

# Choosing where to have your baby



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# Introduction

**As giving birth in the United Kingdom is generally considered very safe for both women and their babies, the Department of Health prefer women to choose where they wish to give birth.**

Every woman's experience of labour and birth is unique. When deciding where to have your baby you will want to choose the most appropriate place for you. Your decision will be an individual one based on your wishes, cultural preferences and any medical needs you or your baby may have. It will also depend upon whether or not this is your first experience of labour and birth or if you have had a baby before. It is important to discuss your previous birth experiences with your midwife when you are making your decisions.

As a centre of excellence for maternity care, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust is able to offer a choice of birthplace options, including:

- Home
- Midwifery-led birth centre:
  - New Forest Birth Centre in Ashurst
  - Broadlands Birth Centre within the Princess Anne Hospital
- Labour ward (obstetrician-led delivery suite) within the Princess Anne Hospital



The aim of this booklet is to help you make an informed decision about where to have your baby. Choosing to give birth in an environment where you feel relaxed and in control may not only make a difference to your labour but has also been shown to influence your emotional wellbeing after the birth of your baby. However, your choice of birthplace will also influence the type of care you receive, your options for pain relief and your access to medical assistance if complications arise.

If you have previously had a straight forward pregnancy and birth and both you and your baby have been well during this pregnancy, recent nationwide research (2011) recommends giving birth in a midwifery-led birth centre or at home.

It is important to make your decisions in partnership with your birth partner and midwife, and where appropriate your obstetric consultant. Your midwife and consultant will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The safety of you and your baby remains a priority and therefore some birthplace options may not be appropriate for you, depending on your individual circumstances. If this applies to you and you would like to explore other options, you may wish to discuss your preferred birth-plan with a consultant midwife. Your midwife will arrange this for you.



# Home birth

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**If you have had a straightforward pregnancy and both you and your baby are well, you might choose to give birth at home.**

In England, around one in every 50 babies (2%) is born at home, and while this figure varies according to location, it is reflected locally (1.3% in 2011).

The advantages of giving birth at home include:

- Being in familiar surroundings where you may feel more relaxed.
- Not needing to interrupt your labour to go into hospital.
- Not needing to leave your other children. Whether or not they are present during your labour and birth is a matter of personal preference.
- Significantly reduced likelihood of requiring an instrumental (forceps or ventouse) or operative delivery (caesarean section). The need for intervention such as augmentation (breaking your waters or the use of a drip to speed up your contractions), epidural, or episiotomy is also less likely and therefore you are more likely to have a normal birth.
- Individual support by a midwife who will be with you while you are in labour and a second midwife who will be asked to attend the birth of your baby.

There are some things you should think about if you are considering a home birth, these include:

- If you are at increased risk of complications either at the beginning of your pregnancy, as your pregnancy progresses or during labour you may be advised against giving birth at home.
- Availability of pain relief – please refer to the availability chart on page 12.

- Likelihood of complications occurring.
- Likelihood of transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward – please refer to page ten.

## **Likelihood of complications occurring**

Research comparing the well-being of mothers and babies by place of birth is limited. However, a nationwide study published in 2011 showed that while a planned home birth is generally safe for healthy women having a normal pregnancy, there are differences between women who have laboured and had a baby before and women for whom it is their first experience of labour and birth.

For healthy women having a second or subsequent baby, home birth appears to be safe for babies and offers benefits to both mothers and babies. There are no differences in the well-being of babies between births planned at home or in a midwifery unit compared with planned births in an obstetric unit.

For healthy women with a healthy pregnancy expecting their first baby, national statistics show the likelihood of a significant concern with baby arising is higher for a birth planned at home (9.3 per 1000) when compared with a birth planned in a birth centre or an obstetric unit (5.3 per 1000). The health benefits for you as a mother and the increased likelihood of success with breastfeeding associated with a home birth remain the same. It is important that you are aware of this if you are expecting your first baby, as you may wish to discuss this in further detail with your midwife. It is for this reason that a transfer from home to the Princess Anne labour ward is also more common amongst first-time mothers.



### **Transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward**

Midwives are able to quickly detect the onset of problems and if you or your baby needs emergency treatment you will be transferred in an ambulance to the obstetrician-led labour ward at the Princess Anne Hospital for specialist care.

If you are planning a homebirth you should be aware of the procedures and reasons for transfer in advance. These are discussed in further detail on page ten, where a comparison with transfer from our birth centres is provided.

Making preparations just in case, such as packing an overnight bag and planning child and pet care will make this transition smoother if it is necessary.

