Doula UK Member Questionnaire, June 2016

In conjunction with the User Survey on the Doula UK website (which will be there from 22nd June for three months), we have created a short questionnaire for members to complete with regards the Find A Doula tool.

Please read these thoughts from the Leadership Team and our Web Developer as you consider the efficacy of the Find A Doula tool, before completing the survey (the link is at the foot of this document):

1. At the moment, the search returns a random list of all the doulas who say they are available to work in the postcode area they have selected.

   We trust our doulas to take responsibility for being able to work in areas they know they can reach in a reasonable time frame so as to be able to support their client.

   On the ‘Why Join Doula UK’ page of our website, this is how the member benefit of FAD is described: “Listing on the Find a Doula directory pages of the Doula UK website – this is how most of our clients find us and it is only available to Doula UK members. Doula UK is NOT an agency and this is a service we provide for free to parents to enable them to find the right doula for them. As you can see, we believe that it is important that prospective clients are offered all the options available and it is up to them to find the right person for them.

2. There is another school of thought that believes we should have a list of drop down options, criteria if you will, which allows the client to choose for themselves what is important to them.

   These are some of the selections which have been mentioned:

   o Locality (discussed in more detail below)
   o Price
   o Experience
   o Other skills

   We are concerned about adding in any specific criteria, as they imply simply by their presence that these are important factors.
In terms of the first two criteria, we feel that if we allow a price or experience selection, a whole spectrum of doulas will be ruled out.

In terms of selecting a skill, we believe that this goes against the Doula UK ethos which is that simply being there, as a trained doula, is enough and implies that anyone who doesn’t have additional skills is somehow deficient as a doula.

3. Finally, we must address the issue of locality.

There is a school of thought that believes the following:

- A doula who lives locally can be with a client in 30-45mins.
- They work and live locally, so even if they are out and about, they can still reach a client faster than anyone from outside the same postcode.
- The want the client to have the choice of a local doula up-front, without having to search through all the doulas who are available to attend them.
- They would like the return to be either with a choice of local and available doulas (the client being able to select the return they want) or to have the return in order of where the doulas lives in terms of distance away from the client’s postcode. Local doulas come first, and people coming from further away coming later.
- They have also requested at some points a map with doulas addresses on them displayed in proximity to the client’s postcode.

We have the following concerns with this approach:

- What is local? Is local someone who lives in the same postcode? What if the doula lives next door to the client, but has to pick up or drop off her children 30mins away and so would only be with a client within 60mins while another doula with older children living outside of the postcode could be with them in 30mins?
- Is the word local therefore misleading to the client?
- Is reaching the client within 30mins the best and most important criteria for a doula? Or is finding the right doula and discussing timing antenatally more important?
- If we give an up-front choice to the client of a local doula (i.e. same postcode as the client), then we as Doula UK are implying that this criteria is just as valid as the right doula.
- If the return is a distance-based one, then the doulas who live in the same postcode will always come first. We feel this is not an equitable return as it precludes doulas from even one postcode away from being first on the list at any point.
- Finally, we must tell you that we will never be able to place a map on our website for the following reasons:

1. Our members, unlike other therapists or care providers, do not generally have a place of business as we go to the client. This means that our home addresses would have to go on a map.
2. Safeguarding of our members is of paramount importance. We have a few members with domestic violence in their lives and putting their addresses online would compromise their safety and the safety of their children.

3. If a doula didn't want their home address on the internet, her ability to find work would be compromised.

4. If we chose a local landmark to affix a pin on a map to, then all we would have would be many pins on top of one another, thus defeating the purpose.

In all, we as the Leadership Team feel that the random return we have which displays a selection of doulas who say they can work in a particular postcode is the most equitable. But, we are open to hearing from the membership and from the user survey that this is not the case. If one of the other options is preferred by the users or members, then we will go to a membership-wide vote at the next AGM.

So, please make your voice heard by completing the survey.