



Understanding End of Life Doula provision

Faculty of Wellbeing Education
and Language Studies (WELS)

Call for PhD projects starting in October 2024

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Project description

School

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

Members

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| Prof Erica Borgstrom | https://www.open.ac.uk/people/esb79 | erica.borgstrom@open.ac.uk |
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| Dr Catherine Pestano | https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/biography/catherine-pestano | catherine.pestano@open.ac.uk |
| Kirsten Bashir | https://www.open.ac.uk/people/kam432 | kirsten.bashir@open.ac.uk |
| <p>The project team also consists of members who are outside of The Open University, including Emma Clare (from End of Life Doula UK). Initial queries about the doctoral project should be directed to Prof Borgstrom.</p> | | |

Aims

This project aims to understand end of life doula provision. This includes, but is not limited to, how it fits with other services and forms of support; what kinds of support are offered and the ways in which support is provided; what it is like for doulas.

This work to-date has been part of a Knowledge Transfer Voucher (KTV) funded project. The partners (End of Life Doula UK - EOLDUK) are keen to develop the work further, including expanding the research aims. We would be open to doctoral applicants in outlining project aims that align with our overall aim of understanding doula provision.

Methodology

The project has involved a mixed method approach, to meet different project objectives. We have developed a survey to record family/friend/carer views of doula support (captured after bereavement); this currently has only been piloted in a small geographical area. We have also used a range of qualitative methods including focus groups and collaborative workshops, with the later using a template we developed to capture client case studies.

There is scope to grow this work further to include other methods and/or expand what has been done so far.

Contribution

To date, the project has helped End of Life Doula UK (EoLDUK) to more impactfully deliver support for people who are dying and those who are close to

them (friends/relatives), as well as support the doulas providing the service. Over the medium-term, the results and insights gained through knowledge exchange will enable EoLDUK to form effective partnerships with commissioners and referral agents (i.e. health and social care practitioners). Findings from the project are contributing to a budding national discussion and early evidence base about this growing but still relatively unknown area of end of life doula support in the UK.

Website

<https://wels.open.ac.uk/research/projects/open-thanatology/projects>

PhD project

We would expect the doctoral researcher to come up with their own area of interest to explore that meets the general aims of the work on end-of-life doulas, but they can build on existing OU research and collaborative relationships. We would anticipate that they would use qualitative or mixed methods.