### **Planning a home birth**

You should talk to your midwife throughout your pregnancy about how suitable home birth is for you and your baby, to allow you both plenty of time to ensure appropriate plans are in place.

Your midwife will also arrange to see you at home for your 36 week antenatal appointment, to discuss your birth plan and answer any questions you may have. Arrangements will be made for the delivery of a birth box at 37 weeks. This will contain basic birth equipment, in preparation for when your labour begins.



# Birth centres

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**Birth centres aim to offer a homely environment with a focus on normal birth. Midwives will care for you during your labour and birth, which is why birth centres are also known as midwifery units.**

Birth centres are not equipped to perform medical interventions and are therefore only suitable for women with a healthy pregnancy who are expecting to have a straightforward birth.

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust offers a choice of two birth centres:

- New Forest Birth Centre (freestanding) in Ashurst
- Broadlands Birth Centre (alongside) within the Princess Anne Hospital

There are many advantages associated with choosing to have your baby in one of our birth centres, many of which are similar to choosing to have your baby at home. These include:

- Being in surroundings where you may feel more relaxed and more in control of your labour.
- Reduced likelihood of using pain relief for labour.
- Reduced likelihood of having a drip to speed up your contractions or requiring interventions such as forceps or ventouse.
- Increased likelihood of beginning breastfeeding,

which has benefits for you and your baby, should you wish to do so.

Nationwide research (Birthplace Choices 2011) has shown that births in birth centres are as safe for babies as births planned in an obstetric unit. The higher number of normal births and the significant reduction in interventions are also advantages which you should consider.

If you have any questions about these findings, it is important you discuss them with your midwife or the midwives at the New Forest Birth Centre when you arrange your tour.

There are several points for you to consider when choosing a birth centre as they differ according to their location. This booklet describes the facilities available and explains the differences between the two locations, to enable you to make an informed decision. It is important to discuss your preference with your midwife.

You can access a virtual tour of both Broadlands and the New Forest Birth Centre on our website at [www.uhs.nhs.uk/maternitytour](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/maternitytour). You may also wish to contact the New Forest Birth Centre on 023 8074 7690 if you have any questions or if you would like to arrange a walk-around tour.





## New Forest Birth Centre

The New Forest Birth Centre is situated in Ashurst on the edge of the New Forest. It offers a safe, relaxed environment for the birth of your baby, with midwives present 24 hours a day so you can have one to one support during your labour.

You do not need to live locally to use the New Forest Birth Centre, it is only six miles from the Princess Anne and very accessible.

The centre opened in 2008 and has two bright spacious birthing rooms with modern furnishings. They are fully equipped with:

- Birth pools
- En-suite facilities
- Music and adjustable lighting
- Comfortable birthing aids such as balls and mats, as you will be encouraged to remain active during your labour
- Refreshment facilities for you and your partner
- Views of the garden and New Forest.

There are several points to consider if you are planning to give birth at the New Forest Birth Centre.

This is a free-standing birth centre and even though it is in a community hospital it does not offer the same facilities as the Princess Anne Hospital. For example there are no obstetric doctors, anaesthetists, special baby units or operating theatres nearby.

If you are planning to have your baby at the New Forest Birth Centre it is essential that you are aware of the reasons why transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward might be recommended and the arrangements in place should this become necessary. You should also be aware of how likely this is to occur and the implications for you and your baby. Please refer to page ten of this booklet, for more information and a direct comparison with transfer from home or Broadlands Birth Centre.

### Staying at the New Forest Birth Centre, after you have had your baby

You may choose to return home after you have had your baby or you may wish to stay and receive postnatal support from our team of midwives and maternity support workers. Please refer to your copy of the maternity services guide for further information about the postnatal facilities available.





## Broadlands Birth Centre

Broadlands Birth Centre is suitable for women wishing to have a natural birth in a home-like atmosphere. It is a midwife-led unit, with midwives taking primary responsibility for your care during labour and birth. Choosing to birth here is only recommended if you have had a straightforward pregnancy, without concerns about your wellbeing or that of your baby.

Based within the Princess Anne Hospital, Broadlands Birth Centre is defined as an 'alongside midwifery unit' or a 'co-located birth centre' because obstetric, anaesthetic and neonatal services are available within the same building should they be required. Broadlands is on E level – one floor above labour ward. The door to the birth centre is locked for security reasons. You will need to press a door buzzer to inform midwives of your arrival.

