

History

MSCC HISTORY

The Early Years

The Maternity Services Consumer Council (MSCC) was established in 1990 following a hui that took place in South Auckland in November 1989.

The hui was organised by the Auckland Area Health Board's Maternity Services Taskforce Working Party on community/consumer consultation as a way of obtaining information on how consumer consultation could best occur in the planning and provision of its maternity services. All known consumer groups with an interest in maternity services in the Auckland area were invited.

At the hui it became clear that the groups wanted an organisation that would facilitate information sharing and support amongst consumer groups who were actively involved in or interested in the provision of maternity services.

In April 1990 consumer groups decided to form the Auckland Maternity Services Consumer Council. It was established as an umbrella organisation formed by consumers for consumers to ensure that maternity services met the needs of women.

The MSCC's first newsletter was produced in August 1990 and it recorded that the rationale for setting up the organisation was:

- To facilitate networking/dissemination of information amongst maternity services consumer groups
- To increase the potential for consumer lobbying of the Area Health Board, the Department of Health, district managers, and service providers concerning maternity services
- To increase monitoring of maternity services
- To ensure that appropriate consumer representation and consultation occurs
- To be proactive rather than just reactive
- To promote unity rather than fragmentation of maternity services consumer groups
- To provide support and information for individual consumers



Page from the first newsletter (August 1990)

Following the inaugural meeting in April a Working Group was set up along with a number of sub-groups. The Working Group held two further meetings prior to the publication of the August newsletter.

On 24 July 1990 they also met with Ray Naden from the Auckland Area Health Board (AAHB) and three district health managers – Sally Haig from the West, Sam Denny from the North Shore and Anne Nightingale from Central Auckland. A funding proposal for the MSCC was discussed at the meeting, and Ray Naden agreed to present the proposal to the Board with an endorsement from him and the maternity managers. It was also agreed that there would be regular meetings between the MSCC Working Group and the managers, as well as the occasional forum for all MSCC members to meet with the maternity managers and discuss maternity issues.

The newsletter noted that the newly formed organisation “was seen as a potentially powerful force that could significantly speed up the process of consumer representation. Its role was seen as advantageous to both service users and service providers/planners. A commitment was made for ongoing consultation with the Council along with the provision of information.”

A second meeting with the maternity services managers was held in September with Sally Haig from West Auckland, Sam Denny from the North Shore, Ann Nightingale from National Women’s Hospital, Lee Moselyn from Middlemore hospital and Lou O’Leary from Papakura and Pukekohe hospitals.

Consumer Representatives

The October 1990 newsletter reported that all MSCC groups were invited to a meeting on 24 September to select a consumer representative for the Auckland Region of the College of Midwives Executive and four representatives for the Maternity Health Service Development Group.

The newsletter also featured a reprint of an editorial by domiciliary midwife Joan Donley on the passing of the Nurses Amendment Bill. She wrote: “After a gestation period of 42 weeks, the Nurses Amendment Bill, 1990 passed its second and third reading on 22 August, making New Zealand midwives independent practitioners in practice as well as principle.”

MSCC Steering Group

At the beginning of 1991 the MSCC Steering Group was set up with representatives from the Auckland Plunket Society, Maternity Action, Auckland Parents Centre, the Auckland Women’s Health Council, the Glenfield Women’s Health Co-op, the Maori Women’s Welfare League, the Auckland Homebirth Association, Franklin Parents Centre, the Childbirth Education Association, Natural Family Planning, and the South Pacific Allied Health Network. Two convenors were also appointed.

The Steering Group took over from the Working Group and immediately called for more consumer representatives to join the Steering Group. The January 1991 newsletter reported that so far the MSCC had produced two submissions, written letters on a range of maternity services issues, met three times with the maternity managers, provided consumer representatives for three groups, and sent out three newsletters to over 80 organisations. The production and sending out of newsletters was being funded by the AAHB at no cost to members.

Over the next few months the Steering Group continued to meet fortnightly. By May 1991 one of the convenors had resigned. The workload was considerable as further consultation meetings were organised, letters written, and three more newsletters were produced. It had become obvious that the MSCC could not continue relying on volunteer convenors and meeting in women’s homes, and would need to apply for some funding and appoint a co-ordinator to take on much of this work. The October 1991 newsletter reported that the MSCC had received a grant of \$500 from the Lottery Grants Board, and a working party had completed a draft of a job description.

MSCC Office

By early 1992 the MSCC was sharing a large office with Fertility Action on the 2nd floor, 27 Gillies Avenue in Newmarket, thanks to a grant of \$2,500 from the AAHB for office rent, and had appointed Lynda Williams as the new part-time (20 hours per week) co-ordinator after receiving a grant of \$10,000 from the Lottery Grants Board.

