

Project Name: To develop a Birth Companion University Certificate in partnership with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

Amendment History:

Version No.	Date	Reason for Amendment
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Name of Project Manager & Contact Details Ruth Pearce

Document Distribution

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Action/Information</i>
Debbie Lambert	LLN	Manager of the LLN	For information
Geoffrey Elliott	UW	Members of the Steering Group	To approve the proposal
Chris Morecroft	WCT		
Ian Peake	HCT		
Mike Rookes	OU		
Gail Rothnie	UoB		
Donna Obrey	LLN	Project Officer for the LLN	To track and monitor project

Background

The National Childbirth Trust (NCT) is the UK's leading charity for parents. The NCT started in 1956 and has since worked successfully to improve the experience of becoming a parent in the UK. With a membership of over 96,000 members across the UK the NCT's strength is to provide and support local services, training and evidence-based information for parents, families and health professionals through their network of local branches. The NCT are trusted and respected by health professionals and governments as an organisation that represents the needs of parents.

The NCT in partnership with the University of Worcester, are seeking to develop a birth companion University Certificate. This supports the accelerating agenda for modernising midwifery careers with the identification of new roles and ways of working becoming increasingly apparent. The birth companion role will be key in delivering the national framework identified in the Department of Health (2007) 'Maternity Matters' for a high quality, safe and accessible service that is woman focussed and family centred.

Currently the role of the birth companion is unregulated with no formal standards benchmarked and the NCT want to develop the quality and standard of the knowledge and value of birth companions. There have been preliminary meetings between the University of Worcester and the NCT to discuss the potential of developing an accredited birth companion programme. It is envisaged the programme will consist of 2, level 4, 20 credit modules enabling the students to achieve a University Certificate as a Birth Companion. It is hoped the development of an approved birth companion programme will encourage Trusts to

appoint birth companions to assist in the delivery of high quality maternity care to compliment the role of the midwife. Local leads and heads of midwifery have identified they would consider birth companions to support pregnant women by linking with social care to offer support for the vulnerable that require support and education from pregnancy through to parenthood.

Objectives of the Project

- To work in partnership with the National Childbirth Trust.
- To write and develop a Birth Companion University Certificate.
- To consider the future development to offer progression opportunities to students to access further specialist qualifications if necessary within the context of midwifery.
- To develop an HE programme which embeds employer engagement and is supported by local leads and heads of midwifery
- To support the DH national framework in offering a new role and way of working that will provide pregnant women the choice, access and continuity of care in a safe service for commissioners, service providers and other organisations involved in the provision of maternity services.

Project Approach

Stage One

Organise a series of meetings with the NCT and UW to develop a partnership agreement in order to develop the modules.

Stage Two and Three

- Partners from the NCT, UW and clinical practice (the team) to ensure appropriate content for each module.
- Writing of modules and copies to team for changes, input and proof reading.
- Design of assessment process and agreement from team members and university assessment committee.
- Key texts identified and agreed by team.

Stage Four and Five

- Meeting with team to finalise content and discuss the outlines.
- Finalise the module outlines and discuss the resources required for delivery.

Stage Six

- Hold a validation event to certify the modules ready for delivery in January 2010.

Scope:

A Key Products from the project

- Working collaboratively with the UK's leading charity for parents which could lead to further educative development.

- The development of a Birth Companion University Certificate which addresses the accelerating need for contemporary ways of working to support high quality care for pregnant women.
- The development of a Birth Companion University Certificate that will ensure academic quality standards for a non-regulated group of healthcare workers.

B Out of Scope

The modules will be delivered in partnership with the University of Worcester and the NCT
The development of a Foundation Degree Framework which could offer a progression route for Birth Companions

Constraints

Engaging clinical partners may prove problematic in light of the short timeframe and pressures in clinical practice.

Initial Project Case

- Working in collaboration with the UK's leading charity for parents which could lead to further education development.
- A University Certificate to develop the role of the birth companion to compliment the role of the midwife.
- A blended learning approach utilising experiential learning and PebblePad to support the students on and off campus.

