



Doula UK
Positive birth.
Supporting families.

Complaints Policy

Introduction:

Doula UK requires the philosophy, competency and conduct of all our members to be consistently in line with Doula UK's policies. Members are personally accountable for achieving and maintaining these standards, within the context of Doula UK's support systems.

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, including inappropriate conduct and behaviour. 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 fair and thorough investigation has been implemented.

External complaints:

Any individual or organisation wishing to give feedback or make a complaint about a Doula UK doula should email **feedback@doula.org.uk**. 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**.

On the rare occasion that the Complaints Team (CT) register recurrent concerns about the same subject or same person without anyone registering a formal complaint, we reserve the right to bring our concerns to the Leadership Team. If considered appropriate by a majority vote, an independent investigation will be launched.

Feedback or complaints from an external party will be considered in the first instance by nominated members of the CT of Doula UK. All matters will be kept confidential. In most cases the feedback information will only be disclosed to and discussed and documented by the CT. If the CT judge that they need Leadership Team input they will include the appropriate Leadership Team member/s in their investigation. Where the complaint involves a mentored doula, the CT will discuss the complaint with the designated Doula Mentor.

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 be required 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.

In the unfortunate case that our Code of Conduct or key policies have been seriously broken by a member, the disciplinary procedure will come into action.

The doula, if Recognised, will be encouraged to call on the support of her original Doula Mentor (or another Doula Mentor) and if Mentored will be required to involve her mentor during this process. The doula must respect confidentiality when discussing details with any party other than her Doula Mentor or member of the CT.

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.

By raising a complaint, it is agreed 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, external to Doula UK, affected by the complaint does not agree to confidential information being released the same applies.

Internal complaints:

It is our hope that member-to-member conflicts or concerns will be resolved through honest communication and appropriate support to both parties.

Members who feel they can't resolve their concerns directly with the person involved can contact the Doula Support Network (DSN). DSN volunteers can mediate between members to resolve issues, or if our anti-bullying policy has been broken, they can refer the issue to the CT.

Internal concerns or conflicts must be shared with the DSN before being referred to the CT except for cases in which there are serious concerns around the safety or legality of a member's practise.

In the event the complaint concerns a mentoring issue, then they must first contact the Head of Mentoring on mentoring@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 CT (with the agreement of the mentee in question) should it be deemed necessary.

In the unfortunate case that our Code of Conduct or key policies have been seriously broken by a member, the disciplinary procedure will come into action.

The doula will be encouraged to call on the support of her original 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.

Doula UK Complaints Team:

The Complaints Team 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 fulfil this sensitive role.

In the unlikely event that a complaint concerns a member of the CT, then the Head of Accountability should be contacted (accountability@doula.org.uk). The Head of Accountability will allocate a different member of the CT or a member of the Leadership Team.

In the event the complaint concerns a member of the Leadership Team, a member of the CT, or an external mediator, will be an 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 Head of Mentoring on mentoring@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 CT (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 CT 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 disciplinary action:

- 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, except where required in discussing a complaint with your designated member of the CT and/or Mentor.
- Aggressive behaviour to a client or another doula

1. Complaints involving a DUK members and an external party

In this instance, if the investigation by the CT finds conduct or behaviour has been 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 CT reserve the right to remove the member from our social media platforms, and/or the Find A Doula page for a set period of time 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. Internal grievance involving two or more Doula UK members

Issues between two DUK member doulas will either be resolved direct communication, or supported by a DSN volunteer. If the issue represents a serious transgression of DUK policy, safety or legality it will be referred to the CT. In this case, if the investigation upholds the complaint, the disciplinary procedure will proceed to the appropriate recommendation which may be one or a combination of the following options:

1. return to further mentoring
2. written apology
3. temporary removal from DUK social media and/or the Find A Doula (FAD) directory
4. issue a final written warning.
5. Permanent exclusion from Doula UK

3. Internal grievance involving an official DUK volunteer or mentor

In this instance the complaints pathway is the same but if the issue is escalated to the CT, the investigation will be conducted with an appropriate member of the LT (e.g Head of Mentoring). Recommendations from the Complaints Team may include one or a combination of:

1. removal of volunteer or mentoring role
2. written apology
3. return to further mentoring
4. temporary removal from DUK social media and/or the FAD directory
5. issue a final written warning
6. permanent exclusion from Doula UK

4. Social Media Offences

When a member has breached the DUK Social Media Policy, this can be reported to the acting admin of the DUK Members' Facebook Group who will pass the complaint to the CT to be logged. Once a member has received 3 complaints for breaching guidelines, the CT will act at their discretion in one or a combination of the following ways:

1. temporary removal from DUK social media platforms and/or the FAD directory
2. request a written apology if relevant
3. issue a final written warning

Cases of serious misconduct:

- 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 may 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 majority of Doula UK directors.
 - iii. A decision by the directors to dismiss a member is final. Appeals can only be brought when disciplinary action has not been previously brought to the board of directors.

Complaints Overview:

