

## Choosing where to have your baby

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This leaflet outlines where you can give birth and tells you about the options available in this area.

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### Making your choice

There are many factors to be considered when making the decision about where to give birth. In this area you can plan to give birth at home; in Rushey Birth Centre – a unit run by midwives based at the hospital; or on the Delivery Suite – run by a team of doctors and midwives. Our philosophy is to support you with your preferred choice of place of birth, and for most women we are able to do this but sometimes the unit is very busy and we may ask you to consider another option. This leaflet will also explain what will happen in these circumstances.

When choosing where to give birth, the two main factors that women usually think about are the safety of their baby and their own wellbeing. However, giving birth is generally very safe for both you and your baby wherever you choose. We recommend that you look at the information available on the following NHS website alongside this leaflet to help you with making your choice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/where-can-i-give-birth/>

This NHS site explains the pros and cons for you and your baby of each birth place to assist you in making the right choice, but before making your decision, you may wish to talk to your midwife, GP or obstetrician (doctor specialising in pregnancy and childbirth).

Where you live may well be the deciding factor in choosing a hospital if that is where you want to give birth. Other factors, such as where you had previous births (if this is not your first), or proximity to your family or place of work, can also be important. If you are already attending a hospital clinic for some specific condition, it makes sense to be under the care of the same hospital so that all the specialists and midwives involved in your care have access to your whole medical record, and can liaise quickly if problems arise, but you are free to choose another hospital if you wish.

In certain circumstances your midwife or doctor may consider your choice not suitable for you or your baby and will advise you to reconsider your birth place option. The midwife or doctor must explain the reasons for this advice and the risks and benefits of their recommended alternative choice for you and your baby.

At your booking appointment your midwife will briefly discuss with you where you would like to give birth. Your midwife will have a more detailed discussion with you around 34-36 weeks. You have plenty of time to make your decision and you can change your mind any time during your pregnancy or in early labour.

## Which one is right for you?

### Home birth

Planned home birth is an alternative to hospital birth. If you have no serious complications during your pregnancy and none anticipated for your labour, there is no evidence to say that hospital is safer. This is particularly true if this is your second baby (or more).

Between 1–4% of women per month actually give birth at home; slightly more women intend to give birth at home but transfer into hospital in labour or just after having their baby for various reasons. Women who have had a previous baby or babies (known as multiples) are less likely to transfer, according to national data this will happen to about one out of every ten multiples and for first time mothers, the likelihood of transfer is 45%. For first time mothers, the most common reason for transfer into the main unit is delay in the progress of labour. Transfer to hospital will most likely be by ambulance.

If you would like further information about home birth, please talk to your community midwife who will be able to explain more about home birth and what preparations you will have to make or contact the homebirth team [rbft.homebirthteam@nhs.net](mailto:rbft.homebirthteam@nhs.net)

Once you inform your community midwife that you would like a homebirth you will then be referred to that team which will provide a team case loading model of care. In order for you and your family to receive the full benefits of caseloading care, please request a referral to the team at the earliest available point in your pregnancy.

Once referred you will then be allocated a named midwife within the team who will provide all of your pregnancy care and care after the birth in your home. If this midwife is unable to provide any aspects of your care then another member of the team will conduct this for you. This midwife will be able to support you with all aspects of planning a homebirth.

If you have any complications in your pregnancy and a hospital birth is recommended, or should you change your mind about having a home birth, then your care will be transferred back to the community midwife for your area.

When you are in labour you are advised to call your midwife (if your midwife is not working her phone will be diverted to another member of the home birth team who will take your call).

If you have any complications during labour and transfer to an obstetric unit is recommended, your midwife will accompany you to the hospital. Once in hospital, your care will be handed over to the hospital midwives and obstetric team to continue providing the care you require.

There are rare occasions when we may not be able to support your choice for a home birth when you telephone because there may not be a midwife trained in home birth available. In this situation the safety of all women in labour is our priority and we will offer you an alternative venue, most likely the birth centre but it could be the Delivery Suite; the option available may well depend on how busy the unit is. We know it is difficult to change your preferred option for place of birth at the last moment and we hope this will not have a detrimental effect on your birth experience.

