



**Doula UK**  
Positive birth.  
Supporting families.

### Complaints Overview.

Doula UK requires all our members to achieve and maintain standards of Philosophy, Conduct and Behaviour.

This procedure sets out the action which will be taken in the event of an accusation or act of non-compliance with Doula UK policies, rules or standards and where behaviour or conduct is not appropriate. This procedure applies to all members, course providers, course facilitators and the Leadership Team of Doula UK. Our aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all.

Doula UK recommends that all doulas keep written records of all work and may not be able to fully support the doula in the event of a complaint if they do not.

It is always acknowledged that there are two sides to every story and no action will be taken before a thorough investigation has been implemented.

Any individual or organisation wishing to give feedback or make a complaint about a Doula UK doula should email [feedback@doula.org.uk](mailto:feedback@doula.org.uk). Internal complaints may be submitted anonymously in the case of a member to member complaint if wished. Any complaint involving an external party must be submitted 'on the record'. This is because details of the complaint will need to be supplied in order for the respective parties to address, and answer to, the issue/s.

Any individual or organisation wishing to give feedback or make a complaint about a member of the Complaints Team should email [leadership@doula.org.uk](mailto:leadership@doula.org.uk). On the rare occasion that the Complaints Team register recurrent concerns from different members about the same subject or same person, where nobody is willing to register a formal complaint, we reserve the right to bring our concerns to the Leadership Team and if considered appropriate by a majority vote, launch an independent investigation. This investigation will follow the same process as that of a Member to Member Complaint.

The feedback will be considered in the first instance by nominated members of the Complaints Team of Doula UK. All matters will be kept confidential, and will only be disclosed, discussed and documented by the Complaints Team and, if needed, another designated member of the Leadership Team.

Should a complaint arise and be of a more serious nature such as assault or theft or an activity deemed to be illegal, it will be brought to the attention of the Leadership Team as a whole. Immediately following the complaint, the doula will be informed that should the complaint be upheld, they may have their membership revoked.

Following the initial contact, an investigation will be launched to gather evidence to support or disprove the feedback /complaint. The investigation will be completed where

possible within three months. Please note however that Doula UK is a volunteer run company, and timescales cannot be guaranteed. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been fully investigated. If it is deemed necessary, third parties will be contacted to provide more evidence. All parties will be kept informed about the expected timescale of the investigation.

Once the member has been made aware of the complaint, they will have the opportunity to state their case. Should it be necessary to meet with a member of the Complaints or Leadership Team during the course of the investigation, they may be represented or accompanied, if they wish, by a friend or colleague.

Following the investigation, the individual will either be subject to actions, as detailed in our disciplinary procedure, or cleared of any inappropriate action or behaviour. All parties will then receive in writing the outcome of the investigation and action to be taken.

It is our hope that member-to-member conflicts or concerns will be resolved through honest communication and appropriate support to both parties. In the unfortunate case that this does not suffice, the disciplinary procedure will come into action.

The doula will be encouraged to call on the support of her Doula Mentor (or another Doula Mentor) during this process. The doula must respect confidentiality when discussing details with any party other than her Doula Mentor or member of the Complaints Team.

If it is felt that there is evidence to support the feedback/complaint and the doula is also a Doula Mentor or has another Voluntary role within Doula UK, this position may be withdrawn. As per the Disciplinary Procedure, the doula will be issued with the appropriate level of warning, supervision or exclusion.

The Complaints Team have the full confidence and support of the Leadership Team and are authorised to deal with both internal and external complaints independently. All members of the Complaints Team have been found to possess the appropriate level of professional experience and integrity to fulfill this sensitive role.

In the unlikely event that a complaint concerns a member of the Complaints Team, then the Head of Accountability should be contacted ([accountability@doula.org.uk](mailto:accountability@doula.org.uk)). The Head of Accountability will allocate a different member of the Complaints Team or, as a last resort, an experienced doula within the Leadership Team.

In the event the complaint concerns a member of the Leadership Team, a member of the Complaints Team, or an external Mediator, will be appointed. In this event, any decision made is final and cannot be appealed.

In the event the complaint concerns a mentoring issue, then they must first contact the Heads of Mentoring on [dmcoordinators@doula.org.uk](mailto:dmcoordinators@doula.org.uk). The complaint will initially be investigated by them informally, but if resolution is not possible they reserve the right to take the complaint to the Complaints Team (with the agreement of the mentee in question) should it be deemed necessary.

*By raising a complaint, you agree that there will be an investigation, which may result in confidential information about you being disclosed to a member (or members) of the Complaints Team and if necessary, the Leadership Team. If you do not agree to this, the*

*complaint will be registered but cannot be investigated or completed. If any person affected by the complaint does not agree to confidential information being released the same applies.*

### **Disciplinary Procedure:**

Following the investigation, the individual will either be subject to actions as detailed below or cleared of any inappropriate action or behaviour.

