

Outstanding Care,
Compassionate People,
Healthier Communities



Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Choosing where to give birth to your baby

Information for women, birthing parents and carers



**Maternity
Services**

With you every step of the way

**This leaflet is for women and birthing people receiving
maternity care at Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS
Foundation Trust.**

This leaflet is designed to help you understand your choices about where to give birth, so you can make a decision that feels right for you.

You will have the chance to talk about this with your midwife or doctor throughout your pregnancy. You can change your mind at any time.

Why does place of birth matter?

Planning where to give birth is an important part of your pregnancy journey.

For women and birthing people with straightforward pregnancies, serious complications during birth are uncommon in all settings.

Different birth settings offer different environments and support options, which may influence:

- How supported you feel.
- Your experience of labour and birth.
- The types of interventions you may be offered.

Your care will always be individualised to you and your baby.

Your local birth options

At Sherwood Forest Hospitals, you can choose to give birth:

1. At home

You can choose to have your baby at home, supported by midwives.

At home:

- You will receive one-to-one care from a midwife.
- Two midwives will attend for the birth.
- You can remain in a familiar and comfortable environment.

Home birth may be particularly suitable if:

- You have an uncomplicated pregnancy.
- You have already had at least one baby.

If you are having your first baby, there is a small increase in risk for the baby compared with hospital birth, although this remains uncommon.

2. Sherwood Birthing Unit (hospital birth)

You can choose to give birth at Sherwood Birthing Unit (SBU) at King's Mill Hospital.

This is a consultant-led (obstetric) maternity unit, which means:

- Midwives provide most care for those with uncomplicated pregnancies.
- Doctors and specialist teams are available if needed.
- Additional monitoring and treatments can be provided quickly.

Facilities include:

- Private birthing rooms.
- One birthing pool.
- Space and equipment to support movement and positioning.
- A range of pain relief options, including epidural.

Midwifery-led care in hospital

If you have an uncomplicated pregnancy, your care in hospital will usually be led by a midwife, even on the obstetric unit.

This means you can be supported to:

- Move freely and use different positions in labour.
- Use options such as water or aromatherapy.
- Receive continuous support from a midwife.
- Make choices about your care during labour and birth.

Most women and birthing people have a positive experience of midwifery-led care within the hospital setting.

However, it is important to understand that:

- A hospital birth takes place in a more clinical environment.
- It is not the same as a midwifery unit (birth centre).
- There is greater access to monitoring and interventions if needed.
- Rates of intervention are generally higher in hospital settings for those with uncomplicated pregnancies.

Your midwife will talk this through with you to support your decision.

Understanding outcomes in different birth settings

For women and birthing people with uncomplicated pregnancies.

For the baby:

- Serious complications are uncommon in all settings.

About 4 in every 1,000 births (around 0.4%, or about 1 in 250 babies).

- If you are having your first baby:
 - Around 9 in 1,000 (0.9%, or about 1 in 110) at home.
 - Around 5 in 1,000 (0.5%, or about 1 in 200) in hospital (obstetric unit).
- If you have had a baby before, outcomes for babies are similar at home or in hospital

For you (interventions)

Women and birthing people with uncomplicated pregnancies are more likely to have interventions in hospital (obstetric units) compared with home birth.

In an obstetric unit (hospital setting):

- Around 25–30% (about 1 in 4 to 1 in 3) have a caesarean birth
- Around 10–15% (about 1 in 10) have an assisted vaginal birth (forceps or ventouse)

Overall, around 35–45% (about 1 in 2 to 1 in 3) may have one of these interventions in hospital.

In comparison, for women and birthing people planning a home birth:

- Around 5–10% (about 1 in 20 to 1 in 10) have a caesarean birth
- Around 5–10% (about 1 in 20 to 1 in 10) have an assisted vaginal birth

Overall, around 10–20% (about 1 in 10 to 1 in 5) may have one of these interventions when planning birth at home.

