



Meet the... Taunton Birth Forum Founders

Somerset Life asked Eleanor and Simon Copp about their work helping parents-to-be and new parents through the Birth Forum – their community-based support and discussion group in Taunton

What or who inspires you?

Eleanor: Sarah Brown for her work with the maternity alliance and for being a brilliant ambassador with her children. The 3Geese are also inspirational.
Simon: Franklyn Sills, craniosacral expert and author, and Andy Stark, my trumpet teacher.

What difficulties does the health service face with regards to pregnancy and birth?

A limit in available money to spend has a direct effect on staffing. There is then a sequential effect on birth: attitudes, choices and ultimately how a midwife or doctor approaches their work. Difficulties and pressures are a constant. That's why parents need to get support in the pregnancy, the NHS is much stretched and does the best it can but in the process can leave families short of time and the attention they need.

What is the best advice you would give to parents-to-be?

Eleanor: I recommend getting confident about your ability to birth, and that will be helped by attending classes such as yoga or active birth. I also find it's crucial to deal with any memories which are less than great about previous births, and to view

this birth in its own right.

Simon: I recommend getting help to support the body as it needs to undergo significant changes during the birth process. Craniosacral therapy is excellent as it's so gentle and non-invasive and can resolve previous traumas.

How was the Birth Forum formed?

Last June we invited practitioners over for strawberries and cream as there are many brilliant people working locally with pregnancy and birth. It was such a success we created the Forum, with the added bonus of hearing a speaker talk every month about their area of expertise.

What help is available to parents who are dealing with the tragedy of losing a child?

Eleanor: Where I work we have an amazing chaplaincy team and there are also councillors available. I am part of the team of three who run the monthly baby loss support group. Attending and gaining a fragment of pure support is very helpful to parents.

Simon: The body will have its own reaction to this loss and working to support the sadness and trauma is touching and rewarding. It is important we include our body in the grieving process.

What are your hopes and aims?

We hope that all mothers are motivated to find someone to help and support them during pregnancy; this will have an impact not just on their physiological experience of birth, but their emotional sense of self and attachment to their new baby too. It would be great to have a health centre in Taunton just for pregnancy, birth and babies.

How do you see the Birth Forum developing in the future?

We are arranging our 2011-12 programme and have some fantastic speakers booked. At the Forum we see parents, complementary health practitioners, doctors and midwives all meet and accept each other.

What is the best aspect of living in Somerset?

We love the Quantocks, especially Seven Sisters where you think you are on top of the world. We also love being an easy drive away from the coast; north and south we have lots of choice. When we lived in Watford, the Chilterns were further away and no sea for miles!

If you have something to say about your life in Somerset, contact me on Natalie.vizard@archant.co.uk.