies adopted by the charity

Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision-making process
- Ensure that Trustees are fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of the charity and that the Board has collective ownership of issues
- Foster, maintain and ensure that constructive relationships exist with and between the Trustees
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to give direction to Board policy-making and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of Trustees
- Ensure that decisions taken at meetings are implemented
- Ensure all Board Trustees are aware of their roles and responsibilities, developing an effective development and appraisal systems for all Trustees
- Regularly review the composition of the Board and the skills of individual Trustees taking appropriate action to remedy any deficiencies through succession planning



Relationship with the Chief Executive

- Establish and build a strong, effective and constructive working relationship with the Chief Executive, ensuring they are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives
- Establish an appropriate relationship with Amma's Executive Team
- Liaise with the Chief Executive to maintain an overview of the charity, providing input as required
- Conduct an annual appraisal for the Chief Executive
- Ensure that the Chief Executive has the opportunity for professional development and has appropriate external professional support





With direct experience of charity governance, having worked with or as part of a Board of Trustees, ideally at chair level, the successful candidate will have strong interpersonal and relationship-building abilities and a strong commitment to the aims and objectives of Amma.

Skills and Experience:

- Relevant experience as a trustee or non-executive Board member, including Committee membership and delegated governance
- A deep understanding of the role of a non-executive and Chair of Trustees including strategic oversight, constructive challenge and support to the Executive.
- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate staff and volunteers and bring people together
- An understanding of managing the performance and effectiveness of an organisation to ensure it meets our operational, business, and financial goals
- Significant successful experience of building effective networks, relationships and partnerships to further organisational objectives.
- Financial management expertise and a broad understanding of charity finance issues
- A highly effective communicator, able to build strong, effective and positive relationships while winning the confidence and respect of all
- Broad understanding of the legal, statutory, governance, political and economic issues facing third sector organisations
- Able to demonstrate tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively
- The ability to foster and promote a collaborative team environment



Time Commitment and Recruitment Process



Time Consideration:

The Board meets at least 6 times a year, plus the AGM and one to two strategy meetings per year. It is also important that the Chair is able to visit Amma's office and be available to the Chief Executive on a regular basis.

The time commitment for the Chair is expected to be 1-2 days per month, on average.

Remuneration:

The role is not remunerated but all reasonable expenses will be paid.

The Recruitment Process:

Candidates wishing to apply should send a CV and covering letter, outlining their interest and suitability, to douglasadam@livingstonjames.com

Amma hopes to have identified their preferred candidate prior to their annual AGM (18th August)

