

BRADFORD VOLUNTEER DOULAS VOLUNTEER LONE WORKER POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Volunteer doula support pregnant and birthing women and people by offering a combination of home visits, accompaniment to appointments and attending the birth of the baby. This support is largely provided on a 1-1 basis with volunteers working alone for the majority of the time that they are volunteering with the project. The role of volunteer doula also requires volunteers to travel to support a family at unsociable hours and at night. The safety of travel arrangements must, therefore, also be considered. Volunteer doulas deserve to feel as safe as possible and adequately supported in their role whilst they are lone working. Bradford Volunteer Doulas is committed to taking proactive measures to minimise risks.

POLICY

- 1.1 Bradford Doulas asserts that volunteer doulas have the right to feel as safe as possible whilst volunteering with the project but acknowledges that all lone working comes with a degree of risk.
- 1.2 Risk assessment is the key mechanism through which risk is identified and appropriate controls and mitigations are determined.
- 1.3 The Service Manager holds responsibility for ensuring that all policy, procedure and risk assessment paperwork for lone working is up to date and will identify any relevant training staff may need in order to effectively implement these.
- 1.4 Team Leads will oversee risk assessment and where necessary offer guidance to staff regarding appropriate measures where risks have been identified.
- 1.5 All staff must have a good awareness of potential risks and must be able to:
 - identify potential risks
 - determine appropriate mitigation measures (with support from their Team Lead or Service Manager)
 - record risks and mitigation measures using the appropriate paperwork
- 1.6 Staff should discuss travel arrangements for visits and birth support with the volunteer doula before lone visits commence.
- 1.7 All volunteer doulas must understand that even once risk assessments are in place, situations can change and it is their responsibility to be alert to signs of risk and take appropriate measures to protect themselves whilst volunteering with the project.
- 1.8 Bradford Doulas also recognises that the role of volunteer doula also requires volunteer to travel to support a family at unsociable hours and at night. The safety of travel arrangements must, therefore, also be considered.
- 1.9 If an incident occurs which leads to a volunteer feeling unsafe, immediate measures to pause the match or remove the volunteer from the match will be taken and if the risk is perceived to have been moderate or serious a review of this policy, procedure and related risk assessment paperwork will be triggered.

UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL RISKS AND POSSIBLE MITIGATIONS

- 2.1 Potential risks during travel to and from visits and birth support include (but are not limited to):
 - Theft of personal items
 - Assault
 - Inappropriate, threatening or intimidating behaviour from taxi driver or members of the public
- 2.2 Potential risks to volunteers during a lone visit include (but are not limited to):
 - Verbal abuse or harassment by people in the house
 - Threatening or intimidating behaviour
 - False accusations
 - Physical attack
 - Attack from a pet
 - Fire
- 2.3 Potential warning signs on arrival or at any point during the visit that a situation that may be at risk of becoming unsafe include (but are not limited to):

- Evidence of drug or alcohol use
- Signs of domestic conflict
- Unexpected people present
- Pets loose in the room where you are meeting
- Unsupervised naked flames

2.4 Possible additional mitigations during visits in instances where elevated risk has been identified include (but are not limited to):

- All contacts taking place in a public place
- Joint visits with another doula
- Joint visits with a member of staff
- Support only at medical appointments
- Birth support at the hospital only

STANDARD PROCEEDURE

TRAVEL

3.1 Staff will discuss travel arrangements with doula during their first contact regarding the match. Any particular concerns should be raised and discussed at this stage.

3.2 Volunteers can and should inform SCAMP at the start and end of any journey for which they want to take additional safety precautions. They should inform SCAMP of their name, addresses for start and end destinations, relevant travel details (such as name of taxi company or bus number), estimated journey time and telephone number.

3.3 Volunteers must inform SCAMP at the start and end of all journeys made by taxi or after dark. They should inform SCAMP of their name, addresses for start and end destinations, relevant travel details (such as name of taxi company), estimated journey time and telephone number.

HOME VISITS

4.1 Team Leads will identify cases where risk may be likely during the triage process and if necessary contact the referrer or the family for further information before accepting the referral

4.2 Staff will contact the family to complete an initial risk assessment by phone prior to visiting

4.3 All initial visits to a family by a volunteer doula and any subsequent visits to a new private location (due to a change of address for example) will takes place with a member of staff

4.4 Staff will complete a full in person on site risk assessment which will be shared with and signed by the volunteer before any lone visits commence. Exit routes from the property and ease of access to these should be noted and discussed with volunteers.

4.5 Staff must notify Team Leads in all cases where mitigation measures are necessary

4.6 Volunteers must raise with a staff member, at the earliest possible opportunity, any additional concerns that arise at any point. A new risk assessment may be required before support continues. The volunteer must not visit again until this has been agreed with the staff member

4.7 Staff will notify the doula immediately of any changes to the risk assessment during the course of the match

4.8 Volunteers must have their doula mobile with them and charged during all visits to the family.

4.9 Volunteers must log in and out with SCAMP Security for every contact with the family regardless of the location of the visit. They must inform SCAMP of their name, full address for location of visit and telephone number. If the visit is likely to take longer than an hour, they will need to call after an hour to confirm they are still on the visit and repeat hourly until they check out from the visit.

4.10 If on arrival to the property, volunteers have any concerns about safety, they should not enter the property. They should make their excuses, apologise and say that they or a member of staff will be back in touch soon. They must notify staff of this as soon as possible. A new risk assessment must be completed before support continues. The volunteer must not visit again until this has been agreed with the appropriate staff member.

4.11 If a volunteer doula feels unsafe at any point during a lone visit they should leave the property as quickly and safely as possible. They must notify staff of this as soon as possible. A new risk assessment must be completed before support continues. The volunteer must not visit again until this has been agreed with the staff member.

4.12 If a volunteer doula feels unsafe at any point and is unable to exit the property or situation for any reason they must either call 999 directly or call SCAMP security and ask for 'Extension 13' which will trigger an immediate 999 call by SCAMP security.

BIRTH

5.1 It is expected that doulas will travel by taxi when offering birth support, therefore travel procedure 3.3 must be followed.

5.2 If any birth support is provided at home, home visiting procedure as outlined in 4.1 – 4.11 must be followed including hourly check in calls to SCAMP security.

5.3 When providing birth support at the hospital, volunteers must follow 5.1 and 5.2 as relevant and must inform SCAMP on arrival to the hospital. They must inform SCAMP of their name, location (Maternity Unit, BRI) and telephone number and confirm they will contact SCAMP when they are finished. Volunteers must remember to follow travel protocol 3.3 for their journey home.

5.4 In instances of home birth, once the midwives have arrived, hourly check ins with SCAMP can be replaced by an agreement to call when support finishes as in 5.3 for hospital birth support.