

Trustee candidate pack



Protecting human rights in childbirth

Introduction from the Chief Executives

Firstly, thank you for your interest in working with Birthrights! If you are someone who values justice for all and are committed to working in community to transform experiences and outcomes of maternity care for all women and birthing people please read on.

Birthrights was founded in 2013 with the understanding that at the heart of the poor experiences and outcomes of maternity care for so many, is a consistent failure to listen to the voices of women and birthing people and a complete disregard for their fundamental human rights. Our work has never been more urgent.

Over ten years Birthrights has grown from a tiny volunteer-led organisation to the UK's leading authority on the human rights of women and birthing people during their pregnancy and birth.

We have delivered information and advice to thousands of women and birthing people; delivered training across multiple hospital trusts to build understanding of and confidence in delivering rights-respecting care; and published our Race Inquiry report *Systemic Racism, not Broken Bodies*, which uncovered experiences behind the stark disparities in maternal outcomes for Black and Brown women and birthing people.

We started as new CEOs of Birthrights in January 2023. Over the past year we have focused on strengthening our foundations, including developing a new strategic framework for the next 10 years.



As we look forward to the decade ahead, Birthrights is in a strong position to work collaboratively towards long term, systemic change that empowers women and birthing people and the frontline professionals seeking to deliver person-centred care.

It's a really exciting time to be joining the Birthrights team. We are buzzing with energy and ideas on how we can translate our strategic framework into reality and address the entrenched inequalities in maternal healthcare in all our work, whilst carving out the time to really care for ourselves and each other.

We are seeking trustees who can help support and challenge us on that journey. We hope that you will consider applying, even if you feel you do not meet all the criteria of the job description.

Shanthi Gunasekera and Janaki Mahadevan
Co-CEOs, Birthrights

About Birthrights

Birthrights is the leading authority on the fundamental human rights of women and birthing people during pregnancy and birth and our work has never been more urgent.

Birth justice exists when women and birthing people have the right to give birth with whom, where, when and however they choose and when laws, policies and practice enables all women and birthing people to access those rights. These rights exist in international human rights law and UK laws, but access to exercising these rights is under threat in the UK for all women and birthing people and is particularly restricted for the most marginalised.

Our work is critical to not only transforming the experiences and outcomes for individuals, but also in shifting wider policy, practice and systems. We do this by empowering and supporting women and birthing people, training healthcare professionals, holding systems and institutions to account and making visible the diverse experiences of maternity care.



Our current team are spread across England and Wales, we embrace flexible-working, and we are a completely remote working organisation. We create a supportive and inclusive organisational culture, and develop spaces and practices that support healing, solidarity, care and development for our people. As a Board and staff team, we bring our diverse lived and professional experiences of pregnancy and birth, and of discrimination and oppression, and are united in the common belief that pregnancy and birth should be above all about your body, your birth, your rights.

Birthrights: your body, your birth, your rights

Our mission

To champion the rights of women and birthing people during pregnancy and birth across the UK.

Our vision

A world where women and birthing people can access safe maternity care that fully respects their right to bodily autonomy and self-agency, free from discrimination, coercion and violence.



What we do



Equip women and birthing people and their supporters with information and advice to advocate for their rights and navigate maternity systems, providing more intensive support and advocacy for those who are most likely to be marginalised and least likely to be heard.



Hold institutions to account and, using the law strategically, stand ever ready to take action where the law is not upheld in policy or practice.



Increase awareness and understanding of how the law applies to maternity care and why this matters amongst women and birthing people and their supporters, and those who design, manage, deliver and regulate maternity care.



Work in community to catalyse systemic change through research and evidence, policy and advocacy, litigation and campaigns.

How we do it

Information and Advice

Our email service, information resources and in-person sessions provide advice to empower women and birthing people and their supporters through pregnancy and birth to understand and act on their rights.

Training

We deliver training to catalyse improvements in NHS practice and culture by working to ensure those managing and delivering care have a strong understanding of rights-respecting care and how this is critical to safe care.

Through training we also seek to empower birth workers, peer supporters and community advocates to champion the rights of women and birthing people.

Policy and campaigns

We work collectively to transform experiences and outcomes for individuals and shift policy, practice and systems towards birth justice.

We seek to work in community to uplift the voices and experiences of the most marginalised communities.



In May 2022, we published [Systemic Racism, not Broken Bodies](#), laying bare the systemic racism within maternity care.

