CHOOSEING 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 BabyFriendly accredited?
- Does his maternity unit employ a breastfeeding counsellor who can help me if I’m having problems breastfeeding?