

# Choices for Place of Birth

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### **Congratulations! You are pregnant!**

During this exciting time, we want to help you make the most of the facilities and services we offer to enjoy your pregnancy and birth experience. We recognise that this is a very special time for you. Your midwife will be available to give you all the help and support you need for you to make the best choices for you and your baby. You and your partner will be supported by the midwife in exploring the best option based on your wishes and the nature of your pregnancy. This leaflet details the different options and where they are available at our three Maternity sites (Penrith, Carlisle and Whitehaven).

Childbirth is a normal, natural process and for women with straightforward low-risk pregnancies these are the following choices:

- 1. Home birth** means that you can plan to birth your baby at home. Midwives will support you to give birth safely within your home comforts. Being in our own home allows you to be in familiar surroundings free to use your own things to support you through the birth. Your midwife will advise you if any changes arise during your pregnancy and labour
- 2. Free Standing Midwife Unit (FMU) – Penrith Birth Centre** is located at Penrith Hospital. This unit offer a more homely environment where midwives take complete responsibility for your care. There are no medical doctors at this site. If complications do arise during your labour or birth, the midwives will transfer you to an obstetric unit where doctors will be on hand to care for you and your baby
- 3. Alongside Midwife Led Unit (AMLU)** offers the same facilities as a FMU but are located on a hospital site with immediate access to obstetric led care if this is required. At the Cumberland Infirmary (Carlisle) and West Cumberland Hospital (Whitehaven) Consultant Led Units, we have dedicated rooms to provide midwife led care. If any changes arise during your baby's birth, the midwives will transfer you to the Consultant Led Unit where doctors will be on hand to care for you.

If you would like to have your baby in any of the above you will need to:

- Have a normal pregnancy with no complication
- Be expecting one baby
- Have no medical problems or problems in previous pregnancies
- Be at 37 to 42 weeks of your pregnancy
- Go into labour naturally

### **Mothers-to-be who will be cared for by the consultant obstetric team**

If you have a pre-existing medical condition, risk factors, and a previous complicated pregnancy/birth or there is a recognised risk to your baby, you will be booked under the care of a consultant obstetrician (specialist doctor) at either the Cumberland Infirmary of West Cumberland Hospital. Although the care is provided by a team of people, obstetricians (doctors who specialise in birth) lead in your care. Midwives also provide care to all women in an obstetric unit. Mothers-to-be who would like to choose to be cared by the consultant obstetric team. All women are able to choose to be under the care of the consultant obstetric team.

### **Meeting your midwife**

At your initial antenatal visit with your midwife, the midwife will undertake an assessment to make sure that you fit the criteria for midwife led care. This will be documented in your “handheld” records/ notes. Your midwife will explain what choices you are able to access which will depend on your previous medical history. You will be offered the option to give birth at home, the Alongside Midwifery Led Unit or Penrith Birth Centre (PBC) or care under a medical obstetrician.

Throughout the antenatal period you will continue to see your midwife, if at any time there is a change to your care, your midwife may decide to transfer you to consultant led care for an opinion. Your midwife in partnership with you will always include you in all decisions about your care and keep you updated at all times throughout your pregnancy. The midwife will also undertake an assessment at 36 weeks to ensure you remain on the midwifery led care pathway and meet the criteria to birth at home/ alongside Midwifery Led Units or Penrith Birth Centre.

**Making a Birth Plan:** The birth of your baby is a very exciting time and the midwives and doctors would like to make the birth experience special, while also making it safe. Through making a record of your preferences for labour and birth, this can make you feel more in control. This allows the midwife and doctor looking after you to know your wishes and understand your individual needs.

Where to start: There is a page in your green maternity notes – ‘Preferences for Birth’ you can fill in with your birth partner or with your community midwife. There is also a blank birth plan you can download from the North Cumbria Trust website’s Maternity page. Your community midwife can help support you on how to make a

birth plan.

Please remember that every birth is different and the course of labour may be unpredictable. Try to stay flexible as your plan may have to change - try to keep an open mind as your birth may not go exactly as planned.

**Q - What if complications occur and we need to get to the consultant led unit**

**A-** All midwives are experienced in identifying and dealing with problems. They will make an assessment and should your risk status change at any time during your antenatal care or during labour you will be transferred to the consultant unit

- **Having your baby at Home or Penrith Birth Centre**

Your midwife will monitor you and your baby throughout pregnancy and labour and will give you as much warning as possible should you require an urgent transfer to a consultant led unit. If it is that you or your baby requires more specialised care, an ambulance will take you to either the Cumberland Infirmary or West Cumberland Hospital, depending on your location as quickly as possible.

- **Having your baby at the Alongside Midwifery led Suite/Unit**

If a situation occurs that you require medical assessment and review you will be directly transferred to the Obstetric Unit (Labour Ward) by the midwife caring for you.

**Q – What is the likelihood of being transferred in labour and giving birth?**

**A-** The risk of being transferred while giving birth in the midwifery led unit/suite are no greater and no less than if you choose to have your baby at home. The midwives will care for you in exactly the same way as they would if you choose to birth at home. The national average transfer rate of women from midwifery led care to obstetric units is 9-13 % for women who have had one or more babies and 36-40 % for women who have never had a baby. (*Source – Birthplace in England Programme*).

**Q – Is having my baby at a free standing midwifery led unit as safe as a consultant unit/hospital birth?**

**A –** The birthplace study has said that Midwifery-led units were safe for the mother, and women who planned birth in a midwifery unit were significantly more likely to have a 'normal birth', i.e. without medical interventions. They were less likely to have their baby delivered by caesarean section, forceps or ventouse (vacuum).

Whilst the recent study cannot prove with certainty that there are no differences in safety between the birth settings, it found that the proportion of babies with an adverse outcome was similar in all settings. The study found that for women who did not have complications when they presented for care in labour, outcomes were almost identical in births planned in midwifery-led units and obstetric units.

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“Giving birth is generally very safe for healthy women with a straightforward (low-risk) pregnancy. ‘Adverse outcomes’ for babies are rare regardless of where mothers plan to give birth, occurring overall, in just 4 to 5 births in every 1,000. These adverse outcomes are potentially serious events, but thankfully they are rare” (*Birthplace*) (*Source – Birthplace in England Programme*).

## **Research findings to help you make your decision about where to give birth**

Birthplace is a programme of research designed to compare outcomes for births in different settings for healthy women with a straightforward pregnancy. (*Birthplace in England Programme*).

<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace>

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) has also recently released updated guidance on options for women in childbirth (childbirth care: care of healthy women and their babies during childbirth (December 2014):

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG190](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG190)

We hope that this leaflet has helped you make an informed decision about where you choose to have your baby.

## **Confidentiality**

**‘The Trust’s vision is to keep your information safe in our hands.’**

We promise to use your information fairly and legally, and in-line with local and national policies. You have a right to understand how your information is used and you can request a copy of the information we hold about you at any time.

For further information contact the [Subject Access Coordinators](#)  
[SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk) or [SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk)

## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the PALS team (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 01228 814008 between 10.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday or email [PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk).

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio the PALS team will be able to assist you (contact details above)

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