Broadlands Birth Centre has four birthing rooms, two of which have ensuite facilities. These rooms are equipped with comfortable birthing aids such as balls, beanbags, special chairs and stools and provide a relaxed environment for you and your partner.

In addition, there are two spacious pool rooms equipped with adjustable lighting that can be used during labour and/or birth.

It is important to eat and drink while you are in labour, so you have enough energy. Please bring snacks and drinks with you. You can help yourself to tea, coffee and cold water and food will be ordered for you at meal times. Your birth partners need to eat and drink too. Partners can make a small donation for their tea and coffee but they might like to bring in snacks.

If you are planning to have your baby on Broadlands it is essential you are aware of the reasons why transfer to labour ward might be recommended and the arrangements in place should this become necessary. You should also be aware of how likely this is to occur and the implications for you and your baby. Please refer to page ten of this booklet, for more information and a direct comparison with transfer from home or the New Forest Birth Centre.

### Staying on Broadlands after you have your baby

You may wish to stay for additional support after you have had your baby, or go home directly from one of our birthing rooms. If you have any questions about the facilities available after you have had your baby please refer to your copy of the maternity services guide or discuss them with your midwife.

## Transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward from your chosen place of birth

### Reasons for transfer

Choosing to have your baby at home or in one of our birth centres is only recommended if you and your baby remain healthy throughout pregnancy and labour.

Transfer to labour ward may be recommended if your labour is not progressing as well as it should, or if there are concerns about the wellbeing of you or your baby.

The reasons for your midwife recommending transfer to the labour ward are the same irrespective of where you choose to give birth. The urgency with which transfer is required will be dependent on the reason for transfer.

While the majority of transfers take place during labour, situations can also arise after the birth of your baby where transfer becomes necessary. Your midwife will be able to discuss the likelihood of this occurring with you.

### Likelihood of transfer

If you are planning to have your baby at home or in one of our birth centres it is essential you are aware of how likely you are to transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward.

Recent national research has shown that a substantial proportion of women planning to have their first baby at home or in a birth centre are transferred to an obstetric unit, either during labour or immediately after their baby is born. However, the likelihood of this occurring varies according to where they originally planned to give birth.

The table presenting these statistics allows you to make direct comparisons, however, when reading this table there are several points you should consider.

The number of women choosing to have their baby outside an obstetric setting is considerably higher within the Southampton area (33%) when compared to the national average (7%).



Requests for further pain relief were identified as one of the main reasons for transfer in Southampton, a reason which was not reflected nationally. This may be because:

- Transfer is relatively convenient, particularly from Broadlands Birth Centre, where the number of women choosing to transfer for additional pain relief is significantly higher.
- If you plan to use an epidural or remifentanyl and you are otherwise healthy with a straightforward pregnancy, you will be advised to begin your labour care in Broadlands Birth Centre and transfer to labour ward when use of epidural or remifentanyl becomes appropriate.

## Transfer from planned place of birth

Figures for 2011

Chosen place of birth	Home		New Forest Birth Centre		Broadlands Birth Centre	
	National statistics across the United Kingdom	Local statistics Southampton and the surrounding area	National statistics across the United Kingdom	Local statistics Southampton and the surrounding area	National statistics across the United Kingdom	Local statistics Southampton and the surrounding area
<b>Number of women having a normal birth in their chosen location</b>	88%	81% 100 out of 124	83%	81% 368 out of 455	77%	63% 1012 out of 1612
<b>Women expecting their first baby</b>		33% 7 out of 21		67% 144 out of 216		43% 368 out of 854
<b>Women expecting second or subsequent babies</b>		90% 93 out of 103		94% 224 out of 239		85% 644 out of 758
<b>Number of women transferring, either during labour or immediately after birth</b>	21%	25% 31 out of 124	22%	27% 124 out of 455	26%	41% 667 out of 1612
<b>Women expecting their first baby</b>	45%	71% 15 out of 21	36%	43% 93 out of 216	40%	61% 524 out of 854
<b>Women expecting second or subsequent babies</b>	12%	16% 16 out of 103	9%	13% 31 out of 239	13%	18% 143 out of 758

### Arrangements for transfer

If you are transferring from home or the New Forest Birth Centre arrangements for your transfer may include an urgent ambulance or your own transport depending on your reasons for transfer. Your midwife will also go to the Princess Anne to continue your care. The time taken to transfer you to the Princess Anne can vary. This usually depends on the reason for transferring you and it is important to remember emergency situations are unusual for women who are healthy and who have had an uncomplicated pregnancy.

It is not possible to give an average time for transfers from home, as this varies depending upon where you live.

