

# DOULAS & MIDWIVES

"WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?"

## Doulas

Provide practical and emotional support for you and your family

Do not perform clinical tasks or give medical advice

Advocate and support women's informed choices

Are not regulated by a governing body and have no legal clinical duty of care

## Midwives

Provide holistic antenatal, birth and postnatal care and are specialists in physiological pregnancy and birth

Can perform clinical tasks, give medical advice and assess the physical well-being of you and your baby

Advocate and support women's informed choices

Are regulated by the NMC (UK) and NMBI (ROI)

Have legal responsibility and clinical duty of care

Families often choose to have a Doula in addition to a Midwife and this can work very well.

Doulas have no legal or clinical responsibility and they can give you and your family practical and emotional support, focusing on your needs and signposting you to healthcare professionals and information you may find helpful. Doulas will also advocate or 'be your voice' if you feel you need this.

Many Doulas are trained in alternative therapies, massage, hypnobirthing etc. which they can use if requested.

Midwives are the experts in 'normal' pregnancy and birth. They will ensure that you have a safe, healthy pregnancy and birth whilst enabling you to make informed choices by providing evidence based, researched information. They also have an advocacy role and because they are healthcare professionals, can help you navigate through medical advice, options and challenging choices.

Midwives belong to a professional body, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in the UK, or the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) and as such are clinically and legally both responsible and accountable for their midwifery practice.

Many Midwives are also trained in alternative therapies, birth biomechanics, hypnobirthing and may also have a specialist interest in topics as diverse as diabetes, birth trauma, mental health, tongue-tie or VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Caesarean).

Doulas and Midwives can work very well together, complimenting each other's skills with a shared goal of supporting, empowering and informing you, their client.