



GUIDANCE FOR COLLABORATIVE WORKING BETWEEN DOULAS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AT WHITTINGTON HEALTH NHS TRUST – July 2018

Introduction

Whittington Health has always welcomed the individual support given to families by doulas and has a long tradition of working with doulas for many years. Doula support can improve women’s satisfaction with their birth experience, enhance their relationship with their partner and baby, increases the likelihood of a shorter labour and a straightforward vaginal birth and increases breastfeeding initiation (see references).

In order to promote and preserve a good working relationship between doulas and health professionals ensuring safety and consistency of approach, this document explains how we wish to continue to work together, for the benefit of all involved in caring for women and families. It provides information and guidance for all doulas/companions (non-family members or friends) and health professionals caring for and supporting women and families at the Whittington. It is expected that a mutually respectful collaboration between doulas and health professionals will develop and embed at Whittington Health.

Health and Safety

Whittington Health has a duty to ensure that everyone working within the premises has been authorised and is safe to do so. It is expected that doulas and health professionals will do the following:

Doulas Will	Health Professionals Will
1) Introduce herself to the person in charge of the area	Welcome and introduce themselves to the doula
2) Preferably display an ID badge of whichever organisation they belong to	Confirm doula is who she says she is
3) Follow the hand hygiene procedures of using gel or washing hands when entering and leaving the clinical area	Follow hand hygiene rules
4) Know how to alert for assistance in an emergency	Show doulas where the emergency bells are
5) Know the emergency exits and meeting points in the event of a fire	Show doulas where the emergency exit is and meeting point
6) Have a break when required using the kitchen facilities or room facilities for tea/coffee	Show the doula where refreshments are available and where she can fetch a suitable chair to use

7) Ensure no unauthorised person tailgates them into clinical area	Ensure entry to clinical area is controlled
8) Be aware of entry and exit requirements at night time and that partners can stay overnight for labouring and postnatal women	Inform the doula of procedures at night time and enable access at any time
Clinical Aspects	
1) Work in collaboration with professionals so women's wishes are respected	Work collaboratively with the doula ensuring women's wishes are respected and ensuring safe and optimum care
2) Provide non clinical care and support to the women and her partner	Provide clinical care as appropriate
3) Highlight any specific care issues that the professional is not aware of eg: existing or changed care plans, preferences and priorities	Ask questions about care plans and act accordingly

Supporting at C/Sections elective and emergency

Our elective CS's are done in the main theatres where there is very little room in theatre and the recovery area. Emergency CS's are done in the LW theatre. Numbers of people in theatre are restricted due to infection control and health and safety reasons. Therefore a doula;

- May only accompany a woman into theatre for an elective or an emergency caesarean **if her partner does not wish to**, except in the event of exceptional circumstances **
- Otherwise the doula should wait in the labour ward waiting area until the mother returns to the recovery area. Within the recovery area only one person can remain at the bedside at any one time, so swaps between the partner and the doula may be necessary. The doula will be expected to respect and cooperate with the decision of the clinical team in an emergency, to avoid delays
- Can accompany a woman to LW theatre for suturing of 3rd and 4th degree tears and manual removal of placenta, if the partner would prefer not to. Mother and baby should not be separated therefore the baby will go to theatre with her.
- Will follow theatre protocols ie: change to scrubs and observe infection control procedures as directed by staff members
- Will continue to support partner of woman if not in theatre
- Will support early skin to skin contact and infant feeding where appropriate

***Please note if mother has an emergency C/S which requires a general anaesthetic, no companions including partners are admitted to theatre, but can wait in the waiting area until mother is back in recovery. The baby will remain with the mother at all times.**

****When doula presence alongside partner presence is requested by the woman in exceptional circumstances (for example but not limited to women who are fearful, vulnerable, traumatised) this needs to be discussed and agreed with the Labour ward matron or theatre lead.**

Supporting Homebirths

If the doula is present in the woman's home before the midwife arrives, it is important that she reminds the woman to call the midwife. Midwives must be informed of women labouring at home in a timely way. This gives midwives the time to prepare, travel and arrive on time to support women at homebirths.

The doula can be a welcoming presence for the midwife and help the midwife to familiarise with the woman's home. She will continue to remain a calm and reassuring presence for the woman and partner during labour, which will help the midwife in being able to provide safe care.

Tour of unit, information and support

A video tour is available on the Whittington maternity page on the website for doulas, companions and women. We do not provide unit tours regularly to women as feedback from families reveals that they have little privacy and large numbers of people touring is unsettling. In view of this the following information is available on <https://maternity.whittington.nhs.uk>

- Video tour
- Information on self-referrals for women
- Information on Maternity Voices Partnership(MVP) for Whittington

Please note that Professional midwifery advocates (PMA's) and senior midwives are available to discuss women's birth plans and queries. Birth reflection clinics are also available for women who have experienced birth trauma

Collaboration

We welcome feedback on how doulas and health professionals can work together and on women's experiences of our maternity services. We would also like to hear of any other issues that you would like to discuss. We will work in partnership with doulas in promoting the role of the doula at our education forums.

Contacts

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This guidance will be updated annually in line with changes

References:

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Hansy Josovic Maternity Trust *A Labour of Love*