

CHOOSING A MATERNITY UNIT QUESTIONS TO ASK

Type of care

- ✓ **What type of unit is this?** Labour ward or birth centre?
- ✓ **Can I get continuity of care?** Will I be able to see the same midwife during pregnancy, birth and after I've gone home?
- ✓ **How many midwives** am I likely to see during pregnancy and birth?



Antenatal classes

- ✓ **Can I do birth preparation classes** at this maternity unit?
- ✓ **Who teaches the classes?** Midwives or antenatal teachers?
- ✓ **Are the classes provided free of charge** and when do I need to book?



Pain relief & equipment

- ✓ **Will I be able to use self-help methods?** For example aromatherapy, hypnotherapy or TENS?
- ✓ **Which pain relief drug does this unit offer?** Pethidine, diamorphine or meptid?
- ✓ **Are epidurals available 24 hours a day** and does this unit have a dedicated anaesthetist?
- ✓ **What non-medical equipment is available?** For example birth ball, bean bags, cushions or floor mats?



Birth pools

- ✓ **How many birth pools are there?** Is there a birth pool in every delivery room?
- ✓ **How often are all birth pools occupied?**
- ✓ **Are all midwives in the unit trained** to attend to women labouring or giving birth in water?



Support in labour

- ✓ **Are all midwives trained** so that I can give birth in an upright position, or will I be encouraged to lie or sit on the bed?
- ✓ **How many birth partners can I have with me?**
- ✓ **Are female doctors always available?**



Vaginal birth after caesarean (VBAC)

- ✓ **Does this unit encourage women to have a VBAC** or will I automatically be offered another caesarean?
- ✓ **Is there a policy of continuous monitoring during VBAC** and will I be supported if I would like intermittent monitoring instead?
- ✓ **If I agree to be continuously monitored**, can it be arranged so that I can remain upright and mobile?
- ✓ **Will I be able to give birth in the birth centre** if I've had a previous caesarean?



Accessibility

- ✓ **Does the hospital provide an interpreting service** for women who would prefer to speak their own language?
- ✓ **Is there easy wheelchair access** to the delivery suite and the wards?
- ✓ **Does the hospital provide equipment** to help disabled women in labour?



After the birth

- ✓ **How long will I stay in the unit after the birth**, assuming there are no problems?
- ✓ **Will I be moved to a postnatal ward?** If so, how many women will be in the ward?
- ✓ **Can my partner stay overnight?**
- ✓ **What are the visiting hours for my partner**, family members and friends?
- ✓ **Will community midwives come for home visits** after I've come home, or will I have to go to a clinic?



Breastfeeding

- ✓ **Is this unit Baby Friendly accredited?**
- ✓ **Does his maternity unit employ a breastfeeding counsellor** who can help me if I'm having problems breastfeeding?

