



NHS



your birth, your choice



Maternity services in east Kent are changing

Congratulations

You're pregnant, congratulations! We're here to support you and your family during this very special stage in your life.

During pregnancy, it's important to consider where you would like to give birth. We've put this booklet together to let you know about the kinds of pregnancy, birth and aftercare services available in east Kent to help you make the best choice for you and your baby.

When you give birth, it's important to feel relaxed. Some women feel safer in hospital and are reassured by having a range of services on hand to help them – or they would like an epidural for pain relief. Others feel that they would prefer to stay at home where they feel relaxed and in control.

You can choose from a midwife-led unit, a hospital birth, or a home birth (even if this is your first baby).

For some women, their choice may be limited by existing medical conditions (for example, diabetes), or by problems arising during pregnancy (for example, high blood pressure) or by problems occurring in a previous pregnancy (for example, caesarean section). In these cases your midwife or GP will be able to advise you about your options.

Remember, you don't need to make a decision immediately, and you can decide at any stage of your pregnancy where you want to give birth. Discuss any concerns you have with your midwife.

We look forward to caring for you and to welcoming your baby into the world.

Lindsey Stevens,
Head of Midwifery at East Kent Hospitals
University NHS Foundation Trust



Giving birth naturally

Choosing a natural childbirth, without the use of drugs or surgery, is choosing to trust your body and knowing that you already possess all the tools you need to give birth.

Giving birth naturally is better for you and for your baby as you will feel more in control of your body and more aware of the experience.

Babies who arrive naturally are generally more active and alert, which makes those first few hours of bonding easier, and these infants tend to take to breastfeeding more easily too.

Having a natural birth doesn't have to mean choosing pain – there are a wide variety of natural comfort measures and women often find the experience empowering. Talk to your midwife about what's right for you.

For example, some women find that birthing pools help them to manage their labour more comfortably and for many women help with pain relief. Pools are available at midwife-led units. If you choose to give birth at home you can hire a birthing pool.

Discuss your decision with your midwife.





The choices

Hospital (consultant-led unit)

Available at:

William Harvey Hospital (WHH),
Ashford

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother
Hospital (QEQM), Margate

Advantages

- ✓ You can choose any type of pain relief including an epidural
- ✓ Doctors, specialist equipment and staff support are available at all times
- ✓ If there are any complications, you won't have to move
- ✓ At William Harvey there is a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) which looks after premature babies from 24 weeks of pregnancy
- ✓ At QEQM, there is a Special Care Unit (SCU) for babies born after 28 weeks of pregnancy
- ✓ Your partner/ supporter is now able to visit for 24 hours on the postnatal ward at QEQM but we hope to roll the scheme out at the WHH on 24 September

Disadvantages

- ✗ You may require more pain relief during labour
- ✗ You are more likely to have an intravenous drip and electronic monitoring of the baby's heart-beat, which may restrict your movement during labour
- ✗ You are more likely to be cared for by a midwife you have not met before
- ✗ There are restrictions on visiting times
- ✗ You can't use a birthing pool

Midwife-led units

Available at:

Singleton MLU at the William Harvey Hospital, Ashford

St Peter's MLU at the QEQM Hospital, Margate

Our MLUs are located alongside traditional hospital labour wards. The facilities and care given during labour are provided by midwives only. You should have had a normal pregnancy and be fit and healthy to have your baby here.

Advantages

- ✓ The environment is less clinical than in hospital
- ✓ Birth pools are available

- ✓ Emergency transfers to the labour ward is quick and easy
- ✓ You can move around more during labour
- ✓ Partners / supporters are able to stay overnight

Disadvantages

- ✗ You must be fit and healthy and have had a normal pregnancy
- ✗ You can only remain in the unit for 24 hours
- ✗ You cannot have an epidural
- ✗ You are more likely to be cared for by a midwife you have not met before



Home birth

Advantages

- ✓ Women who have had both a home birth and a hospital birth say they much prefer a home birth
- ✓ You may feel more relaxed and in control when you are in comfortable and familiar surroundings
- ✓ A midwife is able to provide one-to-one care
- ✓ You are more likely to be cared for by a midwife you know
- ✓ You can eat and drink as you wish
- ✓ You can sleep in your own bed and use your own bathroom
- ✓ You are more likely to have a normal birth and need less drugs for pain relief
- ✓ You can move around more during labour

Disadvantages

- ✗ You cannot have an epidural
- ✗ There are no doctors immediately available
- ✗ If complications occur during labour or after the birth, you may have to transfer to hospital

If you are considering a home birth, discuss this with your partner and family, your midwife, and any parent support groups in the area. as usual for day services, which include antenatal and postnatal checks.



Useful numbers

- **Canterbury Maternity Unit** – 01227 783105
- **Dover Maternity Unit** – 01304 222523
- **QEQM Hospital, Margate** – 01843 292494
- **William Harvey Hospital, Ashford** – 01233 616124
- **Singleton MLU, Ashford** – 01233 651868
- **St Peter's MLU, Margate** – 01843 235100

For more information

East Kent Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust www.ekhuft.nhs.uk (click on pregnancy and childbirth)

National Childbirth Trust www.nct.org.uk or ring the helpline **0300 330 0700**

La Leche League for breastfeeding support www.laleche.org.uk

Infant feeding in east Kent www.ekbaby.nhs.uk

Remember if you have any questions or concerns speak to your GP or your midwife.