



# Patient Information Service

Women and children's business unit

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## Place of birth

Southend University Hospital   
NHS Foundation Trust

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## Where shall I have my baby?

In 2007 the Government highlighted the importance of offering all women, and their partners, a wider choice of type and place of maternity care and birth. It is our wish at Southend University Hospital that you achieve the birth you hope and plan for. Therefore we give all parents the choice of place of birth that they feel is right for them and their individual needs.

Your midwife will be able to discuss in detail with you the options of where to give birth to your baby. If it is expected that your pregnancy and birth will be uncomplicated, you may wish to consider having your baby at home or on the low risk birth unit.

- **Homebirth** – Labour and delivery at home with the support of a community midwife is ideal for many low-risk women (a second midwife is likely to attend the actual birth)
- **Midwife led birth unit** at Southend University Hospital is a midwifery led unit where low risk women who choose not to birth at home can deliver. The unit has four birthing rooms with en-suite shower room and two have birthing pools. Each room will have a double bed and natural birthing aids such as a stool, sling and a birthing ball. Women are encouraged to be mobile, supported by midwives and maternity support workers who are dedicated to promoting normal birth. The unit provides a real alternative to traditional hospital or homebirth

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- Labour and delivery in Southend University Hospital central delivery suite with a hospital midwife. Depending on your personal circumstances it may be possible to return home after a few hours, though a longer hospital stay may be recommended. The central delivery suite has six rooms which cater for all types of births. We also have two obstetric theatres on the same floor which cater for caesarean birth if required (for an elective, ie pre-arranged caesarean or if you/your baby's condition in labour warrants this).

## **Is homebirth safe?**

Several studies have concluded that homebirth is safe for women who have been identified as having no potential risk factors associated with their pregnancy and birth. You will be assessed by your midwife early in your pregnancy and any potential risk factors discussed with you so that you can make a decision.

## **What happens if I have booked a homebirth but my pregnancy develops problems?**

You may be referred to a consultant clinic for the advice of an obstetrician at any stage of the pregnancy, if your midwife feels that it is necessary, or at your request. They will be able to discuss with you the options for delivery.

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## **What will I need for a homebirth?**

Your community midwife will discuss with you the facilities and requirements needed for your planned homebirth. Our aim is to provide two midwives for the actual birth although occasionally this may not be possible due to exceptional workload commitments.

## **What will I need to provide at home?**

- maternity sanitary towels
- something waterproof to protect carpet, sofa or bed
- bin liners
- comfortable clothes to wear in labour
- suitable underwear to accommodate maternity sanitary towels
- old towels
- small soft towel to wrap baby in
- energy drinks/tablets
- paracetamol.

## **What happens when I go into labour and I booked a homebirth?**

You will have been given a number to contact when you think labour has started. A midwife will come to your home and assess how your labour is progressing. If you are in established labour the midwife will remain with you. If you are in the very early

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stages of labour, the midwife may leave you for a while and return at an agreed time or before if you need her.

## **What happens if complications occur during labour?**

If you are at home, you will be advised by the midwife to transfer into the hospital. You will be transferred via ambulance and the midwife will accompany you. If your midwife is unable to stay with you following transfer, your care will be handed over to a hospital midwife. It is for this reason that you may like to pack an emergency hospital bag which you can take with you should transfer be necessary. It should contain all the same things advised for hospital birth (see separate sheet).

The chances are that you will give birth at home as planned, but your effort will not have been wasted as you will then have all these items to hand in one place!

If you are on the low risk birth unit and complications occur, you will be transferred to the nearby central delivery suite.

## **What pain relief can I have at home?**

The community midwife will discuss forms of pain management with you. There are many things that you can do at home to deal with pain, such as relaxation techniques, position changes, soaking in the bath etc. The midwife will have Entonox (gas and air) with her for you to use if you need it. If you require further pain management such as a pain relieving injection or an epidural you will need to go into hospital.

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## **What happens after the birth?**

The midwives will ensure you and your baby are well. They will help you to feed your baby. They will give you a contact number to call if you are worried and give you some advice of things to watch out for. Depending on the time of day or night that you have had your baby they will usually call and see you again later in the day.

If you have delivered on the midwife led birth unit you may be able to go home a few hours later if you and your baby are well and there are no concerns. Similarly, it may be possible to go home from central delivery suite; if not, you will be transferred to the postnatal ward or to the extended care unit if you require closer observation.

## **What happens if I really want a homebirth but my midwife or doctor do not think that I should?**

The midwife and or doctor should discuss with you the reasons why they feel a homebirth would not be suitable for you. If you decide to go ahead with a homebirth the midwife will attend to you in exactly the same way as described. Your right to make a choice will be respected. However the midwife may feel that she needs extra support from her supervisor of midwives and so she will notify them when you are in labour.

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## Further reading

Which? Birth Choice

[www.which.co.uk/birth-choice](http://www.which.co.uk/birth-choice)

[www.nct.org.uk/pregnancy.com](http://www.nct.org.uk/pregnancy.com)      **0300 330 0700**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Contact numbers

Community midwives' office:      **01702 385487**  
(Mon – Fri 9.00am to 4.00pm)

Midwife led birth unit:      **01702 385260**

Central delivery suite:      **01702 385163**



# Patient Information Service

If this leaflet does not answer all of your questions, or if you have any other concerns please contact the central delivery suite direct on: **01702 385163**.

[www.southend.nhs.uk](http://www.southend.nhs.uk)

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For a translated, large print or audio tape version of this document please contact:

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

**Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

**Prittlewell Chase**

**Westcliff-on-Sea**

**Essex, SS0 0RY**

**Telephone: 01702 385333**

**Fax: 01702 508530**

**Email: [pals@southend.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@southend.nhs.uk)**

Written by D. Mowle & PIPMS  
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Southend University Hospital   
NHS Foundation Trust