

THE NHS CONSTITUTION

The NHS belongs to us all. It touches our lives at times of basic human need, when care and compassion are what matter most. Pregnancy is one of these times. So it is important that you know what you and your baby can expect from the NHS, and what is expected from you in return.



The NHS Constitution was launched on 21 January 2009. It brings together for the first time in one place what staff, patients and the public can expect from the NHS. It explains that by working together we can make the very best of finite resources to improve our health and well-being, to keep our minds and bodies well, to get better when we are ill, and when we cannot recover to stay as well as we can to the end of our lives. The Constitution reaffirms that everyone has a role to play in the success of the NHS.

As well as capturing what is important to the NHS (the principles and values that determine how the NHS should act and make decisions), the Constitution brings together a number of rights, pledges and responsibilities for staff and patients alike.

These rights, pledges and responsibilities are the result of extensive discussion and research with staff, patients and the public and they reflect what matters to them most.

Rights

The NHS Constitution sets out the legal rights of the public, patients and staff. Some of the rights that may be of interest to you are listed below:

- **You have the right** to receive NHS services free of charge, unless Parliament has sanctioned charges.
- **You have the right** to be treated with dignity and respect.
- **You have the right** to be treated with a professional standard of care.
- **You have the right** to be given information about your care.
- **You have the right** to privacy and confidentiality.
- **You have the right** to be involved in discussions and decisions about your care.
- **You have the right** to have any complaints you make properly investigated.



Pledges

The NHS Constitution sets out a number of pledges for the public, patients and staff. These are things that the **NHS is committed to achieving**. Some of the pledges that may be of interest to you are listed below:

- **The NHS commits** to make sure that it is easy to access health services.
- **The NHS commits** to inform you about the services that are available to you.
- **The NHS commits** to offer you information that helps you to take part in making decisions about your care.
- **The NHS commits** to work in partnership with you, your family, carers and representatives.
- **The NHS commits** to treat you with courtesy and to be supportive when you make a complaint.

Responsibilities

There are a number of things we can all do to help the NHS deliver quality services. These are set out as responsibilities in the NHS Constitution. Responsibilities are the things **we can all do to help the NHS work effectively**. You should always think about your responsibilities when you are receiving NHS services. You have nine responsibilities to keep in mind:

- Do what you can yourself to stay healthy and feel well.
- Register with a GP.
- Treat NHS staff and patients with respect.
- Give accurate information about yourself.
- Keep appointments, or let the NHS know when you cannot keep them.
- Follow the course of your treatment, or speak to someone if you feel you cannot.
- Take part in important public health immunisation programmes.
- Make sure people close to you know about your wishes for organ donation.
- Give feedback on your treatment and care.

The NHS Constitution sets out all of these rights and pledges, together with the principles and values, in more detail. The NHS Constitution Handbook contains further information.



Want to know more?

The **NHS Constitution Handbook** gives further information about the NHS Constitution and further advice on what to do if you are not happy with the service you receive. The **Statement of NHS Accountability** summarises how the NHS is structured and what the responsibilities of individual parts of the NHS are.

How do I get a copy of the NHS Constitution?

You can get copies of the NHS Constitution from libraries, doctors, dentists and town halls. You can also obtain a copy from:

Telephone:

0300 123 1002

Website:

www.orderline.dh.gov.uk

Email:

dh@prolog.uk.com

Or write to:

DH Publications Orderline

PO Box 777

London SE1 6XH

The NHS Constitution, NHS Constitution Handbook and the Statement of NHS Accountability are also available online at **www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/Constitution**

GLOSSARY OF USEFUL TERMS

TERM	MEANING
Albumin	A protein that can appear in your urine when you are pregnant. It can be a sign of an infection or pre-eclampsia. Your midwife will test your urine for albumin at your antenatal check-ups.
Amniocentesis	A test in which a thin needle is inserted into the uterus through the abdominal wall to take a sample of the fluid surrounding the baby. The fluid is then tested for certain chromosomal and genetic disorders. An amniocentesis is usually carried out between 15 and 18 weeks into your pregnancy. It may be used later in pregnancy to find out if your baby's lungs are mature.
Amniotic sac	The bag of fluid that surrounds and cushions your baby in the uterus. Before or during labour the sac breaks and the fluid drains out. This is called the 'waters breaking'.
Anaesthetics	Medicines that reduce or take away pain.
Antenatal	This literally means 'before birth' and refers to the whole of pregnancy, from conception to birth.
Baby blues	Feeling sad or mildly depressed a few days after your baby is born. The baby blues are very common – eight out of 10 new mothers feel like this. They can be caused by hormone changes, tiredness or discomfort and usually only last a week. More severe depression or anxiety that lasts longer than a week could be postnatal depression (see page 181).
Balanced diet	A diet that provides a good balance of nutrients.
Bereavement	The loss of a person. Coping with a bereavement can be particularly difficult if you are pregnant or have just had a baby, and even harder if it is your baby who has died.
Birth plan	A written record of what you would like to happen during pregnancy, labour and childbirth.
Breech birth	When a baby is born bottom rather than head first.
Caesarean section	An operation to deliver a baby by cutting through the mother's abdomen and then into her uterus. If you have a caesarean, you will be given an epidural or general anaesthetic.
Catheter	A thin, flexible, hollow plastic tube that can be used to perform various diagnostic and/or therapeutic procedures. Catheters may be used for the injection of fluids or medications into an area of the body or for drainage, such as from a surgical site. They are also frequently used to allow physicians to access the body with surgical instruments.
Cervix	The neck of the uterus. It is normally almost closed, with just a small opening through which blood passes during monthly periods. During labour, your cervix will dilate (open up) to let your baby move from your uterus into your vagina.
Chorionic villus sampling	A test to detect genetic disorders, particularly chromosomal disorders such as Down's syndrome. It is usually carried out at around 11 weeks.
Colostrum	The milk that your breasts produce during the first few days after your baby is born. It is very concentrated and full of antibodies to protect your baby against infections. Colostrum has a rich, creamy appearance and is sometimes quite yellow in colour.
Conception	The start of a pregnancy, when an egg (ovum) is fertilised and then moves down the fallopian tube to the uterus, where it attaches itself to the uterus lining.
Contraception <i>(also known as birth control)</i>	Contraception prevents or reduces your chances of getting pregnant. See page 135 for the different types of contraception that are available.
Cot death <i>(also known as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)</i>	The sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant during their sleep. For information on what you can do to avoid cot death, go to pages 129 and 140.