The total time taken from calling an ambulance at the New Forest Birth Centre to arriving at the Princess Anne Hospital is 30 minutes on average, but may be quicker. As Broadlands is located within the Princess Anne, the

time taken to transfer to labour ward is significantly shorter than if you were at home, or at the New Forest Birth Centre. Transfer is downstairs to the obstetrician-led labour ward on D level, either in a wheelchair or on a bed. The time taken to transfer you to labour ward can vary depending on why you are being transferred. However, in an emergency situation, your transfer takes approximately five minutes.

When considering these transfer times, it is important you are aware of the care midwives provide during labour and in emergency situations. Midwives are fully equipped to facilitate basic maternal and neonatal life support and ensure transfer remains a well managed situation. However, the resources available to your midwife at home will differ from those available within the birth centres. You should discuss these differences with your midwife, before finalising your decision about where to give birth.

# Availability of pain relief

Most women use a variety of methods to help them cope with pain during labour. You should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the methods available with your midwife before you are in labour, so

you are able to make an informed decision about what might be right for you. We also recommend attending an antenatal course, as this will provide you with the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

	Home	New Forest Birth Centre	Broadlands Birth Centre	Labour ward
<b>Comfortable birthing aids</b> Beanbags, birthing balls	Requires you to make your own hire or purchase arrangements.	Available	Available	Available
<b>TENS machine</b>	Irrespective of where you choose to have your baby, you will need to make your own hire or purchase arrangements before your labour begins as TENS machines are not available to borrow from our maternity services. Your midwife will be able to provide you with information about different suppliers.  Your midwife will also be able to advise you on how to use your TENS machine, should you wish to use one, and will support you with its use.			
<b>Birthing pool</b>	Requires you to make your own hire or purchase arrangements.	Two pools are available	Two pools are available	One pool*
<b>Gas and air (Entonox)</b>	Available	Available	Available	Available
<b>Pethidine</b>	Available**	Available**	Available**	Available**
<b>Remifentanil</b>	Necessitates a transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward	Necessitates a transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward	Necessitates a transfer to labour ward	Available***
<b>Epidural</b>	Necessitates a transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward	Necessitates a transfer to the Princess Anne labour ward	Necessitates a transfer to labour ward	Available***

\*This pool is available for use by women wishing to use pools on Broadlands if both pools are in use, or for women on labour ward where use of water has been agreed by either an obstetric consultant or consultant midwife. If you think this may apply to you please discuss your plans with your midwife.

\*\*\*Availability is dependent on anaesthetist availability at the time of request; please discuss this with your midwife. You will be advised to begin your labour care in one of our birth centres and transfer to labour ward when remifentanil or an epidural becomes appropriate for you.

\*\*Please discuss availability with your midwife, before you go into labour

# Princess Anne labour ward (obstetrician-led unit)

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**Princess Anne Hospital is a regional centre for maternal and fetal medicine, providing multi-speciality, consultant-led care for women who have, or who develop, medical problems during their pregnancy or labour. For these women, birthing in an environment with direct access to obstetricians, anaesthetists (who administer epidurals and general anaesthetic) and neonatologists (specialists in newborn care) is recommended.**

If your baby requires extra care at birth, the Princess Anne has one of the largest regional neonatal units in the country, providing specialist care to term and preterm babies, in a spacious and welcoming environment.

Facilities available on labour ward include:

- **13 birth rooms and one birth pool** – these rooms are equipped with comfortable birthing aids such as birthing balls, as well as additional equipment for monitoring the wellbeing of you and your baby. You should therefore be prepared for a less homely and more clinical appearance.
- **A four-bed induction of labour suite** – if inducing your labour is recommended you will be asked to come to the induction of labour suite on labour ward at a given time on your arranged day. You will be advised to remain active and walk around the hospital to help get your labour started. Once in labour you may be able to move to your chosen place of birth. This will depend on the reason for induction and you are advised to refer to the induction of labour information sheet and to discuss this with your midwife.

- **A recovery area** for women who have had a Caesarean section.
- **A high dependency unit** with specially trained midwives available to care for women who are unwell and need extra care and monitoring, either before or after having their baby.

The neonatal unit and operating theatre are on the same floor allowing rapid transfer if necessary.

The advantages of giving birth in an obstetric unit include:

- On site access to emergency support including obstetric, anaesthetic and neonatal services. You won't need to transfer if there are problems.
- Access to other specialist services, such as epidurals and remifentanyl for pain relief.

