

Bradford Doulas

Delivered by Action for Community Ltd from May 2017 – April 2024

Acting as a 'professional friend', volunteer doulas help pregnant women and birthing people navigate their pregnancy journey and make positive choices. They also accompany them to appointments, provide practical support at the birth, build positive relationships with other services and offer emotional support.

♥ How it was delivered

Support was provided six weeks before birth, during birth and six weeks afterwards, through home visits, over the phone and via video calls.

Volunteers were trained to become level 3 accredited volunteer doulas. The 13-week course included antenatal support, working with healthcare professionals, perinatal mental health, breastfeeding and safeguarding. This led to a level 3 qualification (equivalent to 1 A-Level).

In 2023 alone

111

women were supported by the Bradford Doulas



97

new doulas have been trained since 2017

29 different languages spoken
36 ethnicities recorded



Almost 70% of those supported received at least one of the following: food parcels, maternal care items, baby care items or breastfeeding items

♥ Why this project was developed

- Help families make informed choices about their own and their babies' health
- Help women and birthing people have a more positive experience of pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period

♥ Expected outcomes:

- Women and birthing people will engage more with wider support and health services where appropriate
- Women and birthing people will experience an improved sense of mental wellbeing
- More babies will be breastfed at birth and on discharge from maternity services
- More babies will be fully or partially breastfed up to the age of 6 months
- Fewer women and birthing people will experience severe anxiety or depression
- Improved maternal sensitivity when baby is aged 3-4 months
- Improved quality of parent-child interactions at age 2

♥ Impact and findings*

- Bradford Doulas have established a recognised partnership with maternity services at Bradford Royal Infirmary. This relationship has allowed for continuous evaluation and improvement of the service, and during COVID-19 it enabled doulas to support labouring women and birthing people at the maternity unit from November 2020.
- Bradford Doulas have achieved a Maternity Stream of Sanctuary award, demonstrating their commitment to supporting the most vulnerable families, as well as a passion for continuous learning and professional development.
- The retention of volunteer doulas is exceptional and unprecedented. The holistic training offered and regular wellbeing meet-ups are a testament to the cohesion of staff team and their shared ethos.
- The project was recognised in the NHS Volunteering Taskforce Report and Recommendations (2023): 'Wise women give reassurance before and during birth'.
- The project has given volunteers a skillset that has helped them into employment and further education, with some pursuing a career in midwifery.

*This section includes information from both the evaluation report/s and project

