



HIGHLIGHT REPORT: MATERNITY CHAMPIONS IN KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Introduction

The Maternity Champions programme in Kensington and Chelsea moved in to its third of a four-year contract in 2019. Working with new and expectant parents with babies from 0 - 1, one or two activities weekly took place in each neighbourhood, hosted by Maternity Champions. These sessions aim to share information, reduce isolation, offer support, signpost to relevant services and help parents make connections with each other which enable parents and babies to thrive. Partnerships with Early Help services and their local Children's Centres, Midwifery, Health Visiting Services, West London CCG, IAPT and Imperial and Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Trusts, have been strengthened.

The boroughwide Maternity Champions manager, hosted by Venture Community Association, supports the recruitment and training of Maternity Champions, development of relevant partnerships and delivery of activities located with each Community Champions project. Turnover in project managers, contract renewals and a building decant impacted for some of the year; nevertheless, as our highlights show, some new and innovative activities have taken place - and others have become more established. All data for this element of the programme sits in each Community Champions project report.

■ Teddy Walk

In May, Maternity Champions from Golborne, Notting Dale and Worlds End & Cremorne delivered 'Teddy Walk', attended by 19 adults and 20 babies. Inspired by Mental Health Awareness Week, the event was organised slightly earlier in order to avoid Ramadan and coincide with Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day. It included: a buggy walk and exercise session led by a qualified tutor, nursery rhyme and parent & baby yoga sessions, a cream tea and socialising in Meanwhile Gardens. Informal conversations between mothers and a therapist from Community Living Well (CLW) and the health visiting team took place about ways of keeping mentally well and support available. Goody bags were distributed, including a 'How to be a happy parent' pamphlet created by CLW; Meaningful May calendars by Action for Happiness; Maternity champions projects leaflets and books for children, provided by the London's Children Book project.

One mum said, *'Today was so much fun, I didn't expect to meet so many nice people and I didn't even know this place was here (Meanwhile Gardens). I broke my diet for the afternoon tea, hopefully I burnt off enough calories on the buggy walk whichever way it was worth it!'*

■ Baby and Me

'Baby and Me' in Notting Dale is a weekly activity for pre-walking babies and their parents. The sessions are based around nursery rhymes, but also include music, sign language, creative play and story time. Maternity Champions share information on breastfeeding, starting solids, oral health, baby immunisations, safe baby sleep, as well as support available locally - supported on occasion by outside specialists from partner organisations. They also encourage parents to read to their children from a very young age and distribute baby books provided by the London Children's Book Project. Parents attend both as a result of publicity and outreach and referrals from the local Health Visiting Team - support is offered both during and outside of the session.



A move of venue to the Lancaster West Estate Community Centre, extended the session's reach to many new families. A nice activity led by Maternity Champions was the creation of sensory baskets for children to play with and a nursery rhymes brochure, which was given to parents to take home.

One mum that benefited from Baby and Me was Shiho who moved to Notting Dale in 2019 with her husband and baby son Koko. Initially she felt very lonely not knowing anyone in the area. English is her second language and she felt too shy to initiate conversations with people. Having found a leaflet promoting 'Baby & Me' in her local GP surgery, she decided to give it a try. Maternity Champions noticed that she was slightly withdrawn and did their best to make her feel welcome and supported. They also told Shiho about the new baby massage course, which she also happily joined. She enjoys the diverse environment and is no longer so stressed about her English.

Shiho says: *'Koko really enjoys nursery rhymes as well as massage, which helps him to relax and get to sleep... I don't know what I would do without you ladies, and without this session. I would be so lonely.'*



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■ Stay & Play with Chickenshed

This year saw the introduction of World's End and Cremorne's new and exciting Stay & Play sessions at Chelsea Theatre, delivered in partnership with inclusive theatre charity, Chickenshed. The drop-in sessions are called "A Box Full of Tales" and each week local parents, babies and under-fives enjoy an interactive performance, sensory play and puppet show, supported by Maternity Champions.

Local parent, Laura said, ***'It really is brilliant, and my little girl absolutely adores the puppet show. I can't believe it's free so everyone can enjoy it! Plus it has the added benefit of having experienced volunteers to support us new parents and let us know about all other local services.'***

■ Nappy Natters and Baby Stuff Swap event

Golborne and Notting Dale Maternity Champions, in partnership with RBKC Waste Management Team and the Washable Nappies Company, put on this Nappy Natters event. Parents learnt about the benefits of using reusable nappies and claimed a nappy voucher worth £45. They also brought unwanted baby clothes and items to swap with others – in keeping with the environmental theme nothing was wasted with leftover items going to Al Manaar Mosque and Portobello Rugby Trust. Champions also shared information on oral health, immunisations and winter wellness – and everyone went away with a goody bag containing supplementary information, soup, hot chocolate or vitamin sachets, hats, gloves and baby books. Parents were offered support and signposting to other services; insight was gathered into parent's needs and they were informed of what Maternity Champions do and how they can help.

Local mum, Zainab said: ***'What a fantastic event! Are you planning some similar ones in future? All these dresses – they are lovely!'***



■ Spotlight on Maternity Champion, Claire

Claire joined the Notting Dale Maternity Champions team in 2018. She tells the story of her champion journey here:

I had been to visit my therapist at St Charles' Hospital. In our sessions we talked about how I have to go on with my life, after surviving domestic violence. Starting the healing process and changing my lifestyle was so difficult for me, as I didn't know where to start from and whom to trust. After the meeting and at the exit of the hospital there was a lady who asked me to grab a leaflet from her table. Actually I grabbed a bunch trying to avoid talking to her, because I wanted to run and hide as I hated going out or being around people.

I was captivated by the Maternity Champions leaflet and started encouraging myself to go and meet them. Finally, at Thorpe Close I met Matan, the Maternity Champions project worker. She was a compassionate lady, who was so supportive towards a person like me who was struggling to find my voice. I soon signed up to become a Maternity Champion.

I love knowledge and participation with Maternity Champions helped me to expand my experience with my three daughters, who are at different stages of their life. I am constantly learning for myself and them at the same time. Since joining the project I have attended a lot of courses, such as NCT Birth and Beyond, NCT Breastfeeding Peer Support, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Children's Safeguarding, Boundaries, Understanding Health Improvement and Stress Management.

Once a week I support mothers at Baby & Me, where we sing and read books for babies to improve their brain development and answering mums' questions. We also have sessions about how to take care of your children teeth and we gave away some toothbrushes and toothpaste. Often, we spread the support around the community by giving away clothes and nappies to those in need. We also do lots of fun things too like having tea at Kensington Palace, Leighton House, Visiting Kew Gardens and organizing Christmas parties for children around the community and having Maternity Champions parties too.

In the past I have had a tough time, but on the other hand every day is a blessing, a new start and I feel useful to help my family and people around me – maybe what I am doing makes a small difference and I can help someone to have a smile. I am doing what I can to improve my outlook and look after myself by spreading the knowledge and fun around the community to friends, neighbours and relatives that I help with what I have learned from becoming a Maternity Champion.

