



Choice of Birthplace

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By Anne Glover

AIMS has a position paper on [Choice of Birthplace](#) which states that choice of place of birth is a fundamental human right protected under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights Act, 'the principle of autonomy'.

AIMS believes that every pregnant woman and person should be made aware of all their choices and respectfully supported by their care providers when making an informed decision on where to birth their baby. Choice is the key word here, and to be able to make choices, you need to know all your options.

AIMS does not promote any particular birthplace as being better than another, recognising that different birthplaces will be appropriate for different people depending on their circumstances, preferences and clinical needs. However, AIMS believes that everyone has the right to access any of the four birthplace options, no matter where they live, what Trust or Board they come under and whatever the current staff situation. This means that all Trusts/Boards should be making all the options available:

- Home setting
- Freestanding birth centre/midwife-led unit
- Alongside birth centre/midwife-led unit
- Obstetric unit/delivery suite

However, as the recent pandemic has demonstrated, even where options exist, restrictions can be placed at short notice leaving people with very limited choices. Even now, our [Helpline](#) continues to hear from people planning a home birth who have been told that the local home birth team has been suspended, due, for example, to staff sickness.

So we will continue to campaign and lobby for everyone to have the right to all four options throughout the UK. We ask you to share our position paper with maternity service users and MVP/MSLC^[1] user representatives, to check your Trust/Boards' policy on access to birth centres and support for homebirths, and to lobby for improvements. This way, everyone is made aware of their options and can confidently choose where to birth their baby.

If you are interested in joining our campaigning work, please drop us a line at campaigns@aims.org.uk

Author Bio: Anne is a well-known doula in Northern Ireland and is forever going on about maternity choices to anyone who will listen! She has recently been lobbying for all four birthing options to be available to all families in Northern Ireland.

^[1] Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) and Maternity Services Liaison Committees (MSLCs)