All parties will then receive, in writing the outcome of the investigation and action to be taken.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of examples that would warrant a verbal or a first written warning:

- Not adhering to Doula UK Policies, Code of Conduct or Philosophy
- Not adhering to Doula UK Social Media and Forum Guidelines
- Bullying, targeting or otherwise harassing in any manner likely to cause injury or distress physically, mentally or emotionally either in person or on social media, and including malicious damage to property or reputation
- Breaking client confidentiality
- Aggressive behaviour to a client or another doula

### **First Warning:**

1. If the complaint involves a member of Doula UK and an external party, and investigation finds conduct or behaviour has been deemed unsatisfactory:
  - i. The member will be given a verbal and/or written warning. Such warnings will be recorded, but disregarded after 12 months of satisfactory conduct. The member will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change.
  - ii. Depending on the nature of this offence, the Complaints Team reserve the right to remove the member from our social media platforms, and/or the Find A Doula page for a period of time from 1 month onward depending on the severity of the case.
  - iii. Where the first offence is sufficiently serious, because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on Doula UK, it may be justifiable to move directly to a final written warning.
  - iv. Where the conduct or behaviour involves a doula and an external party, the doula may be required to undertake further mentoring, supervision, remedial written work and or other actions as deemed appropriate. In all cases the outcome will be communicated in writing and the doula will be monitored for the period specified and if the doula fails to comply within the specified time period a final warning will be issued.
  - v. Where the doula holds a Volunteer role within Doula UK, the role may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Board following a report by the Complaints team.
  - vi. **Mediation:** Depending on the nature of the offence, a mediation offer may also be made. This will include the following:
    - i. A written apology including acknowledgement of action and personal responsibility for such actions being made to the other party.
    - ii. If this is unacceptable, the offer will be made to both parties to attend a mediation meeting within 12 weeks of the initiation of the disciplinary

procedure. A friend or colleague is able to attend this meeting for support. This will take place at a location agreeable to all parties but primarily at the convenience of the mediator. The mediator will, wherever possible, be a member of the Complaints team or Leadership Team of Doula UK. On completion of the mediation, all parties will be given a written copy of the agreed actions, including what behaviour must specifically be stopped.

- iii. If either party refuses to attend mediation they will be issued with a written warning immediately. If a first warning has already been issued this may result in a final warning being issued.
2. If the complaint involves two members of Doula UK, and an investigation finds conduct or behaviour has been deemed unsatisfactory:
    1. The member will be given a verbal and/or written warning. Such warnings will be recorded, but disregarded after 12 months of satisfactory conduct. The member will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change.
    2. Depending on the nature of this offence, the Complaints Team reserve the right to remove the member from our social media platforms, and/or the Find A Doula page for a period of time from 1 month onward depending on the severity of the case.
    3. Where the first offence is sufficiently serious, because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on Doula UK, it may be justifiable to move directly to a final written warning.
    4. Where the doula holds a Volunteer role within Doula UK, the role may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Board following a report by the Complaints team.
    5. **Mediation:** Depending on the nature of the offence, a mediation offer may also be made. This may include one or more the following at the discretion of the Complaints Team:
      - i. A written apology including acknowledgement of action and personal responsibility for such actions being made to the other party.
      - ii. Both (all) doulas will be required to attend a mediation meeting within 12 weeks of the initiation of the disciplinary procedure. A friend or colleague is able to attend this meeting for support. This will take place at a location agreeable to all parties but primarily at the convenience of the mediator. The mediator will, wherever possible, be a member of the Complaints team or Leadership Team of Doula UK. On completion of the mediation, all parties will be given a written copy of the agreed actions, including what behaviour must specifically be stopped.
      - iii. If either party refuses to attend mediation they will be issued with a written warning immediately. If a first warning has already been issued this may result in a final warning being issued.
  3. If the complaint involves the head or representative of a Doula UK approved course and an investigation finds conduct or behaviour has been deemed unsatisfactory:
    6. The member will be given a verbal and/or written warning. Such warnings will be recorded, but disregarded after 12 months of satisfactory conduct. The member will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change.

