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A qualitative study of volunteer doulas working alongside midwives at births in England: mothers' and doulas' experiences

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Abstract

Objective: To explore trained volunteer doulas' and mothers' experiences of doula support at birth and their perceptions of how this related to the midwife's role.

Design: A qualitative descriptive study, informed by phenomenological social psychology.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were carried out between June 2015 and March 2016.

Interview transcripts were analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

Setting: Three community volunteer doula projects run by third sector organisations in England.

Participants: 19 volunteer doulas and 16 mothers who had received doula support during labour.

Findings: Three overarching themes emerged: (1) 'the doula as complementary to midwives', containing subthemes '*skilled physical and emotional support*', '*continuous presence*', '*woman-*

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