These differences reflect that women and birthing people with uncomplicated pregnancies who plan a home birth are less likely to experience medical interventions during labour and birth.

Transfer to hospital (if planning home birth)

- First baby – about 45% (around 1 in 2).
- Not first baby – about 10–12% (around 1 in 10).

Most transfers are not emergencies and are often for reasons such as labour taking longer than expected or requesting additional pain relief.

Your midwife can help you understand what these numbers mean for your individual circumstances.

Midwifery units (birth centres)

Some hospitals have midwifery units (also called birth centres), designed for women and birthing people with uncomplicated pregnancies.

These may be:

- Based within a hospital (alongside units).
- Located in the community (freestanding units).

These settings are associated with:

- Lower rates of interventions.
- A higher chance of birth without medical procedures.

Sherwood Forest Hospitals has a consultant-led maternity unit (Sherwood Birthing Unit) but does not have a separate midwifery-led unit (birth centre).

This means you can still receive midwifery-led care in hospital, but within a setting where doctors and additional services are available if needed.

Your choices beyond Sherwood Forest Hospitals

You should still be given information about all available birth settings.

If you would like to give birth in a midwifery unit, your midwife can:

- Provide information about nearby services.
- Support you to explore your options.

You are not limited to your local hospital and can choose care in another area if this feels right for you.

How do I decide what is right for me?

Every pregnancy is different.

Your decision may be influenced by:

- Your health and your baby's wellbeing.
- Your previous experiences.
- What matters most to you.
- How you feel about different care environments.

Some women and birthing people prefer:

- Immediate access to medical support.
- A familiar or non-clinical setting.
- Greater flexibility in how they labour and give birth.

There is no right choice, only what is right for you.

Discussing your birth preferences

All women and birthing people will be offered a discussion about their birth preferences with their community midwife between 34 and 36 weeks of pregnancy.

Your named community midwife is usually the best person to have an initial discussion with about your birth choices, preferences, questions or concerns. Many birth planning decisions can be supported through these conversations.

Some women and birthing people may benefit from an additional Birth Options appointment with a Professional Midwifery Advocate (PMA). This service provides extra time and support to explore choices, preferences and individual circumstances using a shared decision-making approach. It may be particularly helpful if you are considering care outside usual guidance, including a home birth where additional risk factors are present, or if previous experiences are influencing your decisions about birth.

You can ask your community midwife to refer you to the Birth Options Service. If you would prefer, you may also self-refer by contacting the PMA Team directly at: Email: sfh-tr.pmateam@nhs.net

When hospital birth may be recommended

You may be advised to give birth in hospital if there are risks such as:

- High blood pressure or diabetes.
- Previous birth complications.
- Twins or other multiple pregnancy.
- Concerns about your baby's growth or wellbeing.

This is to help ensure that you and your baby have access to appropriate care if needed. You will always be supported to understand your options.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can:

- Change your plans during pregnancy.
- Revisit your choices at any time.
- Change your place of birth during labour if needed.

Shared decision-making

Your care is based on shared decision-making.

This means:

- You will be given clear, balanced information.
- You can ask questions at any time.
- Your preferences, values and beliefs will be respected.

You have the right to:

- Choose what feels right for you.
- Accept or decline care.
- Be fully involved in decisions about your care.

Key messages

- Serious complications during birth are uncommon for women and birthing people with uncomplicated pregnancies.
- At Sherwood Forest Hospitals, you can give birth at home or in hospital.
- Midwives provide care in both settings

- Sherwood Forest Hospitals has a consultant-led maternity unit, but not a separate midwifery-led birth centre.
- You can choose to explore birth options in other areas if you wish.
- Your care will be personalised to you and your baby.

Further information

- NHS: www.nhs.uk
- Which? Birth Choice: www.which.co.uk/birth-choice
- Speak to your midwife or maternity team

Important

This leaflet provides general information and does not replace advice from your midwife or doctor.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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