TERM	MEANING
Down's syndrome	A lifelong condition caused by an abnormal number of chromosomes. People with Down's syndrome have some degree of learning disability and an increased risk of some health problems. It also affects their physical growth and facial appearance. For more information about screening or tests for Down's syndrome, see page 50.
Ectopic pregnancy	An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilised egg begins to grow in the fallopian tube, cervix, ovaries or abdomen, not in the lining of the uterus. The fertilised egg cannot develop properly and has to be removed.
Embryo	The term used for the developing baby in the very early weeks up until eight weeks of pregnancy.
Entonox (also known as 'gas and air')	A form of pain relief offered during labour. It is a mixture of oxygen and another gas called nitrous oxide, which is breathed in through a mask or mouthpiece.
Epidural	An anaesthetic that numbs the lower half of the body. It can be very helpful for women who are having a long or particularly painful labour, or who are becoming very distressed. A thin catheter is placed between the vertebrae so that medicine can be delivered to the nerves in the spinal cord.
Episiotomy	A surgical incision made in the area between the vagina and anus (perineum). This is done during the last stages of labour and delivery to expand the opening of the vagina to prevent tearing during the birth of the baby.
Fallopian tubes	Branch-like tubes that lead from the ovaries to the uterus. Eggs are released from the ovaries into the fallopian tubes each month. Fertilisation takes place in one of the fallopian tubes.
Fertilisation	Fertilisation takes place if a man's sperm joins with a woman's egg and fertilises it in the fallopian tube.
Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)	A syndrome that can cause children to have restricted growth, heart defects and facial abnormalities as well as learning and behavioural disorders. It is caused if your baby is exposed to too much alcohol (via the placenta) when they are in the uterus.
Fetus	The term used for the developing baby from week eight of pregnancy onwards.
Folic acid	One of the B group of vitamins, which is found naturally in foods, including green leafy vegetables, fortified breakfast cereals and brown rice. Folic acid is important for pregnancy as it can help prevent birth defects known as neural tube defects. If you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, you should take a 400 microgram folic acid tablet every day until you are 12 weeks pregnant.
Fontanelle	A diamond-shaped patch on the front and top of a baby's head where the skull bones have not yet fused together. During birth, the fontanelle allows the bony plates of the skull to flex, so that the baby's head can pass through the birth canal. The bones usually fuse together and close over by a child's second birthday.
Formula milk	Cows' milk that has been processed and treated so that babies can digest it. It comes in powder or liquid form.
Fundus	The top of the uterus.
Haemoglobin (Hb)	Haemoglobin is found in red blood cells and carries oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body. Pregnant women need to produce more haemoglobin because they produce more blood. If you don't produce enough, you can become anaemic, which will make you feel very tired. Your haemoglobin levels are tested during antenatal check-ups.
Home birth	Giving birth at home, with care provided by a midwife. This is usually planned!

