

Feedback from the women and their partners has been overwhelmingly positive. Comments include:

- 'We couldn't have dreamt of a better experience – we had high expectations but they were most certainly exceeded.'
- 'I felt that giving birth in the birth centre was how giving birth is supposed to be but all too often isn't. I cannot recommend your centre enough and although not a natural childbirth person originally, I have completely changed my outlook and am waxing lyrical about it to all who will listen'.

We are approaching our first birthday and so far, 582 babies have been born. The whole project has been totally worthwhile in terms of creating a beautiful environment, enabling women to give birth actively, and helping midwives develop confidence and skill in normal birth.

### St Mary's Birth Centre philosophy

'Our birth centre will provide a welcoming, relaxed, comfortable, and supportive environment for women and their families. Women experiencing a straightforward pregnancy and anticipating a normal birth will be cared for by enthusiastic midwives and maternity assistants. We are committed to normal birth and view childbirth as a physiological process and a positive life experience which enhances the long term physical and emotional wellbeing of women and their families.

We will work with women and involve them in all aspects of their care to enable them to feel safe, confident and totally involved. We want to be a centre of excellence in midwifery practice and a place of learning for students and practitioners. The midwives, supported by maternity assistants, will deliver high quality, evidence-based care thereby supporting normal birth with competence and confidence and achieving positive outcomes for women and their families.'

## Reaching all parents: the Chinese community in Manchester

*NorthWest Development Worker Ali MacLeod describes the NCT's work with the Chinese women's society in Manchester, Wai Yin*

When former North West Development Worker, Sue Edwards, and I came across Wai Yin, I was disconcerted to learn from its director, Lisa Mok, that parents from the Chinese community do not generally access the maternity services available to them. However, this prompted us to begin to explore ways in which the NCT and Wai Yin could work together.

### Engagement with services by Chinese community

Lisa explained to us how language and cultural barriers played a big part in this lack of engagement with maternity services. 'Chinese women', she told us, 'may receive letters regarding antenatal appointments and other maternity services but often do not know the English language well enough to understand the content. Unless they have someone who can translate and tell them what time and where they are expected to be, important antenatal checks can be missed. Preparation for birth sessions or antenatal classes are even less well attended.'

Since 2006, the two organisations have been working together and sharing their resources. The NCT have provided qualified antenatal teachers and resources to run six antenatal courses in the last two years whilst Wai Yin have provided interpreters and a venue.

This venue is in the heart of Manchester's China Town and easily accessible via the city's tram links; the Chinese population is very dispersed across the city and it is hard to locate a specific area with a high Chinese population – the venue choice is therefore of huge importance.

### Funding

NCT volunteers from the Manchester Central and South branch worked hard to raise the funds to enable this pilot to begin.

The current North West Reaching Out Project Round Two extension (the NCT has been funded by the Parenting Fund to do outreach work in the North West for the last three years) included funding for three Early Days courses, one of which was allocated to Wai Yin. Between six and eight women attended the course, which was successfully run by Belinda Hayes, a newly-qualified postnatal leader.

Belinda has been very pleased with the results and feedback from women who attended the courses, and is keen to use her experience and run more of these courses in the future. She feels that she has learnt a lot doing this work, which involved her in a steep cultural learning curve, with some practices being very different from NCT policy; traditional Chinese doctors recommend to Chinese women that they start weaning at three weeks, for example.

### Publicity

In the case of both the antenatal and postnatal courses, specific posters/adverts were produced with information about the NCT, along with its logo, in Chinese; these were then used to advertise the courses in the North West Reaching Out newsletter, as well as local health centres and hospitals. Specific resources were produced with culturally-sensitive images by the NCT specialist workers.

**If you wish to contact Belinda to ask for ideas on supporting your local Chinese community, then please email her on [b.e.hayes@talk21.com](mailto:b.e.hayes@talk21.com)**