



Planning a home birth?

An update on our midwifery service during this time

December 2022

This leaflet contains important information for anyone planning a home birth. We are doing everything we can to help you have the birth experience you choose – however there are important safety concerns to keep in mind during this unprecedented time for the NHS.

NHS services are under pressure

Due to current winter pressures and the significant impact of the SECAMB response times and the risk this poses, we are facing unprecedented demand for NHS services whilst also managing high rates of staff absence caused by illness or the need to self-isolate. This is having an impact on the services that we can provide including the choice to birth at home. We understand that it is important to you to have this choice and we are doing everything we can to support this, but we hope you can understand the pressure we are under.

The offer of a home birth

To provide you with a safe home birth, we need to be able to meet certain conditions. These are:

- for there to be two midwives available to support you safely through labour
- for there to be enough midwives available to ensure all people who choose to birth in healthcare settings have at least one midwife in attendance
- to reasonably believe the ambulance service can provide an emergency (category 1) response should this be needed to support the safety of you and your baby.

We have a responsibility to keep all our birthing people as safe as possible. Therefore, if we cannot meet these conditions, we will ask you to come into a healthcare setting to give birth, such as a maternity ward or midwife led unit.

We do everything we can to ensure your choice of a home birth can be made possible. This includes reviewing our capacity to offer homebirths both on a two hourly and case-by-case basis.



Choosing an unplanned unassisted birth

We recognise that it may be very disappointing not to have the birth you planned. Though we aim to do everything possible to make this happen for you, the safety of all our service users is our priority. This is why we also strongly recommend that you come into a healthcare setting if home birth is not possible.

You may decide that you prefer to have a home birth without a midwife with you (unassisted birth). It is your right to choose; though please be reassured our midwives are still here to provide advice and support. They can discuss with you the role of the midwife, perform a risk assessment, and help you make an informed choice. They can also personalise your care and support so it's right for you.

Please remember, you can change your mind about the decision to have an unassisted birth at any time during your pregnancy or labour. NHS midwives will always be available to support you and check on the health of you and your baby.

Notify a birth: If you do opt for an unassisted birth, you'll need to tell a GP or local maternity services about your baby's birth as soon as they've been born. This is because by law every birth in the UK needs to be recorded (notified) within 36 hours. A GP or midwife will need to see you before they can notify the birth. When the birth has been notified, your baby will get an NHS number for their NHS care.

We encourage you to call triage or the Labour Ward once you go into labour or at any time during your unassisted labour and birth, especially if you have queries or concerns.

The earlier you speak to us the better able we will be to provide you with advice.

Sources of advice and support

There are many sources of support available to help you make the right choice for yourself and your baby.

AIMS

www.aims.org.uk
Helpline: 0300 365 0663
Email: helpline@aims.org.uk

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

www.nct.org.uk
Helpline: 0300 33 00 0700
Email: enquiries@nct.org.uk

Birthrights

www.birthrights.org.uk
Helpline: 0300 400 3400
Email: info@birthrights.org.uk

Your midwife