TERM	MEANING
Induction	A method of artificially or prematurely stimulating labour. A baby can be induced if they are getting too big, if the pregnancy has gone past the 42-week mark or if there are health risks to either the baby or the mother if the pregnancy continues.
Jaundice	The development of a yellow colour on a baby's skin and a yellowness in the whites of their eyes. It is caused by an excess of the pigment bilirubin in the blood. Jaundice is common in newborn babies and usually occurs approximately three days after birth. It can last for up to two weeks after birth or up to three weeks in premature babies. Severe jaundice can be treated by phototherapy, where a baby is placed under a very bright light. Babies who are jaundiced for longer than two weeks should be seen by a doctor as they may need urgent treatment. See page 149 for more information.
Lanugo	Very fine, soft hair that covers your baby at approximately 22 weeks. The lanugo disappears before birth.
Mastitis	An infection in the breasts caused by blocked milk ducts. Symptoms include hot and tender breasts and flu-like symptoms. See page 109 for how to treat it.
Maternity team care	A team of midwives, obstetricians, anaesthetists, neonatologists and other specialists who provide care to women who have complex pregnancies.
Meconium	The first stools that your baby passes. Meconium is made up of what a baby has ingested during their time in the uterus, including mucus and bile. It is sticky like tar and has no odour.
Midwifery care	Care for pregnant women where the midwife is the lead professional. Midwifery care is suitable for women who have an uncomplicated pregnancy.
Morning sickness/nausea	Morning sickness affects more than half of all pregnant women. Symptoms include nausea or feeling sick, as well as actually being sick. Morning sickness can occur at any time of the day, though it occurs most often in the morning because blood sugar levels are low after a night without food. The symptoms usually start after the first month of the pregnancy, peaking in weeks five to seven, and continuing until weeks 14 to 16.
Neonatal care	The care given to sick or premature babies. It takes place in a neonatal unit, which is specially designed and equipped to care for them.
Nuchal translucency scan	An ultrasound scan to help identify whether you are at risk of having a baby with Down's syndrome. The scan is carried out at 11 to 13 weeks of your pregnancy and measures the amount of the nuchal translucency, which is fluid behind the neck of the baby. Babies at risk of Down's syndrome tend to have a higher amount of fluid around their neck. The scan may also help confirm both the accuracy of the pregnancy dates and whether the baby has any other health problems.
Obstetric cholestasis	A potentially dangerous liver disorder. Symptoms include severe generalised itching without a rash, particularly in the last four months of pregnancy.
Obstetrician	A doctor specialising in the care of women during pregnancy and labour and after the birth.
Oedema	Another word for swelling, most often of the feet and hands. It is usually nothing to worry about, but if it gets worse suddenly it can be a sign of pre-eclampsia.
Ovulation	Ovulation occurs when an egg (ovum) is released from one of a woman's ovaries during her monthly menstrual cycle. If the egg is fertilised during this time, she will get pregnant. This is the time of the month when you are most likely to conceive.
Paediatrician	A doctor specialising in the care of babies and children.
Perinatal	The time shortly before and after the birth of a baby.

TERM	MEANING
Perinatal mental health	Mental health problems that develop during pregnancy and that can last for up to one year after childbirth.
Placenta	The organ attached to the lining of the uterus, which separates your baby's circulation from your circulation. Oxygen and food from your bloodstream are passed to your baby's bloodstream through the placenta and along the umbilical cord. Waste is also removed this way.
Postnatal	The period beginning immediately after the birth of a baby until they are about six weeks old.
Postnatal care	The professional care provided to you and your baby, from the birth until your baby is about six to eight weeks old. It usually involves home visits by midwives to check that both mother and baby are well. Classes may also be available.
Postnatal depression	Feelings of depression and hopelessness after the birth of a baby. These feelings are more severe than the 'baby blues' (see page 178). Postnatal depression affects one in 10 women and can be serious if left untreated. See page 82 for more information.
Pre-eclampsia	A condition that only occurs during pregnancy. Symptoms include high blood pressure, protein in urine, bad headaches, vision problems and the sudden swelling of the face, hands and feet. It usually develops after the 20th week of pregnancy but can occur earlier. Although most cases are mild and cause no trouble, it can be serious for both mother and baby. For more information, see page 67.
Premature birth	The birth of a baby before the standard period of pregnancy (37 weeks) is completed.
Premature labour	When labour starts before 37 weeks of pregnancy.
Rhesus disease	A woman who is rhesus negative (see below) can carry a baby who is rhesus positive if the baby's father is rhesus positive. This can cause problems in second or later pregnancies. If she gets pregnant with another rhesus positive baby, the immune response will be quicker and much greater. The antibodies produced by the mother can cross the placenta and attach to the D antigen on her baby's red blood cells. This can be harmful to the baby as it may result in a condition called haemolytic disease of the newborn, which can lead to anaemia and jaundice.
Rhesus negative	People with a certain blood type are known as rhesus negative. It means that they do not have a substance known as D antigen on the surface of their red blood cells. This can cause problems in second or later pregnancies (see above).
Rhesus positive	People with a certain blood type are known as rhesus positive. This means that they have a substance known as D antigen on the surface of their red blood cells.
Rubella (German measles)	A virus that can seriously affect unborn babies if the mother gets it during the early weeks of pregnancy. Most women have been immunised against rubella, so they are not at risk.
Ultrasound/scans	An imaging technique that uses high-frequency sound waves to create an image of your baby in the uterus. It shows your baby's body and organs as well as the surrounding tissues. Also called sonography, this test is widely used to estimate delivery dates and check that your developing baby is healthy and growing normally.
Umbilical cord	The cord that attaches the baby to the placenta, linking the baby and mother. Blood circulates through the cord, carrying oxygen and food to the baby and carrying waste away again.
Vernix	A sticky white coating that covers a baby when it is in the uterus. It mostly disappears before birth but there may be some left on your baby when they are born.
Vertebrae	Your spine is made up of 33 irregularly shaped bones called vertebrae. Each vertebra has a hole in the middle through which the spinal cord runs.

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

INFORMATION

Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

23rd floor
Euston Tower
286 Euston Road
London NW1 3JJ
08457 47 47 47 (helpline, Mon–Fri 8am–8pm;
Sat 9am–1pm)
www.acas.org.uk

Improves organisations and working life through better employment relations. Provides up-to-date information and independent advice on a wide range of employment relations issues, including the rights and issues around working parents – such as parental leave and pay and requests for flexible working. Provides high-quality training and works with employers and employees to solve problems and improve performance. An independent, publicly funded organisation; many of its services are free.

Action on Pre-eclampsia (APEC)

2C The Halfcroft
Syston
Leicestershire LE7 1LD
020 8427 4217 (helpline, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)
info@apec.org.uk
www.apec.org.uk

Helps to answer any questions about pre-eclampsia. Provides pre-eclampsia leaflets for the general public and ships leaflet orders to any health organisation that asks.

Active Birth Centre

25 Bickerton Road
London N19 5JT
020 7281 6760 (helpline, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)
info@activebirthcentre.com
www.activebirthcentre.com

Complete preparation for active and water birth, including yoga for pregnancy, courses, workshops, professional training, postnatal and baby massage classes and tuition. An empowering way to prepare for an optimal birth and early parenting. Has a complementary therapy clinic for pregnancy and the postnatal period which offers acupuncture, reflexology, cranial osteopathy, aromatherapy, homeopathy and nutritional guidance.

Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (AIMS)

5 Ann's Court
Grove Road
Surbiton
Surrey KT6 4BE
0300 365 0663 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10.30am–5.30pm)
helpline@aims.org.uk
www.aims.org.uk

Offers information, support and advice to parents about all aspects of maternity care, including parents' rights, the choices available, technological interventions, normal physiological childbirth and the complaints procedures.

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers (ABM)

PO Box 207
Bridgwater
Somerset TA6 7YT
0844 412 2949 (helpline, 9.30am–10.30pm)
counselling@abm.me.uk
www.abm.me.uk

Provides information and support for breastfeeding mothers and their families, and training for breastfeeding counsellors and mother (peer) supporters.

Caesarean Support Network

55 Cooil Drive
Douglas
Isle of Man IM2 2HF
01624 661269 (Mon–Fri after 6pm;
weekends)

Offers support and advice to women who have had or may need a caesarean delivery. The Network can also offer advice and support to women who wish to have a vaginal delivery with future pregnancies. They have a directory of support groups and contacts.

Child Law Advice Line

Children's Legal Centre
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
Essex C04 3SQ
0808 802 0008 (freephone, Mon–Fri
9am–5pm)
clc@essex.ac.uk
www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Ensures that parents, carers and professionals can get accurate information on child law and access the support and services to which they are entitled.

Citizens Advice

Myddelton House
115–123 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LZ
020 7833 2181 (administration and
information on local Citizens Advice
Bureaux only; no advice given)
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Online advice and information services. Get help online or find your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Cry-sis

BM Cry-sis
London WC1N 3XX
0845 122 8669
(helpline, 9am–10pm seven days a week)
info@cry-sis.org.uk
www.cry-sis.org.uk

Offers non-medical, emotional support for families with excessively crying, sleepless and demanding babies.

Diabetes UK

Macleod House
10 Parkway
London NW1 7AA
020 7424 1000 (helpline, 9am–5pm)
0845 120 2960 (careline)
info@diabetes.org.uk
www.diabetes.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Freepost RRL1–GHUX–CTRX
Arndale House
Arndale Centre
Manchester M4 3AQ
0845 604 6610 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)
0845 604 6620 (textphone)
info@equalityhumanrights.com
www.equalityhumanrights.com

The helpline provides information and guidance on discrimination and human rights issues. All helpline staff have been specially trained to provide this service.

Family Action

501–505 Kingsland Road
London E8 4AU
020 7254 6251
www.family-action.org.uk

Tackles some of the most complex and difficult issues facing families today, including domestic abuse, mental health problems, learning disabilities and severe financial hardship. Works with whole families to help them find solutions to problems, no matter how difficult, so that they become safer, stronger and more optimistic about their future.

Family Rights Group

The Print House
18 Ashwin Street
London E8 3DL
0808 801 0366 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–3.30pm)
Textphone: dial 18001 then freephone
number
advice@frg.org.uk
www.frg.org.uk

Support for parents and other family members whose children are involved with or need social care services.

Independent Midwives UK

PO Box 539
Abingdon OX14 9DF
0845 4600 105 (local rate)
information@independentmidwives.org.uk
www.independentmidwives.org.uk

Free advice given to women thinking about a home birth. Members offer woman-centred pregnancy, birth and postnatal midwifery to women who book with them, mostly for home births. Fees vary. See website to find local midwives.

Infertility Network UK

Charter House
43 St Leonards Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex TN40 1JA
0800 008 7464
www.infertilitynetworkuk.com

Provides a voice for those with fertility problems. Works to improve awareness and access to treatment.

Institute for Complementary and Natural Medicine (ICNM)

Can-Mezzanine
32–36 Loman Street
London SE1 0EH
020 7922 7980 (Mon–Fri 10am–4pm)
info@icnm.org.uk
www.icnm.org.uk

Can provide the public with lists of members of the British Register of Complementary Practitioners, a professional register of practitioners and therapists who have completed a recognised course and are insured. (Always check with your GP/midwife before using a complementary discipline.)

La Leche League (Great Britain)

PO Box 29
West Bridgford
Nottingham NG2 7NP
0845 120 2918 (helpline)
www.laleche.org.uk

An international, non-profit, non-sectarian organisation which, for over 50 years, has been dedicated to providing education, information and mother-to-mother support and encouragement to women who want to breastfeed. LLL Leaders are mothers who have themselves breastfed for 12 months or longer and have undertaken extensive training to provide telephone counselling and email support, and to run local group meetings.

Life

1 Mill Street
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire CV31 1ES
0800 915 4600 (helpline)
info@lifecharity.org.uk
www.lifecharity.org.uk

Offers counselling and support for men and women in a crisis pregnancy or experiencing difficulties after an abortion, adoption, ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage or stillbirth. Also provides accommodation for homeless and unsupported mothers.

Multiple Births Foundation

Hammersmith House, Level 4
Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital
Du Cane Road
London W12 0HS
020 8383 3519 (helpline, 9am–4pm)
info@multiplebirths.org.uk
www.multiplebirths.org.uk

Offers specialised support to parents of twins, triplets and higher multiple births, and gives relevant advice and training to the medical, educational and other professional groups which are concerned with them.

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

Alexandra House
Oldham Terrace
London W3 6NH
0300 330 0770 (enquiry line,
Mon–Thu 9am–5pm; Fri 9am–4pm)
0300 330 0772 (pregnancy and
birth line, Mon–Fri 10am–8pm)
0300 330 0771 (breastfeeding line,
8am–10pm seven days a week)
enquiries@nct.org.uk
www.nct.org.uk

Supports 1 million mums and dads every year through helplines, courses and a network of local support. With evidence-based information on pregnancy, birth and early parenthood, it can provide support from when you first discover you are pregnant to when your baby turns 2. Visit the website for information on becoming a parent or to find your nearest NCT group.

NHS Direct

0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Provides a 24-hour, 365 days a year, nurse-led health advice and information service, online and over the telephone.

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) (now incorporating ChildLine)

Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
0808 800 5000 (24-hour national helpline)
0800 056 0566 (textphone)
help@nspcc.org.uk
www.nspcc.org.uk

ChildLine is a safe place where children and young people can share their worries with a trained counsellor. Children and young people can call confidentially on 0800 1111 to find out more about how to seek help, or visit the website www.childline.org.uk. The NSPCC's helpline provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse. It also offers a bilingual Welsh helpline and an Asian helpline in five Asian languages.

Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS)

www.pals.nhs.uk
Available in every NHS trust, PALS provide information and advice about NHS and health-related services to patients, carers, families and the public. Staff can also help to resolve problems and concerns relating to health services through liaison and negotiation. Feeds back to trusts about problems experienced by those using services and about gaps in services, and helps make changes which benefit patients and carers. For more details, contact the local NHS trust or see the website.

Patients Association

PO Box 935
Harrow
Middlesex HA1 3YJ
0845 608 4455 (helpline, Mon–Fri 10am–4pm)
helpline@patients-association.com
www.patients-association.com

A wide variety of helpful healthcare information on the website as well as ways for patients to make their views known about services. Sign up as an e-member and take part in patient surveys.

Relate (National Marriage Guidance)

Relate Central Office
Premier House
Carolina Court
Lakeside
Doncaster DN4 5RA
0300 100 1234
www.relate.org.uk

Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support, face-to-face, by phone and through its website.

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)

27 Sussex Place
Regent's Park
London NW1 4RG
020 7772 6200
library@rcog.org.uk
www.rcog.org.uk

Samaritans

PO Box 9090
Stirling FK8 2SA
0845 790 9090
www.samaritans.org

A confidential emotional support service for anyone in the UK and Ireland. The service is available 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that may lead to suicide.

Shelter

88 Old Street
London EC1V 9HU
0808 800 4444
info@shelter.org.uk
www.shelter.org.uk

Helps more than 170,000 people a year to fight for their rights, get back on their feet, and find and keep a home. Also tackles the root causes of bad housing, by campaigning for new laws, policies and solutions.

ADDICTIVE DRUGS**Narcotics Anonymous**

0845 373 3366 (helpline)
ukso@ukna.org
www.ukna.org

A voluntary organisation. Membership is open to anyone with a drug problem seeking help, regardless of what drug or combination of drugs has been used. It is a completely anonymous, non-religious service, encouraging each member to cultivate an individual understanding, religious or not, of a 'spiritual awakening'. There are no fees for membership. The primary service provided is local weekly self-governing meetings.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol Concern

64 Leman Street
London E1 8EU
020 7264 0510
contact@alcoholconcern.org.uk
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

Does not operate a helpline nor provide actual services to individuals with alcohol problems; for further help and advice contact Drinkline on 0800 917 8282 (freephone). Use the services directory to find an alcohol advice or counselling service in your area. All information enquiries should be submitted by email. Please give a brief outline of the information enquiry, your telephone number and full address. A member of the team will get back to you within 10 working days.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

General Service Office
PO Box 1
10 Toft Green
York YO1 7NJ
01904 644026
0845 769 7555 (helpline)

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
Has over 4,000 groups throughout the UK, which are designed to help those with a serious alcohol problem. Through mutual support, sufferers assist one another in coping with their problem. There are no fees for membership and anonymity is carefully preserved.

