

The Antenatal Teacher

NCT antenatal teachers work within their branch as part of a team that includes breastfeeding counsellors and a postnatal support network. Strong links are developed with local maternity services, midwives and health visitors. NCT teachers strongly support the skills of midwives to ensure that all involved are working in the best interests of parents.

NCT antenatal teachers are trained workers. They are trained by the NCT to the highest of standards. The NCT has developed, along with Luton University, a new training course that will now give women who want to become antenatal teachers the opportunity to take the Diploma of Higher Education in Antenatal Teaching.

NCT antenatal teachers are not normally medically qualified (although we do have some trained midwives who are also NCT antenatal teachers). Teachers would normally refer women with specific concerns to a midwife or another appropriate health professional. The most important attribute of an NCT teacher will be her attitude and affinity to the subject.

An NCT antenatal teacher needs to be:

- a good listener able to maintain complete confidentiality whilst requesting that group members do the same
- enthusiastic and positive about babies and parenthood, with joy and confidence in a woman's natural ability to give birth
- balanced and non prescriptive in her approach to the choices available
- able to challenge, through constructive attitudes, local hospitals or midwifery care
- able to involve fathers in antenatal classes where they choose to attend

What Does An Antenatal Teacher Do?

Pregnancy can be a time of great excitement, coupled with anticipation and preparation. For any pregnant woman and her partner, it can also be a time of real anxiety. Anxiety about labour, about parenthood, about the forthcoming upheaval in life, and the ability to cope with the changes.

An NCT antenatal teacher knows from experience and from training how to prepare for these, sometimes ambivalent, feelings. Antenatal teachers are mothers themselves, so they have been through all or many of the experiences of the new parents they are working with.

NCT antenatal classes are designed to confront and explore these feelings, and class attendees are encouraged to share and discuss their hopes, doubts and fears with others. This helps to increase confidence while building a network of mutual support and friendship.

Antenatal teachers offer courses of eight to ten weekly sessions, lasting about two hours each, to small groups of pregnant women and couples, during the last three months of pregnancy. The agenda will include aspects of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood, but will remain flexible. That flexibility is important because the antenatal teacher must be sensitive to the needs and interests of each particular group. Sometimes the course is held over two weekends, depending on local need.

Self help techniques such as relaxation and breathing awareness, massage and movement positions for labour will be practised in some detail and information will be imparted using a variety of up to date teaching methods.

Using your experience and confidence to help parents have the best experience of pregnancy and birth is one of the most rewarding things available to those involved in the NCT and antenatal teachers lead the way on this.

How Do I Become An Antenatal Teacher?

Teachers are always in demand. If you think you would like to be an antenatal teacher talk to an existing teacher or tutor. More information is available from your regional co-ordinator or the Teachers Panel Administrator at UK Office.