AIMS For a better birth...

Birth pools for sale in Mothercare and Boots

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For the first time two large high street retail outlets are to sell portable birth pools to women. The increased awareness of the benefits and availability of water for pain relief and birth will no doubt please many women who wish to use water during labour.

No pools are being offered in store, they are only available online and through catalogues. The range being offered is limited to comprehensive packages, so that there is little risk of women buying less than they need. In Mothercare, there is only one package on offer that has everything a woman needs, including a second liner for pre-birth trial runs or relaxation. Boots has been offering a range of options but will change that to just two packages in late August 2008.

If women want to pick and choose the elements they buy, they will be directed to The Good Birth Company or one of their specialist dealers who have the knowledge to advise them based on their own needs and circumstances.

Amy Mclean of The Good Birth Company said: 'We will keep this under review and certainly realise that if pools are offered in store, there will likely be a significant training requirement for front-line staff in stores.

'We do not expect a sudden surge of increased demand. Rather we expect this to add to the slowly building momentum in favour of increased availability of birthing pools for women in labour at home or in hospital. We are realistic that it takes time to change Trust budgets towards the increased midwifery staffing levels required for large increases in home water birth.'

The Good Birth Company now have over 40 NHS trusts using their pools both on their delivery suites and in the community teams.

'In our discussions with NHS Trust managers about offering increased access to birthing pools, we cover the training needs they may have. Many Trusts have internal expertise that they use for training before going live with their first pool on the unit. This is increasingly common in our experience,' Amy added.

The instructions all clearly point customers to The Good Birth Company for support. It is expected that some people will still go to the retailer first but are referred on to The Good Birth Company quickly if necessary. There are no plans to reduce their support capacity and they see this is as a vital part of their offering.

If you would like to read more about home waterbirth there is some really good information about the

different pools available on the home birth website www.homebirth.org.uk/waterchooseah.htm