



Maternity Support Therapist (doula) Programme

As the leading provider of professional education on the safety of complementary therapies in pregnancy and childbirth, Expectancy is pleased to announce its exciting new Maternity Support Therapist programme for women wishing to acquire the knowledge and skills to use a range of strategies, including complementary therapies, to support women safely and appropriately during childbirth and in early parenthood.

Childbirth is a normal physiological life event, arguably the most significant in the lives of most women. The majority of mothers give birth in hospitals or birth centres, but a few choose to have their babies at home, as the medicalised environment of a large maternity unit can adversely affect progress towards a natural birth. Women who have had uncomplicated pregnancies and proceed to normal labour are cared for by midwives, the lead professionals involved in the maternity services, but unfortunately there is a severe shortage of some 5,000 midwives in the UK, with 2000 midwifery posts unfilled in London alone. Studies have shown that the continued support of an appropriately prepared female companion during labour can improve the outcome for both mother and baby, being more likely to result in a normal vaginal birth without intervention or complications, providing the mother and her partner with a safer and more satisfying experience and, indirectly, preventing ongoing complications such as postnatal depression.

The use of complementary therapies in maternity care is extremely popular and it is estimated that the self administration by expectant mothers of substances such as herbal and homoeopathic remedies may be anything between 50% and 75%, primarily to relieve discomforts such as "morning sickness" and backache and, postnatally, to help them adapt to motherhood and to establish breastfeeding. In labour the use of complementary therapies helps to relieve pain, fear, tension and anxiety and can make the difference between a normal birth and a Caesarean section. Some maternity units now offer aspects of complementary medicine including, aromatherapy, reflexology and acupuncture. However, although one survey in 1997 suggested that approximately a third of midwives use complementary therapies, the availability within the NHS of such services remains limited.

Women are increasingly prepared to pay for services which provide them with a satisfying experience, especially since financial and staff reductions in NHS maternity services mean that they have little opportunity to discuss their worries with their midwives. Some women engage the services of a *doula* to accompany them during labour. A doula is a lay practitioner who has no legal responsibility for the mother's care but who provides physical, emotional and social support alongside the mother's family, her midwife and other caregivers. She also acts as an advocate for the mother and a liaison between the mother and the midwife. Unfortunately, despite this growing trend in direct response to the state of the UK maternity services, there is no formal accredited and regulated doula training or registration, although this is currently being addressed by the Federation of Antenatal Educators (FEDANT). Furthermore, the ad hoc use of complementary therapies by doulas with little or no training and a poorly developed understanding of their application to pregnancy, labour and postnatal physiology is potentially putting mothers and babies at risk.

Expectancy, acknowledges the difficulties of the current maternity system and the consequent increasing numbers of lay supporters and complementary therapists accompanying women in labour. Expectancy is an established training organization and, since its inception five years ago, has become the leading provider of professional education on the safety of complementary therapies in maternity care. This Maternity Support Therapist Programme aims to address the particular issues of support and advocacy for labouring and newly-delivered mothers and to fill a much needed void within intrapartum and postnatal care. The Programme aims to offer a comprehensive theoretical and practical education to prepare interested and enthusiastic women to work as "Birth Support Therapists" and/or "Postnatal Support Therapists". These lay practitioners will be able to offer nurturing and supportive care to women before, during and after childbirth, safely using aspects of complementary therapies such as massage, aromatherapy, certain specific manual techniques (eg acupressure and reflex zone therapy) and Bach Flower remedies. Students who successfully complete the Programme will have the opportunity to register with Expectancy as an approved "Maternity Support Therapist" specialising in supporting mothers and their families during labour (Birth Support Therapist / BST) or after the birth (Postnatal Support Therapist / PST), or both (Maternity Support Therapist / MST). Ongoing mentoring, supervision and continuing professional development will be an integral part of future practice.

The Programme has recently been accredited with the University of Greenwich, (15 credits at foundation level) which will ensure an acceptable standard of preparation of these lay practitioners and which may pave the way for a more formal educational route and the development of a defined role for those choosing to work as birth or postnatal supporters. Expectancy prides itself in emphasizing safety, professional accountability and evidence-based practice, in all its courses and Programmes, and on insisting that all its lecturers and facilitators are midwives or nurses who have worked in the Higher Education sector and who have qualifications in one or more complementary therapies or related disciplines. Negotiations are also underway to obtain professional accreditation for the Maternity Support Therapist Programme with the Federation of Antenatal Educators (for the doula role) and the Federation of Holistic Therapists (for the complementary therapy component).

