
Raising a concern about your maternity care

Information for fathers
and partners

Your experience matters

For many families, having a baby is a shared experience where fathers and partners play an important role in supporting communication, advocacy and safety during pregnancy, birth and after birth.

The safety and wishes of you and your family should be at the heart of all care, with professionals working in partnership with you for the safest outcome.

Unfortunately, not everyone receives that level of care despite the efforts of all concerned.

Sometimes pregnancy, birth or postnatal care do not go as expected. This can be distressing and have a lasting impact on women¹, babies, fathers and partners.

Fathers and partners can play an important role in care conversations, including in emergencies, by advocating for the mother and baby. But you may not always feel able, or be able, to do this in the moment.

This leaflet explains what you can expect from the midwives or nurses looking after you, where to turn to for support if you are worried about the care you received, and how to raise a concern about a midwife or nurse if needed.

¹ Please note that the term mother or woman has been used throughout this leaflet but we acknowledge not everyone uses or identifies with these terms.

What you can reasonably expect

When a woman is pregnant, a midwife will encourage support from fathers, partners or any other emotional support of the woman's choosing.

A midwife's role is to ensure they support and advocate for the woman and the newborn baby. They will listen and respond to the thoughts and wishes of the woman throughout the pregnancy, birth and postnatal care so that the care she receives meets her needs and to ensure the safety of both the mother and the baby.

As the woman's care provider, the midwife will respect the wishes of the woman unless there are physical or mental health reasons for them to seek counsel from the father, partner or person supporting the woman. This may include the involvement of another professional. It is part of the midwife's role to work with other medical professionals and escalate if there are concerns.

Fathers and partners can be vital in supporting midwives to advocate for the woman giving birth.



Who is the NMC and how can we help?

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the independent regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK and nursing associates in England. Our role is to protect the public and maintain confidence in the nursing and midwifery professions.

What we do

If you have concerns about the safety or care provided by a nurse, midwife, or nursing associate, we can investigate these concerns to help keep the public safe.

Choosing the right route for your concern

The NMC can only look into concerns about the care provided by a nurse, midwife, or nursing associate. If your concern is about the service overall this is usually best raised with the hospital or trust.

Raising a concern

If you are worried about the care you or your partner have received, you have every right to speak up. Raising a concern helps keep other families safe. Here are the steps you can follow – you can stop at any stage if things are put right.

1. **Speak to the person in charge at the time.** If you feel something isn't right, raise this with staff if you feel able to, so they can address your concern straight away.
2. **Speak to the hospital.** You can contact your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) (in England and Wales), Patient Advice and Support Service Scotland (PASS), Patient & Client Council (PCC). Hospitals also offer debriefing services where you can ask questions about your care.
3. **Make a formal NHS complaint.** Every trust and health board has a complaints procedure. Free NHS complaints advocacy can support you through it.
4. **Contact the NMC.** Call us on **020 3307 6802** if you are unsure or you are not satisfied with how your complaint has been handled. If you want to raise a concern you can fill in a form on our website: nmc.org.uk/concerns-nurses-midwives/raise-a-concern.
5. **Concern about the overall care, not an individual?** Contact the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in England, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) or The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) in Northern Ireland.

Support and resources

These are some of the UK organisations who offer information and practical help designed with fathers and partners in mind.

- **Birth Trauma Association** – for support for those who have been impacted by traumatic birth
- **PANDAS Foundation** – for perinatal mental health support
- **Dad Matters** – for perinatal peer support for dads, online and in person, through local Home-Start partnerships across the UK
- **Fatherhood Institute** – supporting both mothers and fathers as earners and carers
- **Parent-Infant Foundation** – connecting parents to organisations offering parent-infant relationship support
- **Tommy's** – practical advice on supporting your partner in labour, birth and the role you can play
- **Sands** – support for families who have suffered a pregnancy loss or death of a baby
- **Five X More** – support, empowerment and advocacy around issues affecting Black women's maternal health in the UK
- **Birthrights** – advice and information on legal rights during pregnancy and birth in the UK

-
- **The Lullaby Trust** – support to grieving families
 - **Louie's** – supporting families with hospitalised children
 - **Bliss** – support for families with babies born premature or sick
 - **Make Birth Better** – expert support to parents impacted by birth trauma
 - **Action against Medical Accidents (Avma)** – advice and support for people who have experienced avoidable harm in healthcare.

You may also find further support through your GP and local service groups.

Your mental health matters

Many fathers and partners quietly carry a lot of stress, worry or low mood and never mention it. This is common and help is available.

Speak to your GP, the midwife or health visitor caring for your family, or contact **PANDAS Foundation** for perinatal mental health support. From mental wellbeing skills for fathers and partners, to advice about speaking to a healthcare professional, there are a range of resources you can use. You do not have to wait until things feel unbearable to ask for help.

If you need urgent help for mental health, seek **NHS advice**.

For more information about how we look at concerns, see our website at **www.nmc.org.uk**.

This document will also be available in Welsh **[on our website](#)**. Other languages are available on request by emailing **communications@nmc-uk.org**.

Bydd fersiwn Gymraeg hefyd ar gael. Mae ieithoedd eraill ar gael ar gais drwy e-bostio **communications@nmc-uk.org**.

23 Portland Place,
London W1B 1PZ
+44 20 7637 7181
www.nmc.org.uk



The nursing and midwifery regulator for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland Registered charity in England and Wales (1091434) and in Scotland (SC038362).