If you choose to give birth in the labour ward an obstetrician will take primary responsibility for your care but you will still be looked after by a midwife during your labour.

You will still have choices about the care you receive and will be encouraged to participate in any necessary decision making processes. It is therefore essential that you discuss with your midwife the possible reasons for inducing or augmenting (starting or speeding up) your labour, the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of pain relief and the reasons for recommending continuous monitoring of your baby's heartbeat, so you are able to make informed decisions.

# Your care after your baby is born (postnatal care)

**The wellbeing of you and your baby will determine the length of time you stay at the Princess Anne Hospital or at the New Forest Birth Centre.**

Please refer to your copy of the maternity services guide for further details about visiting hours and all other aspects of your postnatal care, as the facilities available vary according to your chosen birth location. It is advisable to read this before your baby is born as this will allow you the opportunity to discuss any questions you may have with your midwife.

Decisions about your postnatal care do not need to be made before you have your baby, as your plans may change. However, you may wish to discuss your options with your midwife at your 36 week antenatal appointment.

## **Making your choice**

It is important to remember that your midwife and obstetrician work together in partnership, so you can make well-informed decisions about the choices available. You should therefore discuss your options

with your midwife (and if appropriate your obstetric team) at booking and throughout your pregnancy. This will ensure you have all the information you need and that your decision is well thought through.

When thinking about your own health and circumstances you should also consider the support available to you from your partner, family and friends both during labour and after you have had your baby, as this may also influence the decisions you make.

You may also choose to read other relevant information, if you have not already done so and book yourself a place on our course of antenatal classes. This is done via maternity information services and support office at the Princess Anne and your midwife will be able to give you a booking form.

Remember, immediate decisions are not necessary, as factors influencing your decision may change as your pregnancy progresses and you may still wish to change your mind after your labour has begun. If you choose to write a birth plan, you should discuss this with your midwife at your 36 week antenatal appointment.



# Helpful contacts and sources of information

## **Active Birth**

[www.activebirthcentre.com](http://www.activebirthcentre.com)

## **Association of Improvements to the Maternity services (AIMS)**

0870 651433

[www.aims.org.uk](http://www.aims.org.uk)

## **Birth Choices UK**

[www.birthchoiceuk.com](http://www.birthchoiceuk.com)

## **Breastfeeding Babes**

Room 22 Broadlands Birth centre

Open Monday – Friday

10am – 1pm

No appointment necessary.

07786 267584

## **Home Birth Support Group**

[www.homebirth.org.uk](http://www.homebirth.org.uk)

## **Midirs informed choice booklets**

[www.midirs.org](http://www.midirs.org)

## **National Childbirth Trust (NCT)**

0870 4448707

[www.nctpregnancyandbabycare.com](http://www.nctpregnancyandbabycare.com)

## **The 'Pregnancy Book'**

A complete guide to pregnancy, labour and birth.

Visit the Department of Health website to download your copy.

[www.dh.gov.uk/publications](http://www.dh.gov.uk/publications)

## **Princess Anne midwifery community office**

West and Central midwifery teams:

023 8079 8513

South, East & Southern parishes teams:

023 8079 5205

Administrator (Mon to Fri, 9am to 4pm):

023 8079 4871

These numbers are for non-urgent messages only.

## **Royal College of Midwives**

[Rcmnormalbirth.org.uk](http://Rcmnormalbirth.org.uk)

## **Southampton area homebirth**

Southampton:

Clare [sotonhomebirth@nct.org.uk](mailto:sotonhomebirth@nct.org.uk)

023 8040 3821

Romsey:

Barbara [Barbara4c@yahoo.com](mailto:Barbara4c@yahoo.com)

Email group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HomebirthSotArea>

## **Supervisors of midwives**

Southampton 023 8079 6021

Portsmouth 023 9228 6000 ext. 3649

## **Vaginal Birth after Caesarean Section (VBAC)**

[www.vbac.com](http://www.vbac.com)

## University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust birth centres

### **Broadlands Birth Centre**

Princess Anne Hospital  
Coxford Road  
Southampton  
Tel: **023 8079 6337**

### **New Forest Birth Centre**

Ashurst Hospital  
Lyndhurst Road  
Ashurst  
Southampton  
SO40 7AR  
Tel: **023 8074 7690**

### **Labour Ward**

Tel: **023 8079 6002**

**If you need a translation of this document,  
an interpreter or a version in large print,  
Braille or on audio tape, please telephone  
023 8079 4688 for help.**

**[www.uhs.nhs.uk](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk)**