The Maternity Support Therapist (MST) Programme has two pathways: the Birth Support Therapist (BST) for those wishing to accompany women in labour, and the Postnatal Support Therapist (PST) for those wishing to provide support in

early parenthood and assistance to establish breast feeding. Candidates may elect to complete one or both of the pathways.

This part-time modular Programme comprises one introductory module which must be completed by all students prior to commencing their chosen pathway. This module is the Caring for Pregnant Clients (CPC) course, which is already accredited by the Federation of Holistic Therapists, delivered either as a 2-day taught course with subsequent home study or as a distance learning course. It is currently available as continuing professional development for qualified complementary therapists wishing to specialize in treating pregnant clients. The content includes anatomy, physiology and an introduction to conventional maternity care during pregnancy, labour and the puerperium; it equates to 20 hours of study.

Both pathways then have a further 2 modules of 2 taught days each, offered every 8 weeks, plus a final assessment day, totalling 30 hours plus 40 hours of home study. Thus the BST or PST pathways constitute 90 hours of learning each; those who have completed the BST and wish to progress to the PST then undertake the relevant postnatal modules, equivalent to an additional 30 hours, plus 40 hours of home study, making the combined MST programme 160 hours.

The Programme will take place at selected appropriate venues around the UK in association with Expectancy, with the first course intended to commence in September 2009 in Northwich, Cheshire. The venue is an Holistic Birthing Centre (HBC) run by independent midwives who provide a variety of services for mothers, including complementary therapies and counselling, as well as antenatal and postnatal care, with births taking place in the centre, the mother's own home or in hospital. Although hands-on clinical practice is not an essential component of the MST Programme, it is hoped that the links forged between the HBC and Expectancy will provide an exciting opportunity to encourage and motivate those who undertake the Programme, and may be a source of future work for those living in the north. Subsequent intakes may attend courses in Northwich or the London area.

Entry Requirements:

Recruitment for the programme will be from mature and enthusiastic applicants interested in working with childbearing and newly-delivered mothers. Applicants may be women with personal childbirth experience, maternity support workers already working within the NHS maternity services and wishing to extend their role, antenatal teachers, doulas, complementary therapists and those with an interest in future midwifery training.

Academic qualifications are not a pre-requisite but evidence of the ability to write English to an acceptable semi-professional level will be required. Thus, recruitment will be by a selection process in which candidates are required to submit a 500 word reflection on their perceptions of pregnancy and childbirth or the postnatal period, according to their chosen pathway, which may be based on personal or relevant professional experience. Following this, a telephone interview will take place. The selection process aims to determine that prospective students are able to produce a cohesive comprehensible written account on a related subject, to facilitate them to focus on their commitment to understanding the birth process or the postnatal period, and to assess the prospective student's verbal communication skills (telephone interview) as this forms a fundamental aspect of the programme and of the role of a maternity support therapist.

Candidates who are successful in their application will enter their written reflective account in their individual professional portfolio which will be a key component of the programme, enabling students to compile a record of learning and experience, both during the programme and for their continuing professional development record.

Aims of the Programme:

The Programme aims to provide students with the opportunity to:

- Acquire the knowledge and skills of selective aspects of complementary therapies, supportive techniques and relaxation methods to provide women with appropriate physical, emotional and spiritual care before, during and after birth
- Understand issues relating to professional accountability and health and safety when complementary therapies are offered to pregnant, childbearing or newly-delivered mothers
- Reflect on the practical implementation of their role within the context of the overall provision of maternity services.

Learning outcomes: by the end of the Programme students will be able to:

- 1. Act as an advocate for labouring / newly-delivered mothers and support them safely and appropriately with a range of complementary techniques and natural remedies to help them to achieve a safe and satisfying birth experience and/or to assist in their recovery from childbirth and in coping with the transition to parenthood
- 2. Display an appreciation of their role as a birth / postnatal supporter in the context of the conventional maternity services and in relation to the maternity professionals involved in the care of pregnant and/or postnatal women
- 3. Demonstrate an understanding of professional accountability, legal, ethical and health and safety issues when working with expectant, labouring and/or newly-delivered mothers
- 4. Utilise their knowledge and learning as a resource for their clients

CORE MODULE 1: CARING FOR PREGNANT CLIENTS (BST and PST)

Day 1 – Aims of antenatal care; tests and investigations; terminology; physiological changes in pregnancy; development of the fetus; discomforts and complications of pregnancy; dealing with emergencies

Day 2 – Role of the midwife, maternity care in the UK; introduction to labour/birth/postnatal period, health and safety issues. Introduction to Complementary Therapies (CT's) – safety of CT's and cautions with use.

