Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience team on **01932 723553** or email **asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net**. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise on how to make a formal complaint.

You can also share your feedback with our Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) via email **asphmnvp@gmail.com**

We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.

You can use Text Relay to turn telephone communications into text. Use the Relay UK app on your phone, tablet or PC. You can also use Relay UK via Minicom or Uniphone.

اگر نیاز به ترجمه دارید، لطفا با شماره 01932 723553 تماس بگیرید.

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਤਰਜਮੇ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ: 01932 723553

اگر آپ اس کا اُردو زبان میں ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں، تو براہِ کرم اِس فون نمبر 01932 723553 پر رابطہ کریں

Se precisa de uma tradução por favor contacte: 01932 723553

আপনার অনুবাদের দরকার হলে এখানে যোগাযোগ করুন : 01932 723553

यदि आपको अनुवाद की ज़रूरत है तो कृपया इस नंबर पर फोन करें: 01932 723553

Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

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Together we care

NHS
Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Choosing where to have your baby

Maternity

Published: August 2025

Patient information

Choosing where to have your baby

Choosing where to give birth is an important decision. Your choice should be based on your health, pregnancy history and personal preferences. You can discuss your options with your midwife who can provide personalised advice. Wherever you chose, the place should feel right for you and you can change your mind at any point in your pregnancy.

This leaflet gives information about your birth options at Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. It is based on the Birthplace Study (2011) and NHS guidance. It is aimed at people planning a vaginal birth. If you're thinking about having a planned caesarean section, please read the *Elective Caesarean Section* leaflet and talk to your maternity team for more information

Birth choices outside usual recommendations

Should you wish to discuss choices outside of usual recommendations, your community midwife will offer you a referral to our Birth Options Clinic with our Consultant Midwives for an appointment. This can be made at any stage in your pregnancy although we would encourage starting these discussions as early as possible.

The Birth Options service gives you time to talk, share your concerns and preferences and understand the risks and benefits of recommended care. The service focuses on your choices, informed decision-making, and open communication to create a personalised care plan.

When considering your options, think...

B – What are the Benefits?

R – What are the Risks?

A – What are the Alternatives?

I – What does your Intuition or Instinct tell you?

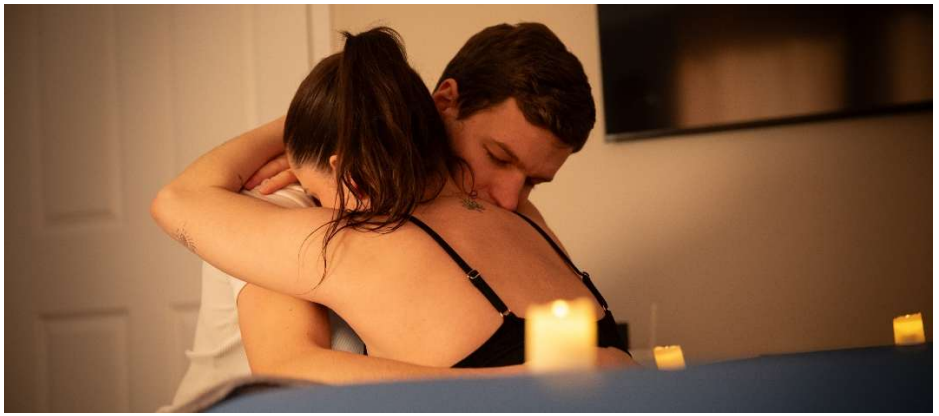
N – What if you do Nothing?

Evidence from the Birthplace Study:

Homebirth	• For women and birthing people having a second or subsequent baby, home birth was as safe as hospital birth for the baby and had fewer interventions. • For first-time mothers, home birth is generally safe, though research shows a slightly higher chance of serious problems for the baby compared to births in hospital. To give you an idea, this is around **9 in 1,000** babies born at home, compared to **5 in 1,000** in hospital. Your midwife will talk everything through with you, so you can feel confident in making the choice that's right for you and your baby
Abbey Birth Centre **(Midwifery-Led Unit)**	• Outcomes for babies were similar to labour ward births • Women and birthing people were more likely to have a straightforward birth and less likely to need a caesarean or instrumental delivery compared to a labour ward.
Labour Ward (Consultant-Led Unit)	• Labour wards are the safest option for babies in high-risk pregnancies. • Women and birthing people with low-risk pregnancies who gave birth in obstetric units were more likely to have interventions than those in MLUs or at home.

Home Birth

A home birth means giving birth in your own home, supported by our community midwives. This is usually recommended if you have a straightforward pregnancy, and both you and your baby are well.



Advantages:

- You may be more relaxed in familiar surroundings
- There is a lower likelihood of medical interventions (e.g. caesarean section, episiotomy), if your pregnancy is straightforward.
- Increased likelihood of being looked after by a midwife you may have met already in your pregnancy
- Less risk of infection
- Not having to interrupt your labour to travel into hospital

Considerations:

- Transfer to hospital may be needed (around 45% for first-time mothers, 12% for those who have given birth before).
- Some pain relief options may not be available at home, for example an epidural. You might choose to use the gas and air (Entonox), a warm bath, a birthing pool, a TENS machine and any relaxation techniques you may have learnt.

Abbey Birth Centre

The Abbey Birth Centre is our alongside Midwifery Led Unit (MLU). This is part of the maternity hospital and is recommended if you have a straightforward pregnancy, and both you and your baby are well.

Advantages:

- More relaxed and homely environment
- Lower likelihood of medical interventions, if your pregnancy is straightforward.
- Three birthing pools available
- Midwife-led care with a focus on physiological birth

Considerations:

- You may need to be transferred to labour ward if there are any complications (around 40% for first-time mothers, 13% for those who have given birth before)
- Some pain relief options may not be available in the birth centre, for example an epidural. You can use the gas and air (Entonox), pethidine, a warm bath, a birthing pool, a TENS machine, aromatherapy and any relaxation techniques you may have learnt.
- For an epidural, a short transfer to Labour Ward would be needed

Labour Ward

Our labour ward has a pool room, birthing rooms and home from home rooms as well as two maternity operating theatres. The neonatal (baby) unit is based next door.

Advantages:

- Direct access to additional medical support and interventions if needed
- Pain relief options include: gas and air (Entonox), pethidine, the birthing pool, epidural, fentanyl patient-controlled analgesia and any relaxation techniques you have learnt.

Considerations:

- For those with straightforward pregnancies, there is a higher likelihood of medical interventions such as, as induction, continuous monitoring, assisted birth (forceps/ventouse), and caesarean section
- Birth on the labour ward is recommended for high-risk pregnancies (e.g., twins, breech presentation, high blood pressure, previous caesarean)