

# Mid and South Essex Maternity Services

## Personal Care Plan



## Introduction

Congratulations on your pregnancy! Are you aware of your choices throughout your pregnancy, during birth and once your baby has arrived?

This guide is for you to complete and ask questions throughout your pregnancy and following the birth of your baby. You may find it a useful to record your choices and preferences. Please share this with your midwife and any health professionals playing a part in your pregnancy.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your contact number:  
*(in case this plan gets lost!)* \_\_\_\_\_

Your due date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your community midwife team: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **What is a personal care plan?**

Personal care plans help you to explore, understand and record your individual choices for pregnancy, birth and early parenthood. Every woman and her family are different, and you should be aware of choices available to you.

The aim of this booklet is to help inform you of choices available to you, it is for you to complete and fill in as you wish. There are spaces for you to write questions and queries to ask your midwife when you meet.

There are different sections, to help guide you through your pregnancy. Please fill in each section at each stage of your pregnancy. By completing this, we hope it will empower you to make decisions about the care you receive.

## **Health and wellbeing in pregnancy**



Please access the NHS website for details on healthy eating and supplements we advise to take during your pregnancy:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/healthy-pregnancy-diet/>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/foods-to-avoid-pregnant/>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/pregnancy/healthy-eating-pregnancy/>



For most women we recommend light to moderate exercise when you are pregnant.

- Are you aware of the recommendations about exercise?
- Would you like to find out more?
- Do you have a condition that affects your ability to exercise and you would like more guidance from your maternity team?

For the health and wellbeing of you and your baby you are advised not to smoke, drink alcohol or use recreational drugs in your pregnancy.

- Are you aware of the advice around the consumption of alcohol, nicotine products and recreational/illegal drugs?
- Would you like more information? Or to talk to your midwife?

Please follow the link below for more information around smoking in pregnancy:

<https://saferpregnancy.org.uk/keeping-healthy-pregnancy/smoking-in-pregnancy>

Your thoughts and questions:

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## **Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing**

Expecting a baby can be joyful and exciting; however, it is also common for pregnant women to experience anxieties or worries.

When you found you were pregnant how did it make you feel?

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It is normal to feel scared/anxious/worried. Please follow the link below for more information around emotional wellbeing:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/mental-health-problems-pregnant/>

Thoughts you might like to discuss with your midwife or GP:

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Some woman may experience a more severe form of mental health problems like low mood, severe anxiety, obsessional behaviours and even psychosis. It is very important to talk about this with your GP or midwife.

Getting to know you baby during pregnancy helps to build strong a parental relationship, is good for your baby's development and supports emotional wellbeing.

- Did you know talking, singing or playing music to your unborn baby helps?
- You can gently massage your bump
- Practise yoga or hypnobirthing

There are lots of resources available online which you might wish to refer to, for ideas and support on relationship building with your baby:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/relationship-building-resources/building-a-happy-baby/>



There are also things you can do to enhance your emotional wellbeing, these include:

- Taking regular exercise, such as walking, swimming, pregnancy yoga
- Eating well
- Relaxation techniques – listening to music, meditation, breathing exercise.
- Taking time for yourself
- Talking to someone you can trust, friend, family, midwife, GP

Thoughts you may wish to discuss:

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There are many types of antenatal education available.

Most maternity units offer free NHS classes, where we discuss an overview of pregnancy and labour and infant feeding. Some units offer a hypnobirthing service (these may incur a charge).

Hypnobirthing is a complete antenatal programme focusing on a combination of education, self-hypnosis & deep relaxation to help achieve a more comfortable birth. It gives parents the tools they may need to minimise the fear-tension-pain cycle, resulting in shorter and more comfortable births.

If you are interested in the above, please speak to your midwife for more details on antenatal education and preparation for birth and parenthood.

The National Childbirth Trust also run classes, which can be found on this website:

<https://www.nct.org.uk/courses-and-workshops>





## **Personalised birth preferences**

A birth plan supports you and your birth partner to make informed decisions about your care in labour. Sharing your preferences with your midwife enables them to personalise the care they give you.

Are you aware of your choices of birth setting (home, birth centre and labour ward?)  
And do you know where you would prefer to give birth?

- Home
- Birth centre
- Labour ward
- Not sure, would you like to find out more?

Certain options may be offered for you based on your own health and pregnancy.

Your thoughts and questions:

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More information can also be found via this website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/where-can-i-give-birth/>

### **Birthing Partner(s)**

It is suggested that no more than 2 people act as your birth partner in labour at any one time.

Your birth partner(s) will be...

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Most hospitals are teaching centres with student midwives and student doctors. They work closely with their named midwife mentor and can provide you with care and support under supervision with your consent.

- Are you happy for a student to be present during your labour and birth?
- Would you prefer to wait and see?
- Would you like to find out more information?

Your thoughts:

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### **How would you like to give birth?**

Have you had a conversation with your midwife/doctor about how you would like to give birth? Most women will have a vaginal birth, however for some a caesarean birth may be suggested.

If you have a caesarean section, you are still able to choose the music you wish to listen to in theatre. Some doctors will ask if you would like the screen to be lowered to allow you to see your baby being born.

You and your partner can still have skin to skin in theatre – just ask the midwife caring for you and they will be able to help you achieve this.

Your thoughts about birth:

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### Induction and pain relief

Sometimes labour needs to be started artificially (instead of waiting for it to start naturally). This is known as induction of labour.

If you go over your due date by 12 days or if you have a medical reason, you may be offered an induction date.

