

Hiring helpers can compromise care, doctor maintains

Birth partner alert

PICTURE: SAM STEPHENSON

SS271109T-1



AUCTION: TaxAssist director Peter Lewis and his staff with some of the treats on offer

Early Christmas present for charity

A SILENT auction was held to raise money for the Make a Wish charity.

Luxury hampers, Thai restaurant vouchers and a two-night hotel stay were all snapped up by employees at the Hove

branch of TaxAssist Accountants.

The event raised £593 for Make a Wish, with the most lucrative bid proving to be for two nights at the Royal Pavilion Townhouse Hotel, Brighton, which

went for more than £100.

Payroll manager Carolyn Woodrup, who helped organise the event, said: "I chose a silent auction because I thought that would be most effective way to raise money."

A HOSPITAL doctor has criticised the growing trend among pregnant women to hire birth partners to help them when they go into labour.

Trainee anaesthetist Abhijoy Chakladar, who works at Worthing Hospital, said using doulas could compromise patient care.

Writing in the online British Medical Journal, Dr Chakladar said doulas, providing support in the child-birth process, were unregulated and should not be involved in medical decisions.

He said: "This trend may be a sad reflection of failures in the delivery of medical and midwifery care, a sticking plaster concealing greater problems."

Dr Chakladar said a doula had compromised the care he offered one patient.

He gave the patient a top-up of epidural pain relief during labour after she complained of discomfort and said she should lie on her side.

The doula interjected to say the mother was comfortable as she was.

Dr Chakladar said he should have spoken directly to the mother and not the doula. He said he was "dis-

by SIOBHAN RYAN
Health reporter

appointed by the real or perceived need for doulas", saying it was the duty of doctors, nurses and midwives to support mothers and families "through a very special but potentially frightening experience".

He said people feared the unknown and this, coupled with the time-pressured environment on hospital wards, "takes control away from the individual".

Dr Chakladar said staff shortages and shift changes often made continuity of care impossible which was why some women may opt to have a doula so there was someone there throughout.

Doulas are not usually medically qualified but have been growing in popularity and have been used by several celebrities.

About 1,000 are thought to be working in the UK. Doula UK is the largest organisation with 450 registered doulas. Doulas can cost from £200 to more than £1,000 and tailor their services to the needs of the mother and any partner.

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News in brief

Turing tribute

A PERMANENT memorial to the inventor of the computer is planned for a seaside town. Alan Turing lived in St Leonards from 1914 to 1921 and went to school in St Michael's School in Charles Road. The idea of a blue plaque was discussed by Hastings Borough Council's museum committee, possibly to be unveiled as part of the centenary celebrations of the mathematician's life in 2012.

Scam warning

COUNCILS across Sussex are alerting residents after reports of a nationwide council tax scam. There have been reports of an incident in Brighton and Hove. The council phone up claiming to be from the council and say you are due a council tax refund and they need your bank account details to pay the money back.

Join the board

EAST SUSSEX Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs Eastbourne District General Hospital and the Conquest Hospital in St Leonards, needs a new non executive director. Call 01323 435653. The closing date for applications is December 15.

Kenya call

SUSSEX teachers are being called on to help educate children in Kenya by Etc! or Educating the Children, a new UK-based charity. Find out more by emailing info@etcetcetera.org or visiting www.ETCetcetera.org.

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