Maternity Information for those considering giving birth unassisted by a midwife

The NHS is here for you

Giving birth without the assistance of a midwife is a legal choice in England. Our commitment is to listen and respect your informed choices.

Giving birth without the assistance of a midwife is sometimes known as "unassisted birth" or "freebirth". If you are considering giving birth without the assistance of a midwife because you are worried about the care you might receive from NHS maternity services, please contact your named midwife or midwifery team to discuss your concerns as soon as possible – they can put you in touch with a consultant midwife or other midwife specialist in supporting choices if needed. They will be able to help you to make a personalised care and support plan that's right for you.

If you are not satisfied that your needs can be met, you can contact your local Head or Director of Midwifery at your local NHS maternity service. You can contact them via your local maternity services' website or through your local Maternity Voices Partnership.

Midwives are here to ensure a personal and safe maternity experience. They are always here to look after the health and wellbeing of you and your baby.

About the support available in maternity services

You can expect support and discussion of unbiased and evidence based information such as the role of the midwife and wider multi-disciplinary team during labour, birth and the early postnatal hours as well as the benefits and risks of unassisted birth to help you to make a personalised care and support plan that's right for you. You will have as much time and support as you need to make your decision.

It is important that you have all the information you need to make an informed choice about choosing unassisted birth. This list outlines examples of the care a midwife would normally provide during labour and birth:

- ➢ Regularly monitoring your health and wellbeing
  - o Taking your temperature, blood pressure and pulse
- ➢ Regularly monitoring your baby's health and wellbeing
  - o Listening to the baby's heartbeat
- ➢ Providing information, support, advice and guidance
- ➢ Supporting with movement and positions
- ➢ Supporting with coping strategies such as breathing techniques
- ➢ Provision of medical pain relief
- ➢ Supporting the birth of your baby
- ➢ Supporting the birth of your placenta
- ➢ Supporting your baby's first feed
- ➢ Ensuring that if you or your baby require urgent medical assistance that this is recognised and provided/accessed immediately

If you choose an unassisted birth

Please be reassured that you will continue to be offered and recommended NHS antenatal and postnatal care throughout your pregnancy journey and can opt into any or all appointments. You can change your plans at any point.

You should call an ambulance if there are problems when you are giving birth so that immediate aid can be mobilised.

If you choose an unassisted birth, your baby's birth must be notified to the Child Health Information Service within 36 hours. This is a legal requirement and provides your baby with an NHS number in case they require NHS healthcare. It will also ensure you are offered newborn screening. If you are under the care of an Independent Midwife, they can assist you with this. If not, your local NHS Midwifery Team or your GP can assist you – if they have not seen you during your pregnancy, they may not be able to do this over the phone.

It is also a legal requirement to register your baby's birth within 42 days. This ensures your baby has an official identity and that a birth certificate can be issued. You can find your local registry office here: www.gov.uk/register-offices

More information on newborn screening
www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/newborn-screening/

More information about unassisted birth via Birthrights:
www.birthrights.org.uk/factsheets/unassisted-birth/ or AIMS:
www.aims.org.uk/information/item/freebirth