Drinkaware Trust

7–10 Chandos Street
London W1G 9DG
020 7307 7450
www.drinkaware.co.uk

Provides consumers with information to make informed decisions about the effects of alcohol on their lives and lifestyles. Its public education programmes, grants, expert information and resources help to create awareness and effect positive change.

Drinkline

0800 917 8282 (Mon–Fri 9am–11pm)
Freephone helpline offering free, confidential information and advice on alcohol problems, support and direction to treatment services.

CHILDCARE

Daycare Trust

21 St George's Road
London SE1 6ES
0845 872 6251 (Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 10am–1pm and 2pm–5pm; Wed 2pm–5pm)
info@daycaretrust.org.uk
www.daycaretrust.org.uk

Provides information and support to parents and carers about childcare and paying for childcare.

Families Information Service Helpline

0800 234 6346
www.direct.gov.uk

National Childminding Association (NCMA)

Royal Court
81 Tweedy Road
Bromley
Kent BR1 1TG
0800 169 4486 (information line)
0845 880 0044 (9am–5pm)
info@ncma.org.uk
www.ncma.org.uk

Charity and membership organisation supporting home-based childcarers in England and Wales. Works in partnership with government and other childcare organisations to ensure that registered childminders, over-7s childminders and nannies have access to services, training, information and support.

Pre-school Learning Alliance

The Fitzpatrick Building
188 York Way
London N7 9AD
020 7697 2500
www.pre-school.org.uk

Delivers a full range of high-quality childcare services for parents. As the largest voluntary sector provider of childcare services, it works closely with families to offer more choice, flexibility and affordability to ensure that their requirements are met.

COPING ALONE

Meet A Mum Association (MAMA)

54 Lillington Road
Radstock BA3 3NR
0845 120 3746 (helpline, Mon–Fri 7pm–10pm)
www.mama.co.uk

Support for mothers suffering from postnatal depression or who feel lonely and isolated. It will try to put you in touch with another mother who has experienced similar problems, or with a group of mothers locally, or help you to find ways of meeting people.

One Parent Families/Gingerbread

255 Kentish Town Road
London NW5 2LX
0800 018 5026 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm;
Wed extended opening to 8pm)
www.gingerbread.org.uk

Charity for single parent families. It offers a range of support services direct to single parents, including a telephone helpline, publications, training programmes and a membership scheme, and campaigns on single parents' behalf.

Parentline Plus

520 Highgate Studios
Highgate Road
Kentish Town
London NW5 1TL
0808 800 2222 (24-hour helpline)
0800 783 6783 (textphone)
parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Charity providing support to parents. Gives you the support you need, on any issue, when you want it and in a way to suit you.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND RAPE

Rape Crisis

c/o WRSAC
PO Box 39
Bodmin
Cornwall PL31 1XF
info@rapecrisis.org.uk
www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Supports the work of rape crisis centres nationally and acts as a referral service for women seeking advice and/or support around issues of rape or sexual abuse. Find the nearest Rape Crisis Centre on the website, or email for more information.

Refuge

4th Floor, International House
1 St Katharine's Way
London E1W 1UN
0808 2000 247 (24-hour freephone helpline)
www.refuge.org.uk

The National Domestic Violence Helpline is run in partnership between Refuge and Women's Aid. Provides emergency accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Women's Aid Federation of England

Head Office
PO Box 391
Bristol BS99 7WS
0808 2000 247 (24-hour freephone helpline)
helpline@womensaid.org.uk
www.womensaid.org.uk

The National Domestic Violence Helpline is run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. Provides help, information and support for women and children experiencing domestic violence, or for their friends and families calling on their behalf.

FAMILY PLANNING

Brook

421 Highgate Studios
53–79 Highgate Road
London NW5 1TL
0808 802 1234 (helpline, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)
www.brook.org.uk

Provides free and confidential sexual health information, contraception, pregnancy testing, advice and counselling, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and outreach and education work.

FPA (Family Planning Association)

50 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8QU
0845 122 8690 (helpline)
www.fpa.org.uk

The UK's leading sexual health charity, enabling people in the UK to make informed choices about sex and to enjoy sexual health.

Marie Stopes International**Head Office**

1 Conway Street
London W1T 6LP
0845 300 80 90 (24-hour information
and appointments)
services@mariestopes.org.uk
www.mariestopes.org.uk

Provides support for women with an unplanned pregnancy and for those seeking abortion services. Nine clinics nationwide, with no wait for an appointment. Counselling services, abortion pill and surgical abortion available. NHS and private.

HEPATITIS**British Liver Trust**

2 Southampton Road
Ringwood BH24 1HY
0800 652 7330 (helpline, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)
info@britishlivertrust.org.uk
www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

National liver disease charity for adults with all forms of liver disease. It is dependent on voluntary donations from individuals, companies, charitable trusts and legacies. It aims to reduce the incidence of liver disease, and to help everyone affected by it, through the provision of information, support and research. Also provides a helpline providing medically equipped telephone support for patients and their carers, encourages and supports local liver support groups for patients and provides funding for research into liver disease.

Hep C Awareness

0800 451 451 (helpline, Mon–Fri 7am–11pm)
hep@nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk/hepatitis

The helpline is an information, advice and referral service for callers concerned about hepatitis C. The line deals with avoidance, testing and treatment enquiries and signposts individuals to local services.

