

NHS Lothian Position Statement on Doulas

Information for patients

NHS Lothian is committed to providing high-quality, safe maternity care that respects the individual choices of women and birthing people. We recognise that some people may choose to have a doula support them in their pregnancy, labour and in the early weeks after birth.

What is a Doula?

A **doula** is a non-medical supporter who can offer emotional, physical, practical, and social support tailored to your needs. Some doulas may also offer complimentary therapies. Doulas provide reassurance, comfort, and encouragement but **do not** provide clinical care or medical advice.

Roles of Doulas and Midwives

- **Midwives** are healthcare professionals responsible for your clinical care and the wellbeing of you and your baby. They are regulated medical professionals who have completed approved training and work under the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). The title midwife is protected by law, and it is a criminal offence to use this title or to “attend” to a woman in childbirth unless that person is a registered midwife or doctor unless in an emergency.
- **Doulas** provide additional, personalised support and companionship, but do **not** replace or undertake any midwifery duties. The role of the doula is not regulated by any professional body although some doulas complete training programmes through accredited providers, such as Doula UK.

It is important to understand that midwives and doulas have different and complementary roles.

Our Position

- We support the right to choose a doula for extra support.
- Doulas should be **engaged directly by women or their families** and not employed by the NHS to avoid any conflict of interest.
- Doulas do **not** provide clinical care and should never be used as a substitute for midwives or NHS maternity staff.
- Midwives and doulas should work collaboratively and respectfully to support an individual’s care and ensure the safety of both the birthing person and the unborn baby or babies.
- NHS Lothian advises against student midwives or midwives also working as doulas to avoid any conflict between the two distinctive roles. Should a midwife wish to act as a doula they must declare this interest with their line manager in accordance with procedures for declaring secondary employment and conflicts of interest in the NHS Lothian’s Applying the Principles of Good Business Conduct.

Shared decision-making

Shared decision-making should ensure that you are supported to make the right decision for you. This leaflet helps to inform you about the facts of engaging the services of a doula, and should be used, along with conversations with your [health professional], and your own previous knowledge and preferences, to make the decision that is right for you.

Contact Information

In what circumstances should you contact your community midwife either at your next appointment or via their office number found in your blue notes folder.

Further Information

You will be able to discuss this further with your community midwife.

Further information and resources can be found at:

Royal College of Midwives Position Statement- Doulas

<https://www.rcm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/rcm-position-statement-doulas.pdf>

Royal College of Midwives Position Statement



Interpretation and Translation

This leaflet may be made available in a larger print, Braille or your community language.

It's OK to Ask

When you understand what's going on with your health, you can make better decisions around your care and treatment.

www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/its-ok-to-ask/