7. Depending on the nature of this offence, the Complaints Team reserve the right to remove the member from our social media platforms, and/or the Find A Doula page for a period of time from 1 month onward depending on the severity of the case.
  8. Where the first offence is sufficiently serious, because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on Doula UK, it may be justifiable to move directly to a final written warning.
  9. Where either or both doulas hold a Volunteer role within Doula UK, the role may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Board following a report by the Complaints team.
  10. **Mediation:** Depending on the nature of the offence, a mediation offer may also be made. This may include one or more the following at the discretion of the Complaints Team:
    - i. A written apology including acknowledgement of action and personal responsibility for such actions being made to the other party.
    - ii. In the case of a representative, both she and the Head of the course will be required to attend a mediation meeting within 12 weeks of the initiation of the disciplinary procedure. In the case of the Head of the course, she will be able to bring a friend or colleague for support. Mediation will take place at a location agreeable to all parties but primarily at the convenience of the mediator. The mediator will, wherever possible, be a member of the Complaints team or Leadership Team of Doula UK. On completion of the mediation, all parties will be given a written copy of the agreed actions, including what behaviour must specifically be stopped.
    - iii. If either party refuses to attend mediation they will be issued with a written warning immediately. If a first warning has already been issued this may result in a final warning being issued.
4. If the complaint involves two members of Doula UK, one of whom is either a Doula Mentor or a member of the Leadership Team, and an investigation finds conduct or behaviour has been deemed unsatisfactory:
- i. The member will be given a verbal and/or written warning. Such warnings will be recorded, but disregarded after 12 months of satisfactory conduct. The member will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change.
  - ii. Depending on the nature of this offence, the Complaints Team reserve the right to remove the member from our social media platforms, and/or the Find A Doula page for a period of time from 1 month onward depending on the severity of the case.
  - iii. Where the first offence is sufficiently serious, because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on Doula UK, it may be justifiable to move directly to a final written warning.
  - iv. Where the doula holds a Volunteer role within Doula UK, the role may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Board following a report by the Complaints team.
  - v. **Mediation:** Depending on the nature of the offence, a mediation offer may also be made. This may include one or more the following at the discretion of the Complaints Team:

- a. A written apology including acknowledgement of action and personal responsibility for such actions being made to the other party.
- b. Both (all) doulas will be required to attend a mediation meeting within 12 weeks of the initiation of the disciplinary procedure. A friend or colleague is able to attend this meeting for support. This will take place at a location agreeable to all parties but primarily at the convenience of the mediator. The mediator will, wherever possible, be a member of the Complaints team or Leadership Team of Doula UK. On completion of the mediation, all parties will be given a written copy of the agreed actions, including what behaviour must specifically be stopped.
- c. If either party refuses to attend mediation they will be issued with a written warning immediately. If a first warning has already been issued this may result in a final warning being issued.

### **Final Warning:**

- If the offence is serious, or there is no improvement in standards, or if a further offence occurs during the period of the existing warning, a final written warning will be given. This will include the reason for the warning and a note that if no improvement results within a defined period of time (usually stated in months as defined by Doula UK), or a final chance to attend mediation is not taken, the following action will be taken.
- If the offence is in relation to a breach of social media guidelines, specifically related to our forum or one of the Doula UK-run Facebook Groups, and there is a second breach within 6 months of the first, then they will be immediately suspended from using these platforms and will go immediately to a final written warning. This will include the reason for the warning, a date by which the suspension from social media will be lifted, and a note that if no improvement results within a defined period of time (usually stated in months as defined by Doula UK) the following action will be taken.

### **Actions following Final Warning:**

#### **1. Dismissal or Suspension of Membership:**

- i. If the conduct or behaviour has failed to improve following the final warning, is repeated within the specified timeframe, or mediation has been refused, the member or course provider will be suspended or dismissed at the discretion of the Leadership Team.
- ii. In the case of an individual member, access to Doula UK website and forums will be removed and all literature and advertising must not include any reference to Doula UK membership within 7 days of the action.
- iii. In the case of a course provider, all literature and advertising including reference to Doula UK must be removed within 14 days. All candidates attending courses affected by the suspension or removal of Doula UK approval must be informed of the suspension or ban before attending the course. Doula UK will not be held responsible for any loss of income to the course provider if candidates choose to exercise their right to a refund.
- iv. Doula UK access links for these courses not distributed to candidates having completed a course before the suspension or removal, will be null and void.
- v. Where it is deemed the facilitator of a particular course is to be suspended or removed, but the course remains approved, that individual must not facilitate any more courses for that provider from the date of the decision.

- vi. If this is not strictly adhered to, the course provider will face disciplinary action. The Leadership Team of Doula UK reserve to right to immediately revoke course approval.

## 2. Gross Misconduct:

- i. If, after investigation, it is confirmed that a member, course provider or facilitator has committed an offence of the following nature (the list is non-exhaustive), the normal consequence will be dismissal without notice.
- Theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of records
  - Fighting, assault on another person, violence and abusive behaviour
  - Deliberate damage to the property, reputation or interests of Doula UK
  - Serious incapability to perform the role as agreed with a client, to the required standard
  - Serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs
  - Serious negligence which causes unacceptable loss, damage or injury
  - Bullying, targeting or otherwise harassing in any manner likely to cause injury or distress physically, mentally or emotionally either in person or on social media, and including malicious damage to property or reputation
  - A breach of the general duty to safeguard confidential information and to ensure that such information is not released to a third party except for authorised and legitimate business reasons
  - Inappropriate use of data obtained through access to clients' personal records
  - Acts of incitement or actual acts of discrimination, harassment or victimisation
  - Indecent behaviour whilst the alleged misconduct is being investigated, the member may be suspended.
- ii. Any decision to dismiss will be taken by Doula UK only after full investigation and agreement by Leadership Team majority

## Complaints Overview:

Complaint is registered with the  
Feedback Department.