HIV AND AIDS**Positively Women**

347–349 City Road
London EC1V 1LR
020 7713 0222 (helpline, Mon–Fri 10am–1pm
and 2pm–4pm)
info@positivelywomen.org.uk
www.positivelywomen.org.uk

Women who are living with HIV answer the helpline, and will ring you back free of charge.

Sexual Health Line

0800 567 123 (24 hours a day, seven days
a week)

Free and confidential telephone helpline advice about HIV, AIDS, sexual health, sexually transmitted infections, contraception, local services, clinics and support services.

ILLNESS AND DISABILITY**Action for Sick Children**

Unit 6, High Lane Business Court
Rear of 32 Buxton Road
High Lane
Stockport SK6 8BH
0800 074 4519 (Mon–Fri 9am–5.30pm)
enquiries@actionforsickchildren.org
www.actionforsickchildren.org

Promotes equality of healthcare services for children in hospital, at home and in the community. Gives information and support to parents and carers with a problem or query regarding their child's healthcare, from how to register your child with a GP or a dentist to what to expect when they need to go into hospital.

Assist UK (Disability Living Centres)

Redbank House
4 St Chad's Street
Cheetham
Manchester M8 8QA
0870 770 2866
0870 770 5813 (textphone)
general.info@assist-uk.org
www.assist-uk.org

Leads a UK-wide network of centres that introduce people to products and solutions which make life easier and safer, creating greater choice and control.

Bliss

9 Holyrood Street
London Bridge
London SE1 2EL
0500 618 140 (helpline, Mon–Fri 10am–10pm)
enquiries@bliss.org.uk
www.bliss.org.uk

UK charity dedicated to ensuring that premature and sick babies survive and go on to have the best possible quality of life. Provides practical and emotional support to families during an extremely difficult time, so that they can give the best care to their babies. Its specialist study days and training support doctors and nurses to develop their skills and it funds research to improve the care of all sick and premature babies.

Contact a Family

209–211 City Road
London EC1V 1JN
0808 808 3555 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–4pm and Mon 5.30pm–7.30pm)
0808 808 3556 (textphone)
info@cafamilly.org.uk
www.cafamilly.org.uk

UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to parents of all disabled children, no matter what their condition or diagnosis. Brings parents of children with the same condition together through support groups and a one-to-one linking service.

Disability, Pregnancy and Parenthood International (DPPI)

National Centre for Disabled Parents
Unit F9, 89–93 Fonthill Road
London N4 3JH
0800 018 4730
0800 018 9949 (textphone)
info@dppi.org.uk
www.dppi.org.uk

Provides information, awareness and support for disabled parents/parents to be and those who support them, including those with a physical or sensory impairment, deaf parents, parents with learning difficulties or long-term illness, or those dealing with mental distress.

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

380–384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
0845 130 9177 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–4pm)
020 7432 8009 (textphone)
advice@dlf.org.uk
www.dlf.org.uk

A national charity that provides free, impartial advice about all types of daily living equipment for disabled adults and children, older people, their carers and families.

Genetic Interest Group (GIG)

Unit 4D, Leroy House
436 Essex Road
London N1 3QP
020 7704 3141 (9am–5pm)
mail@gig.org.uk
www.gig.org.uk

A national alliance of patient organisations with a membership of over 130 charities which support children, families and individuals affected by genetic disorders.

Group B Strep Support

PO Box 203
Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 1GF
01444 416176 (helpline, Mon–Fri
9.30am–3pm)
info@gbss.org.uk
www.gbss.org.uk

A national charity providing information materials to health professionals and individuals on how to prevent most group B Streptococcal infection in newborn babies.

Mind (National Association for Mental Health)

PO Box 277
Manchester M60 3XN
0845 766 0163 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; BT
textdirect users add the prefix 18001)
www.mind.org.uk

Help for people experiencing mental distress. The information line offers confidential help and information.

Newlife Foundation for Disabled Children

Newlife Centre
Hemlock Way
Cannock
Staffordshire WS11 7GF
0800 902 0095 (helpline, Mon–Fri
9.30am–5pm)
info@newlifecharity.co.uk
www.newlifecharity.co.uk

Action to help disabled and terminally ill children in the UK. Provides equipment to help individual children, nurse-led support services, pioneering medical research, awareness and campaigning.

Phab

Summit House
50 Wandle Road
Croydon
Surrey CR0 1DF
020 8667 9443
info@phab.org.uk
www.phab.org.uk

A national charity dedicated to promoting the integration of people with and without physical disabilities, at all levels of society.

YoungMinds

48–50 St John Street
London EC1M 4DG
0808 802 5544
ymenquiries@youngminds.org.uk
www.youngminds.org.uk

A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people under 25 by giving advice, training, campaigning and distributing publications.

LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC)

73 Charlotte Street
London W1T 4PN
020 7631 0285 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–5.30pm)
info@arc-uk.org
www.arc-uk.org

Non-directive support and information for parents throughout antenatal testing, especially when a serious abnormality has been diagnosed and a choice has to be made about the continuation or ending of the pregnancy. Ongoing support given to parents via publications, a helpline, parent contacts, email groups, parents' meetings and newsletters. Support is offered to health professionals by way of training, conferences and publications.