Benefits of the Project

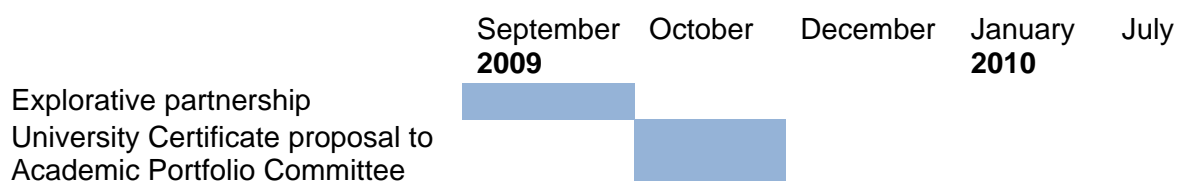
1. Working in a collaborative manner with the UK's leading charity for parents which could potentially lead to further education development.
2. The development of an HE programme that is supported by local leads and heads of midwifery.
3. The development of a new role and way of working in line with the Government's drive to accelerate healthcare careers in delivering on the national framework identified in Maternity Matters for a high quality, safe and accessible service that is woman focussed and family centred (DH, 2007).

Key Assumptions

The key assumptions are that the team will be available to meet to develop the modules and the partnership will be agreed in time for the January 2010 start date.

Timescale

The birth companion programme is due to start in January 2010. The initial 'explorative' partnership meeting has been arranged for early September.



Development of modules
 Finalisation of partnership agreement
 Validation of modules
 Commencement of University Certificate: Birth Companion Evaluation



Costs

Associated costs of project

Staff

Team		Commitment (days)	Cost @ £300/day
Ruth Pearce	IHS	2	-
Rebecca Wirenga	NCT	5	£1500

Consumables

Telephone calls, paper, photocopying, cartridges etc. £200

Grand Total

£1700

How will the project be evaluated?

The project will be evaluated jointly between the NCT and UW.

How will the project be sustained?

The funding applied for is for the development of the birth companion University Certificate rather than the delivery. The project is sustainable due to the overwhelming interest in the programme and the growing recognition and need for this type of role to compliment the role of the midwife. The agenda for modernising nursing and midwifery careers is accelerating and the identification of new roles and ways of working is increasingly apparent. The birth companion role will be key in delivering the national framework identified in Maternity Matters for a high quality, safe and accessible service that is woman focused and family centred (DH, 2007). It is hoped the development of an approved birth companion programme will encourage Trusts to appoint birth companions to assist in the delivery of high quality maternity care to compliment the role of the midwife. Local leads and heads of midwifery have identified they would consider birth companions to support pregnant women by linking with social care to offer support for the vulnerable who require support and education from pregnancy through to parenthood.

If the partnership with the NCT is successful for the birth companion University Certificate there maybe further opportunities to develop education provision at UW for the NCT thus increasing student numbers. This development also supports the ongoing growth within the West Midlands Strategic Health Authority (WMSHA) and the Life Long Learning Network for Hereford and Worcestershire to develop a Maternity Support Workers/Obstetric Theatre Maternity Support Workers Foundation Degree (FD) via an apprenticeship framework. The birth companion modules could count towards the FD.

Implications for Equality & Diversity

Initially the University Certificate – NCT Birth Companions will recruit students from women who have already undertaken a Diploma in Higher Education through the NCT. In the future it is intended to open the certificate to volunteers working for the NCT and to women out with the organisation. At this point the certificate will enable women who have never accessed HE to take an accredited course which builds on their lived experience of having a baby. Gaining the University Certificate – NCT Birth Companion may provide a way into the paid workforce for women who have never entered it, or who wish to return to work after several years absence following the birth of their children.

The birth companion programme is clinically focussed and utilises experiential learning thus attracting students who appreciate a hands on approach to education supported by the e-learning tool PebblePad. The students will be recruited nationally and a blended learning approach will allow students to access information from home or work depending on the availability of a computer.

Initial Risk Log

The following table summarises the risks that have been identified that may prevent the project being completed to the required quality, budget and timescale. The probability and impact of each risk has been graded as low, medium or high to indicate the relative importance attached to each element of risk.

Risks	Probability	Impact	Containment Plan
Timeframe to finalise partnership agreement	Low	Unable to deliver modules in Jan 2010	The partnership agreement explorative meeting has already been organised.
Release of staff from NCT to develop modules	Low	Unable to write and validate modules	Applied for LLN bid to secure time of NCT staff in order to complete the modules.

Project Team

The Project Steering Group also consists of:

Rebecca Wierenga: National Childbirth Trust Birth Companions Development Team Member, NCT Birth Companion Specialist Tutor, NCT Birth Companion Education, Training and Service Coordinator, BA. Ed.

Ruth Pearce: Lead for Continuing Professional Development, Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester

Professor Mary Nolan: Professor of Perinatal Education, Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester and Senior Tutor National Childbirth Trust, NCT Birth Companions Development Team Member

Shona Gore: Senior Tutor National Childbirth Trust, NCT Birth Companions Development Team Member

Cynthia Masters-Waage: National Childbirth Trust Birth Companions Development Team Member, NCT Birth Companion Specialist Tutor