Your thoughts around induction:

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Where you give birth may depend on your choice for pain relief. You can ask your midwife about the options available to you, these may include:

- Hypnobirthing
- Water
- TENS machine (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation)
- Gas and air (Entonox)
- Opioid injection
- Epidural
- I would prefer to wait and see

Your thoughts:

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During your labour and birth, you may wish to consider:

- Use of massage
- Walking and standing
- Different positions, including kneeling, squatting, on all fours, standing
- Using a bean bag/birth stool or support
- Having the lights dimmed
- Using a birthing ball
- Using the birthing pool
- Your own choice of music

There are many options available to you, in the birth setting that you may choose.

Please ask your midwife for more information.

Your thoughts:

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During labour it is advised that we monitor your baby's heartbeat.

- Did you know that we can listen with a handheld device?
- We can also continuously monitor using a cardiotocograph (CTG) machine

Your thoughts:

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During labour your midwife may suggest a vaginal examination to assess the progress of your labour.

- Are you aware of reasons why vaginal examinations are performed?
- Would you like to find out more?

Your thoughts:

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Research has shown that massaging your perineum from 34 weeks pregnant reduces the chance of damaging this area. Please ask your midwife about performing perineal massage.

**Did you know that your midwife applying a warm compress to the area, as your baby's head is born, can reduce the risk of tearing?**

### Third stage of labour

After your baby is born, the cord can be left to stop pulsating and can then be cut. Occasionally if there are any concerns for you or your baby then the cord may be clamped and cut quickly. Your placenta (afterbirth) can then be expelled, and this is also known as the third stage of labour.

There are 2 ways this can happen:

- Natural (physiological) third stage, where you can push the placenta out once it has separated and moved into the correct position
- An active third stage, where the cord is cut after a few minutes and you receive an injection of oxytocin to help with the birth of the placenta

You may also wish to consider whether you or your partner would like to cut the cord.

Your thoughts:

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### Skin to skin

Skin to skin contact is the perfect way to meet your baby immediately after birth. Skin to skin can help to regulate your baby's heart rate, breathing and temperature, and helps baby to feel calm and lays a foundation for strong mother-baby relationships. Skin to skin is an excellent way to get breastfeeding off to a good start. Skin to Skin contact is recommended for at least an hour, until after the first feed or for as long as you wish regardless of how you choose to feed your baby. If there are any reasons you cannot perform skin contact with your baby, your birth partner may be able to support you with this.

Did you know about skin to skin contact?

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**After your baby is born**

Whilst you do not need to make a decision yet about how you wish to feed your baby, what are your current thoughts on this?

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Your midwife will discuss with you the value of breastfeeding, and how to get breastfeeding off to a good start. They may be able to provide you with a copy of the “Mothers and Others” guide, which provides information on parenting and feeding your baby.

Visiting hours at your maternity unit may vary.

- Would you like more information about visiting times and who can visit you after birth?
- Would you like more information about private/amenity rooms on the postnatal ward?

Your thoughts:

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Thinking about after your birth:

- Have you thought about going home and the support that may be available to you after your birth? (It is worth thinking about people, family and friends who can help you at home)
- Are you aware of physical changes to expect after birth?
- Are you aware of postnatal pain relief?
- Are you aware of signs of infections and contact numbers?
- Do you know about pelvic floor exercises?
- Do you and your partner know about the importance of hand hygiene?

Your thoughts:

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Becoming a parent is known to be a time of great emotional change. Being aware of how you might feel after birth can help you to prepare.

- Are you aware of emotional and mental health changes that can be expected?
- Are you aware that in the first few months after giving birth there is an increased chance of having mental health problems like Postpartum Psychosis, post-natal depression, Obsessive Compulsive disorder and other anxieties?
- Do you also know that if you have suffered from mental illnesses in the past like Bipolar Affective disorder there is also an increased risk of a deterioration in mental health in the first year after giving birth?
- Do you know how to access support?
- Would you like to find out more?

Your thoughts:

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### **Caring for your baby**

There are several things to consider before you go home:

- Do you know that being responsive to your baby makes them feel safe and secure, and encourages brain development? It is not possible to spoil your baby by responding to them.
- Do you know how to tell if your baby is feeding well?
- Do you know the signs of an unwell baby? And who to contact if you are worried?
- Do you know about the changes in your baby's nappy?
- Do you know about safe sleeping practices?
- Do you know about jaundice?
- Do you know about the newborn blood spot screening test?
- Do you know about the umbilical cord and skin care?

Your thoughts:

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Once home you will see the community team who comprise of midwives, support workers and health visitors. Their contact details will be highlighted to you before you leave the hospital. They may visit you at your home, but you may also be asked to visit them in a postnatal clinic.

- Do you know about the postnatal care your hospital offer?
- Are you aware of contact details for the midwives?
- Do you know how to contact your health visitor?
- Do you know about your local children’s centres and the services they have to offer?

Other information that is important to know:

- You need to register your baby’s birth within six weeks.
- You need to register your baby with your GP.
- You need to book a GP appointment for 6-8 weeks after the birth for you and your baby.
- You need to discuss future pregnancy planning if you have suffered from mental illnesses in this pregnancy. Please talk to your GP about this.
- If advised by your midwife or doctor, you may need to arrange further tests.

Your thoughts and questions:

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You can keep this booklet after your baby is born, you may find it is a useful record of your choices and preferences, and it may help and support you in any future pregnancy.

### **Acknowledgements**

This booklet has been developed with the help of Healthwatch Essex Maternity Patient Partners and the Mid and South Essex MVP (Maternity Voices Partnership), using the North West London maternity services booklet as a reference.

Produced by Hannah Lawrence-Smith Ellert, SUHFT Matron and Cheryl Huggins, Volunteer and Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Essex.