

The logo for 'Which?' is displayed in white text on a red square background.

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More information to help expectant mothers

[‘Which? Birth Choice’](#) launches to give expectant parents all the facts about where to give birth, after midwives say women would benefit from more information.

New Which? research finds that three-quarters (74%) of midwives say women would benefit from more information to help with choosing where to give birth. Half of mothers (49%) also said they knew nothing or not much about the different types of maternity units available to them and a third (34%) said the same about the amount of choice they had about where to give birth. A quarter (23%) knew nothing about the differences between units in their local area.

With the majority of women having a choice over where to have their baby -for example between giving birth in a hospital, birth centre or at home - it’s vital they can compare the options available to them.

The free-to-use [Which? Birth Choice](#) site - created in partnership with BirthChoiceUK and supported by the Royal College of Midwives - gives expectant mothers all the information they need to know in one place so they can plan the birth they want. It brings together all the facts about local maternity units and birth centres, and provides women with personalised results based on their preferences.

Which? Birth Choice will show expectant mums the most suitable options available in their local area, based on their age, if they are a first-time mum, and any health risks. They are able to compare units in detail based on information provided by the Heads of Midwifery, including information on the different pain relief available, whether there is access to a birthing pool, facilities for partners to stay overnight, and the cost of private rooms.

Sonia Sodha, Head of Public Services Policy at Which?, said:

“Choosing where to give birth is a deeply personal and extremely important decision so it is vital that expectant parents get as much information as possible to help them with this choice.

“But our research has shown many women aren’t aware of all their options. Which? Birth Choice will provide women with personalised results based on their preferences and individual circumstances to help them decide where to have their baby.”

Cathy Warwick, chief executive of the Royal College of Midwives, said:

“Women should be able to make the choice of where they give birth based on the best possible information. This website, along with discussions with their midwife, will go a long way towards helping them make an informed choice and to decide what is the best place for them to give birth.”



Minister for health and maternity Dr Dan Poulter said:

“There is now more choice available to women when having a baby than ever before. But the more information, the better, and any initiative that helps women to make an informed choice about where they give birth is a good thing. In addition to websites like this, the new Friends and Family Test is now being used across maternity units and will help to give mums-to-be a good idea of what other families thought of their care.

“Since 2010 we have seen huge improvements to maternity services right across the country. We have more midwives working in more midwife-led units, as well as record numbers of midwives in training. This is making a big difference to families, with more choice and a better environment where women can give birth.”

Notes to editors:

1. [Which? Birth Choice](#) is a free website, produced in partnership with BirthChoiceUK and supported by the Royal College of Midwives. It takes data from a number of sources, including a survey of Heads of Midwifery, carried out between October 2013 and January 2014, CQC, Unicef, Neonatal Data Assessment Unit and pulls in reviews direct from Patient Opinion. BirthChoiceUK have supplied statistics on the unit pages based on official birth and maternity statistics. Which? Birth Choice will also show Friends and Family scores for maternity, released today, in the near future.
2. Survey of midwives: Populus, on behalf of Which?, interviewed 101 midwives online between 4th and 17th July 2013.
3. Survey of new mothers: Populus, on behalf of Which?, interviewed 303 mothers who had given birth in the last 12 months, online between 12th and 21st July 2013. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.
4. According to the National Audit Office ‘Maternity Services in England’ (November 2013), 79% of women are within a 30-minute drive of both an obstetric unit and a midwifery led unit.
5. Which? has been assuring mums and dads that their baby products are safe for over 50 years. Which? Birth Choice will now help them feel assured they’ve made the best choice about the type of birth they want to have. To see our reviews of baby products, visit www.which.co.uk
6. The [Which? Consumer Rights](#) website has information and advice on what your rights are during birth and how to complain if you’re not happy with your care.
7. BirthChoiceUK has been providing information to help women choose where to give birth since 2001 and have represented maternity service users nationally. They are acknowledged experts in maternity data, working with a large range of professional and consumer maternity organisations and academic institutions. They retain a website for professionals at www.birthchoiceuk.com/Professionals.