



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

## Doula UK Philosophy

Doula UK is a network of doulas. We believe that all women should have the opportunity to be a doula and should have access to the services of one. In the past it was more common for a sister, mother, grandmother, aunt to help a new mother on her journey. These women were not trained, but experienced in life and offered nurturing and support. In the same way, a doula's support comes directly from the heart and wisdom of that individual.

Potentially every woman, whether trained or not, can support another woman antenatally, during labour, birth and in the postnatal period. How well she does this depends on her personal maturity, knowledge and her unique view of pregnancy, birth and motherhood. The main tool a doula has is herself! Before, during and after the birth it is first and foremost a doula's presence that should make the labouring woman/new mother feel safe. Whilst we recognise that to be a doula, it may be easier for those who have the experience of giving birth, breastfeeding and rearing children, we also realise that there are some women who do not have this experience who can be wonderfully nurturing doulas. We believe that a pregnant woman/new mother should be able to choose the doula with whom she is most comfortable.

The doula role, we believe, is a way of "being" not "doing". A "training" implies completion and it is not useful to believe that a woman can attend a two or three day workshop or training course and believe that she is a doula. Doulas are learners, they are explorers, they are guides, friends, sharers, it goes on and on. Without an open approach to self development and human growth it is impossible to be available to enable others. Within a doula's education there must be a deep concentration and focus on self awareness and any woman entering the profession is required to spend a lot of time reflecting.

Although comments such as 'I couldn't have done it without you' may be flattering, what we want women to be able to say is 'you enabled me to do it myself'. We have to remember that we are there to safeguard the emotional memory of pregnancy, birth and early motherhood. A doula is not a 'coach' who tells women what or what not to do either during the birth or postnatally as this is, in essence, disempowering. A doula's practical tools have to be used wisely to help create an environment conducive to bringing forth a new life and to cherishing it.

The doula's role has often been described as "mothering the mother". The doula is employed primarily by the woman to listen, support and respond to her needs. The doula is not there to replace or exclude the father, partner or other family members or to intrude on these relationships. The doula's actions are never driven by her ego but by sensitivity and unconditional love.



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Doulas do not give any medical advice but they should have a good understanding of the physiology of birth and the postnatal period so can provide support to help the woman find solutions when she needs guidance. This distinction between advice and support is important.

The members of our network have come to be doulas through a variety of journeys. All are passionate about their work. We do not want doulas to add another layer of 'professionalism' to an already overloaded maternity system. There are as many different doulas as there are people; indeed, there is not a typical doula, but in every case we hope you will find a woman with her heart in the right place. For a doula it is a privilege to share the 'everyday miracle' of birth and the days surrounding that time.