The May 1992 newsletter reported that “the second floor of 27 Gullies Avenue is buzzing with the activities of the Health Promotion Forum, the Auckland Women’s Health Council, Area Health Promotion workers, Fertility Action and our own Council.” The MSCC Steering Group began meeting once a month, and two more newsletters were sent out in October and December 1992. The newsletter was still being photocopied and mailed out by the AAHB.

On 17 February 1993 the MSCC held a Review and Evaluation Day which resulted in a plan of action that included:

- holding a competition to come up with a logo for the MSCC
- producing a leaflet about the MSCC, its philosophy, aims and objectives
- producing a quarterly newsletter
- producing a leaflet on “*Choices for Childbirth*”
- developing a contract with the newly formed Northern Regional Health Authority regarding a consultation process for developing quality indicators for maternity services.

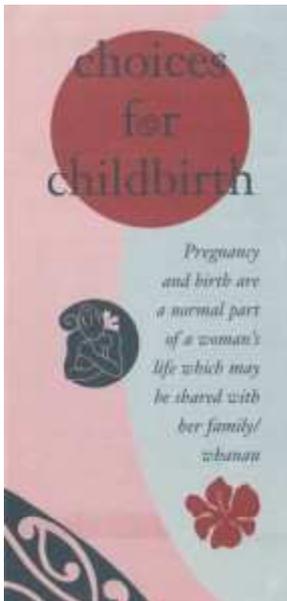
“Quality Indicators for Auckland Maternity Services”

It was a very ambitious plan, but four out of the five objectives were achieved – the “*Choices for Childbirth*” leaflet was deferred until the following year. The major project of 1993 was undoubtedly the consultation project the MSCC undertook on developing quality indicators for maternity services. The December 1993 newsletter reported that “the compiling and editing of the final document took much longer than anticipated. In the end members of the working party even spent all day one beautiful sunny Sunday working on their computers at the MSCC office in an effort to meet the deadline.”

The MSCC’s co-ordinator was also facing another deadline that year. At the beginning of December 1993 Lynda Williams gave birth at home to her fifth child – three days after mailing out the December newsletter along with a copy of the Quality Indicators for Auckland Maternity Services Report. She returned to work at the MSCC office at beginning of February 1994 and another working party was formed to begin work on the “*Choices for Childbirth*” leaflet.

The saga of the *Choices for Childbirth* leaflet

The MSCC held a second Review and Planning day at the beginning of February 199



4 and two major projects were identified as being major priorities for the year – the “*Choices for Childbirth*” leaflet and a maternity Hotline.

Several meetings took place with Sam Denny, North Health's maternity services manager. The MSCC discussed both the "Choices for Childbirth" leaflet and the need for a maternity Hotline with Sam who indicated that some financial assistance from North Health for both the leaflet and four Pacific translations would be possible. The working party produced its first draft by the beginning of May and circulated copies to the MSCC groups for their feedback. The first mock-up of the pamphlet was received at the beginning of June and copies of this draft were sent out to 20 MSCC member groups, midwives and half a dozen GPs. Further changes were made as a result of the feedback received.

The MSCC then arranged to have 50,000 copies printed. Soon afterwards, North Health indicated they wanted to have another meeting with the MSCC and on Thursday 21 July half a dozen members of the MSCC met with Chris Gedye, Sam Denny's boss, and Sam. The MSCC learned that a GP had met with Chris Gedye, four days earlier and had indicated his extreme opposition in "an emotive fashion" to the pamphlet. It seemed he was outraged that midwives were mentioned before GPs and believed the leaflet was pro-midwife.

The MSCC was then informed that there would be no funding from North Health. They didn't want to upset the doctors. North Health was advised that the leaflet had already gone to the printers.

The full story of the development of the leaflet appeared in the September 1994 issue of the MSCC's newsletter, along with the fact that the MSCC did not have the money to pay the printing bill of \$6,378.75. This resulted in a huge amount of fuss being generated by women's groups up and down the country who had seen a draft of the pamphlet and were outraged at the RHA's refusal to honour its agreement. The MSCC even got the Minister of Health involved.

The day before the Opposition spokesperson on health asked a question in parliament regarding North Health's withdrawal of funding for the leaflet, the MSCC received a phone call from Sam Denny to say that the promised funding for the English version would now be forthcoming. However, there would be no further funding from North Health for anything else.

The MSCC then applied for and subsequently received funding from COGS for the four Pacific translations – Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, and Cook Island Maori.

Some years later Ministry of Health eventually established a Maternity Hotline – MUM TO BE or 0800 686 223  0800 686 223.

For more on the Choices for Childbirth leaflet – [The Saga of the CFC pamphlet](#)

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