## Rushey Birth Centre

We have a midwifery-led birth centre on level 6 in the Maternity Unit, known as an alongside birth centre. The centre consists of three birthing rooms that have been designed to be homely and 'low-tech', with facilities to adjust the environment to suit your needs (heating and lighting). The facilities also include one room with a birthing pool and two rooms with large corner baths. A fourth room has a wet room used for women in early labour or postnatal women who are waiting to go home.

If you are well and do not have any obstetric complications or medical complications then the Rushey Birth Centre is suitable for you. If you are not sure whether the birth centre is suitable because of previous complications such as bleeding or forceps, for example, your midwife or doctor will be able to advise you.

When you think you are in labour and telephone the labour triage telephone number, the midwife will ask you for your obstetric and medical details as well as any pregnancy information. This information will help her to advise you where to go for a labour check-up. If you are near your due date and have no complications or potential labour complications the midwife will see you in Rushey triage; from here you can choose to give birth in the birth centre or delivery suite depending on your individual needs and depending on room availability.

The centre is run by midwives; if needed, access to specialised care can easily be arranged at any time during your labour due to its close proximity to doctors on the Delivery Suite. About 25% of all women admitted to the birth centre will require the need to transfer to the main delivery suite in labour or just after the baby's birth. Statistics from the birth centre suggest that first time mothers, as with home births, have a higher chance of being transferred during labour. We calculate from our local data that 40% or four out of every 10 first time mothers are transferred to the Delivery Suite, whereas for multiples the chance of transfer is much lower, we estimate this is less than 10%. The two most common reasons for transfer are delay in labour or request for epidural.

## Delivery Suite

This area is suitable for all women and although we would encourage women who are well to consider the birth centre as their first option, there are rooms available on Delivery Suite where both 'high tech' and 'low tech' care can be given to mothers, according to your needs. The facilities on the Delivery Suite include a static birthing pool, and two further portable pools which can be used in any of the rooms. If you were considering a home or birth centre birth but have been advised by your midwife or doctor to choose Delivery Suite then these facilities may be a good compromise. Many women find that labouring and even giving birth in water is helpful. The pool is not always available for use if your baby's heartbeat is being continuously monitored, although wireless monitoring of your baby's heart beat should be available, allowing you to be in the water – do ask.

There are occasions when you will be strongly advised to choose to give birth in the Delivery Suite as your choice of place of birth because of the medical facilities and care available there.

These reasons include:

- If you have developed any complications in your pregnancy.
- If you have had complications in a previous pregnancy.
- If you request an epidural in labour.
- You have any medical illness complicating your pregnancy.

If you are not sure about the advice you have had, please ask your doctor or midwife to talk their reasons through with you. Sometimes, you may not agree with the recommendations made by either your midwife or doctor. In this instance please ask your midwife to refer you to a consultant midwife for further discussion

When you think you are in labour please call 0118 322 7304 to speak to the triage midwife who will be able to help and support you.

### What happens when the unit is very busy?

Occasionally when the unit is very busy because of the numbers of babies being born at that time, or because of reduced numbers of midwives on duty, we may ask you to go to another hospital to have your baby. During busy times we believe that providing safe care to all women is our priority and we will only ask you to divert to another service if it is deemed safer to do this. If this happens we will advise you which hospital in the local area will be able to look after you because we have communication plans in place to support you. The hospitals we are likely to suggest you go to are North Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust, Frimley Health (Slough or Frimley), the John Radcliffe Hospital or Buckingham Health Care Trust. We know this can be a difficult time but hope that if this does occur it will not have a detrimental effect on your birth experience.

### References

1. Perinatal and maternal outcomes by planned place of birth for healthy women with low risk pregnancies: the Birthplace in England national prospective cohort study *BMJ* 2011;343:d7400
2. National Collaborating Centre for Women and Child's Health (2017) *Intrapartum care for healthy women and babies*: RCOG Press: London

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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