

End of Life Doula and Palliative Care

Supporting families in the space between clinical contact, alongside palliative care teams.

Most of the Final Year Happens Outside Clinical Care

Most of the final year of life occurs in homes and communities rather than clinical settings. Families often navigate:

- caregiving responsibilities
- uncertainty about symptoms
- emotional and relational strain
- practical and logistical decisions
- conversations about dying and death

What Is an End of Life Doula?

An End of Life Doula is a non-clinical companion who provides emotional, practical, spiritual, and social support before, during, and after death. Support may include:

- emotional support
- practical preparation
- whānau communication
- navigation and reassurance

Doulas do not replace clinical care.

What Doulas Do Not Do

- administer medication
- diagnose or provide clinical care
- give medical advice
- impose personal beliefs

Clinical concerns are referred back to the appropriate medical team.

NHS Evidence

www.eol-doula.uk/leeds-nhs-commissioned-project

When Families May Benefit

Doula support can be helpful when:

- caregiver strain is increasing
- families feel overwhelmed navigating the system
- difficult conversations about dying are being avoided
- people want help preparing for the dying process
- social or community support is limited
- families want guidance around vigils or after-death care

How Doulas Complement Palliative Care

Doulas provide relational continuity between clinical contact, supporting families primarily in the time spent outside healthcare settings. Doulas encourage choice, capacity and autonomy. Evidence suggests Doula support may also reduce crises presentations and increase caregiver confidence

- emotional support
- practical preparation and planning
- family communication and dynamics
- navigation, reassurance and understanding
- continuity of presence

The roles are complementary, not competing.

For Clinicians

If families express interest in additional relational or practical support, clinicians may consider:

- letting families know ELDA Professional Doulas exist as a non-clinical support role
- directing interested families to ELDA (to locate Professional Members)
- considering Doula support when caregiver strain or practical complexity is high. Also between and during vulnerable transition times. Or when there is little community or whānau support available.

Further Information

End of Life Doula Alliance Aotearoa (ELDAA)

Website: www.eldaa.org.nz

Email: info@eldaa.org.nz

Your name:

Website:

Email:



ELDAA maintains professional standards, scope of practice, and ethical guidelines for Doulas in Aotearoa.