AIMS For a better birth...

Booking a Homebirth

There is information about your right to a homebirth in our book AIMS Guide to Your Rights in Pregnancy & Birth (principal author Emma Ashworth.) You may also be interested in Why Home Birth Matters by Natalie Meddings. Both are available from the AIMS UK Shop

Your right to a Homebirth

The decision whether or not to have a homebirth rests with the mother, and no-one else. The decision is hers alone. Midwives, GPs or obstetricians have no authority to agree or deny anyone a homebirth, they are there to ADVISE. Whether or not you accept their advice is entirely up to you. Some women have been told that it is 'illegal' to give birth at home. This is untrue.

Article 8 of the Human Rights Act protects your right to birth where you choose. If you have made the decision to birth at home, you should be able to expect NHS care for the birth, but you do not have a right to support if there is a genuine emergency which makes this impossible. This does not mean that you can be **required** to birth in hospital, but that your Trust may not guarantee medical support if you decide to birth at home.

In order to justify an attempt to refuse a woman a homebirth some women are told that they are 'high-risk', for example, they may have had a previous caesarean section. If you are classed as 'high-risk' you can ask the doctor or midwife to put in writing precisely why s/he considers you to be so. It is not uncommon for women to be labelled as 'high-risk' as an excuse for urging a hospital birth and it is important to establish what the risks are perceived to be. However, even if a doctor has defined your pregnancy as 'high risk' you are still entitled to midwifery care and to have your baby at home if you wish.

You do not have to approach your GP in order to book your homebirth, you can write directly to the Director of Midwifery Services at your nearest maternity unit along the following lines:

Dear

I am expecting a baby on the ... and intend to give birth at home. I have carefully considered the risks of homebirth and compared them with the risks of hospital birth and I am not prepared to risk my, or my baby's health, by giving birth in hospital.

I would be grateful if you would arrange for my care to be provided by a midwife who is experienced and confident in assisting women to birth at home.

Yours sincerely

The Director of Midwifery has a responsibility to provide a midwife and if you have any problems making these arrangements do not battle alone, contact AIMS.