Our Guiding Principles



We are intentional about our work and seek to 'do no harm'.



Our work is grounded in a deep understanding of the law and how it relates to maternity care, combined with a commitment to anti-racist, trauma-informed, culturally-competent and empathetic practice.



Our work is rooted in solidarity. We know that working as a collective is crucial to shifting power.



We centre women and birthing people mostly likely to benefit from improved access to information, advocacy and policy and practice change, understanding that systems of oppression are interdependent and women and birthing people facing multiple forms of discrimination often also face the worst breaches of their rights.



We focus on changes to policy and practice that are most likely to catalyse systemic change and use the law to uphold rights-respecting, person centred-care.



We reject limitations and false dichotomies which only serve division and seek to diminish the power of solidarity behind justice for all.

About the role

Birthrights is governed by a Board of Trustees, which consists of up to **12 members** from across a range of professional and life experiences. Our trustees play a vital role in making sure that Birthrights achieves its core purpose by overseeing the overall management and administration of the charity. They also ensure that Birthrights has a clear strategy and that our work and goals are in line with our vision. Just as importantly, they support and challenge the executive team to enable them to grow and thrive, and through this, achieve our mission.

Board members have a collective responsibility. This means that trustees always act as a group and not as individuals.

Duties:

- Support and provide advice on Birthright's purpose, vision, goals and activities.
- Approve operational strategies and policies, and monitor and evaluate their implementation.
- Oversee Birthright's financial plans and budgets and monitor and evaluate progress.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation.
- Ensure that key risks are being identified, monitored and controlled effectively.
- Review and approve Birthright's financial statements.
- Provide support and challenge to Birthright's CEOs in the exercise of their delegated authority and affairs.
- Keep abreast of changes in Birthright's operating environment.
- Contribute to regular reviews of Birthright's own governance. Attend Board meetings, and ensure that you are adequately prepared to contribute to discussions.
- Use independent judgment, acting legally and in good faith to promote and protect Birthright's interests, to the exclusion of their own personal and/or any third-party interests.
- Contribute to the broader promotion of Birthright's objects, aims and reputation by applying your skills, expertise, knowledge and contacts.

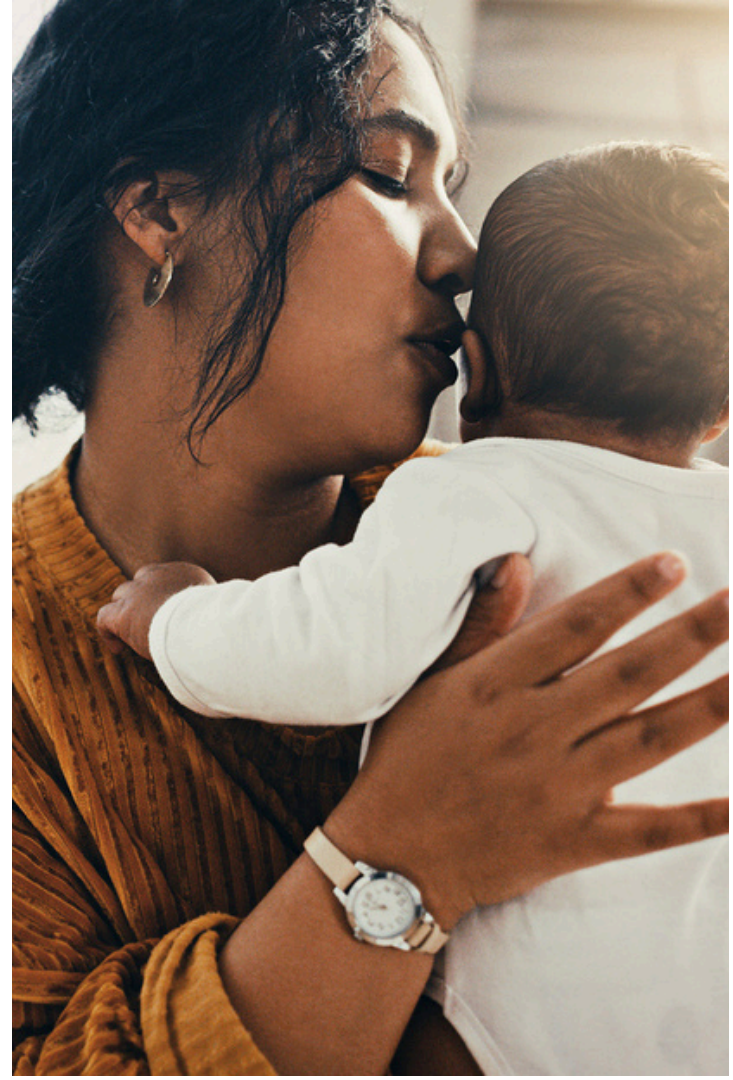
What we are looking for

As a number of our current trustee terms of office are coming to an end this year, we have up to six vacancies that we would like to appoint to the Board.

