

# Planning your birth experience

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## Birth plans and preferences

We work closely with Dorset Maternity Matters to ensure you have information on all aspects of giving birth. Your birth plans and preferences will be very individual. They will be based on your wishes and cultural preferences as well as any medical needs you or your baby may have. You can change your mind about your wishes for labour and birth at any time, even during labour. It is important to discuss your preferences with your midwife or obstetrician. They can answer questions you may have and support you to make an informed choice.

Your midwife will discuss your birth preferences with you at your 36-week antenatal appointment. Please ask if you have any questions about labour and birth before that. Your personal notes include information on personalised care plans and you can find more information on this at: [Your Personal Care Plans - Maternity Matters Dorset](#)

Whether you are planning a vaginal birth or caesarean birth, here are some useful links to review before your appointment:

Dorset Maternity Matters - [www.maternitymattersdorset.nhs.uk](http://www.maternitymattersdorset.nhs.uk)

Wessex Healthier Together [www.what0-18.nhs.uk](http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk)

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

## Choosing to have a caesarean birth

You may be thinking about birthing via a 'planned' caesarean birth. You may feel you want to birth your baby via a caesarean birth because you:

- have had a complicated vaginal birth in the past
- feel so afraid of birth you don't want to labour
- feel unable to cope with the pain associated with vaginal birth
- are concerned about tearing or having an assisted vaginal birth
- are anxious about giving birth, medical procedures or vaginal examinations

If any of these are the case then it is important to discuss this with your midwife as early as possible in your pregnancy. This will enable your midwife or an obstetrician to discuss your options with you and answer any questions you may have.

It is important to consider:

- the implications of a caesarean birth for you and your baby
- the advantages and disadvantages of a caesarean birth and the effect a caesarean birth may have on future births
- the advantages and disadvantages of a vaginal birth and the other options available to you
- what happens if you go into labour before the planned date of a caesarean birth

Your midwife can ensure you have the right support available to you to make an informed decision. This may include referral to:

- birth afterthoughts service
- birth choices clinic and obstetric clinic- in these clinics we can discuss your options to help you decide which is the right birth for you and your family

Wessex Healthier Together has also included a section on birth choices- you may want to review this information before meeting with your midwife or the obstetrician.

You may also find it useful to talk to other services such as Steps to Wellbeing or Maternity Counselling at University Hospitals Dorset.

You can self-refer to these:

- Steps to Wellbeing - call **0300 1231120**
- Maternity Counselling - email **Maternity.Counsellors@uhd.nhs.uk**

## Place of birth

When planning to give birth you may want to consider where you want to give birth - this may be at home, in our midwifery led unit (the Haven Birthing Suite) or the obstetric led unit at Poole Hospital.

There are more details on each birth place at Dorset Maternity Matters:

**<https://maternitymattersdorset.nhs.uk/labour/where/poole/>**

At present the Bournemouth Birth Centre is closed.

The Dorset Maternity Matters website details the options of care, pain relief available and the facilities available on each area. The home birth information includes considerations for home birth.

## Contact details

### Maternity Services

Telephone number **0300 019 2327** (there is an answerphone out of hours)

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