BIRTH SUPPORT THERAPIST PATHWAY

Module 2

Day 3 – Labour

Physiology of labour; stress and birth hormones; traditional pain relief (epidural, pethidine/morphine – physiological effects); nutrition and hydration in labour

Alternative methods of pain relief – complementary therapies, massage, water, yoga, relaxation techniques; Introduction to Aromatherapy – safety; selected oils; basic massage techniques

Day 4 – Role of the Birth Support Therapist; advocacy and empowerment.

Physical care – position, comfort and hygiene; use of birthing balls and other aids; Application of TENS

Emotional and spiritual issues; birthplans; communication and listening skills

Introduction to Bach Flower Remedies – philosophy; Rescue remedy; selected remedies for labour and childbirth

Introduction to oriental medicine (acupuncture, shiatsu etc) – philosophy and review of main principles; acupressure techniques for labour

Module 3

Day 5 –Review of intervention in childbirth and obstetric emergencies.

Introduction to Homoeopathy – philosophy; arnica; other remedies; birth kits

Introduction to Reflexology – philosophy; basic foot massage and key points for relaxation

Day 6 – Review and further input on the key complementary therapies for labour and childbirth – selected essential oils; further massage practice; acupressure; additional Bach Flower remedies for labour and childbirth.

Safety and professional issues – review of health and safety issues from module 1 (CPC); working within NHS environment; home birth; when birth does not go according to plan; limitations of own practice; care for oneself; insurance; CRB checks; setting up in business

Preparation and discussion of assessment requirements

POSTNATAL SUPPORT THERAPIST PATHWAY

Module 2

Day 3 – Physiology of the postnatal period; perineal care; circulation; urinary output; tiredness; physical recovery from childbirth; hygiene.

Role of the PST; Complementary therapies for general postnatal care

Day 4 – Infant feeding – breast and formula feeding; making up formula feeds; physiology of breastfeeding ; facilitating successful breastfeeding; Complementary therapies to assist with infant feeding

Module 3 (PST)

Day 5 - Complications of the postnatal period – bleeding; infection; deep vein thrombosis; retention of urine; perineal pain.

Adjustment to parenthood – lack of sleep; resuming sexual relationships; siblings; fatherhood; care of the baby

Contraception and family spacing

Complementary therapies to promote relaxation and assist with postnatal problems

Day 6 – Postnatal depression; baby blues; Puerperal Psychosis

Limitations of practice; Liaising with mother, family and health care professionals

Key complementary therapies to assist with stress and depression – aromatherapy, acupuncture; Bach Flower remedies; homoeopathy; reflexology; herbal medicine

Safety and professional issues – review of health and safety issues from module 1 (CPC); working within NHS environment; home birth; when birth does not go to plan; limitations of own practice; care for oneself; insurance; CRB checks; setting up in business

Preparation for assessment

Day 7 – BST and PST – Assessment days for both pathways will consist of submission of completed portfolio of learning; quiz on care during labour and birth (BST pathway) or postnatal care (PST pathway);

plus participation in a group debate: home versus hospital birth (BST pathway) or breast versus formula feeding (PST pathway)

Evaluation of the programme – verbal and written

Fees for the academic year commencing September 2009:

Birth Support Therapist pathway £1350

Postnatal Support Therapist pathway £1350

Combined Maternity Support Therapist programme £2500

Payable as a deposit of £350 (BST/PST) and five monthly payments of £200
OR a deposit of £750 (combined MST) and ten monthly payments of £175
Students wishing to submit assignments for academic credit from the University
of Greenwich will be required to pay an additional £450 administration fee.

Introductory offer - 20% discount for fees paid in full before July 2009 (£2000)

Maternity Support Workers wishing to extend their roles can receive an
additional £100 discount (£1900) if payment is made in full before 31.7.09

For further information and an application form please contact the Programme
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