Above all, we are looking for people willing to bring energy, enthusiasm and commitment to the role, and who will broaden the diversity of thinking on our board. However, we would be particularly keen to hear from candidates with specialist skills in the following areas:

- Finance, with a view to taking on the role of Treasurer
- Fundraising
- Legal ideally in the Human Rights field
- HR
- Campaigning

You do not need to have any previous governance experience as you will receive a full induction.





Personal skills and qualities

- A strong personal commitment to our guiding principles as a means to achieve our mission, and a willingness to lead according to these values.
- Enthusiasm for our vision and mission.
- Willingness and ability to understand and accept your responsibilities and liabilities as trustees and to act in the best interests of the organisation.
- Ability to think creatively and strategically, exercise good, independent judgement and work effectively as a board member.
- Effective communication skills and willingness to participate actively in discussion.
- Commitment to Nolan's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Additional information

Time commitment

- Attending four Board meetings annually, which are currently held virtually.
- Trustees are also encouraged to contribute their specialist skills to support the organisation. This may include joining a committee, such as our Finance & Resources Committee (4 virtual meetings per year) or contributing your expertise on an ad hoc basis eg. joining a time-limited Working Group; providing strategic advice to Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members on upcoming Campaigns etc.
- Attending one day per year to attend an in-person away day (location will be city-based).
- Supporting Birthrights in its reach and visibility including on occasion and where appropriate attending events, media opportunities and helping us to gain support for our mission within your networks.
- Trustees will receive a full induction, which will include a range of activities to familiarise yourself with the role and our organisation eg. external governance training, shadowing a Birthrights training module, meeting with the SLT etc.



Terms of appointment

This post is for an initial term of up to three years, which may be extended for one further term of three years.

Remuneration

The position is unpaid, although Birthrights UK reimburses travel costs and other direct expenses incurred.

Our recruitment principles

Birthrights prides itself on respectful and inclusive recruitment practices, and it is important that we follow these practices in recruitment to all positions at Birthrights. These include:

- Always letting candidates know the outcome of their application, even if they are unsuccessful.
- Sharing information about the role and organisation in different formats (e.g. recruitment packs, videos, drop-in sessions).
- Encouraging applications in formats that enable candidates to shine (e.g. written, video, audio).
- Giving candidates at least a week's notice ahead of interview.
- Sharing interview questions with candidates in advance.
- Providing feedback to all candidates who have been offered an interview.

We welcome applications from individuals from communities who have experienced and continue to experience multiple forms of oppression, including those from racially minoritised, LGBTQI+, Deaf and disabled, migrant and neurodiverse communities.

We are committed to minimising barriers people may have through the application process, which is why we commit to paying for care and childcare whilst you're attending an interview and making any reasonable adjustments that you may require.

If there is anything else you're concerned about or think we could support with, please let us know.

“When we set out, human rights weren't part of the conversation in maternity care, but our work has changed that and made a real difference to the lives of women and birthing people.”

Elizabeth Prochaska,
Birthrights Co-founder



How to apply

If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following by **12 noon on Monday 1st July**.

- A CV setting out your career history, responsibilities in each of your roles and achievements.
- A covering letter (maximum 2 sides) highlighting your suitability for the role and how you meet the person specification. Please note that the covering letter is an important part of your application and will be assessed as part of your full application.
- Details of two professional referees together with a brief statement of their relationship to you and over what period of time they have known you. Referees will not be contacted without your prior consent.

Please send your application to: careers@birthrights.org.uk

If you have further questions after reading this pack, please email careers@birthrights.org.uk.

Depending on the number of applications received, we may bring the closing date forward. We therefore encourage early applications

Birthrights champions the fundamental human rights of women and birthing people during pregnancy and birth across the UK.