Child Death Helpline

York House
37 Queen Square
London WC1N 3BH
0800 282 986 (Mon, Thu and Fri
10am–1pm; Tue and Wed 10am–4pm;
every evening 7pm–10pm)
contact@childdeathhelpline.org
www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age, from pre-birth to adult, under any circumstances, however recently or long ago. Staffed by trained volunteers, all of whom are bereaved parents.

Compassionate Friends

53 North Street
Bristol BS3 1EN
0845 123 2304 (helpline, 10am–4pm
and 6.30pm–10.30pm)
helpline@tcf.org.uk
www.tcf.org.uk

An organisation of bereaved parents and their families that offers understanding, support and encouragement to others after the death of a child or children. Also offers support, advice and information to other relatives, friends and professionals who are helping the family.

Cruse Bereavement Care

PO Box 800
Richmond
Surrey TW9 1RG
0808 808 1677 (young person's helpline)
0844 477 9400 (Day by Day helpline,
Mon–Fri 9.30am–5pm)
helpline@cruse.org.uk
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

A nationwide service providing emotional support, counselling and information to anyone bereaved by death, regardless of age, race or belief. Also provides information on local groups.

Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (Cot Death Research and Support)

11 Belgrave Road
London SW1V 1RB
020 7802 3200
0808 802 6868 (helpline, Mon–Fri
9am–11pm; Sat–Sun 6pm–11pm)
helpline@fsid.org.uk
www.fsid.org.uk

Charity working to prevent sudden deaths and promote health. It funds research, supports bereaved families and promotes safe baby care advice.

Miscarriage Association

c/o Clayton Hospital
Northgate
Wakefield
West Yorkshire WF1 3JS
01924 200799 (helpline, Mon–Fri 9am–4pm)
info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
Information, advice and support for women who have had, or who are having, a miscarriage. Local contacts and groups.

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (Sands)

28 Portland Place
London W1B 1LY
020 7436 5881 (helpline)
support@uk-sands.org
www.uk-sands.org
Supports anyone affected by the death of a baby through a network of support groups run by bereaved parents throughout the UK, a telephone helpline and support literature.

SMOKING

NHS Smoking Helpline

0800 022 4 332
www.gosmokefree.co.uk
Counsellors offer confidential help and advice about every stage of quitting.

NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline

0800 169 9 169 (12pm–9pm)
www.gosmokefree.co.uk
Trained advisers are available to answer any questions you have about smoking during pregnancy or about the free services available to help you quit.

NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline (Bengali)

0800 169 0 885

NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline (Gujarati)

0800 169 0 884

NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline (Hindi)

0800 169 0 883

NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline (Punjabi)

0800 169 0 882

NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline (Urdu)

0800 169 0 881

SPECIALISED ORGANISATIONS

Association for Post-Natal Illness (APNI)

145 Dawes Road
Fulham
London SW6 7EB
020 7386 0868 (Mon–Fri 10am–2pm)
0808 800 2222 (Parentline 24-hour helpline)
www.apni.org
Network of telephone and postal volunteers who have experienced postnatal illness, offering information, support and encouragement.

Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH)

ASBAH House
42 Park Road
Peterborough PE1 2UQ
0845 450 7755 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–4pm)
helpline@asbah.org
www.asbah.org

Voluntary sector organisation providing information and advice about spina bifida and hydrocephalus in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

British Thyroid Foundation

2nd Floor, 3 Devonshire Place
Harrogate
North Yorkshire HG1 4AA
01423 709707
01423 709448
www.btf-thyroid.org
Provides support and information to people with thyroid disorders through literature, newsletters and information events.

Child Growth Foundation

2 Mayfield Avenue
Chiswick
London W4 1PW
020 8995 0257
info@childgrowthfoundation.org
www.childgrowthfoundation.org

Creates awareness of child growth disorders.

Cleft Lip and Palate Association (CLAPA)

First Floor, Green Man Tower
332b Goswell Road
London EC1V 7LQ
020 7833 4883
info@clapa.com
www.clapa.com

Offers and provides support to patients, their family and friends, health professionals and anyone affected by a cleft lip and/or a cleft palate.

Climb (Children Living with Inherited Metabolic Diseases)

Climb Building
176 Nantwich Road
Crewe CW2 6BG
0800 652 3181 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–4pm)
0845 241 2172 (enquiries)
info.svcs@climb.org.uk
www.climb.org.uk

Supports families and professionals, with information on over 700 metabolic diseases.

Cystic Fibrosis Trust

11 London Road
Bromley
Kent BR1 1BY
020 8464 7211 (switchboard)
0845 859 1000 (helpline, 9am–5pm)
enquiries@cftrust.org.uk
www.cftrust.org.uk

Information and support for parents of children with cystic fibrosis and for people worried about the possibility of passing on the illness.

Down Syndrome Education International

The Sarah Duffen Centre
Belmont Street
Southsea PO5 1NA
023 9285 5330 (helpline, Mon–Fri
9am–5pm)
enquiries@downsed.org
adviceline@downsed.org
www.downsed.org

Helps people with Down's syndrome to achieve more in all areas of their development, by informing progress through research and education. Delivers information and services to families to help them provide the best care and support for their children with Down's syndrome.

Haemophilia Society

First Floor, Petersham House
57a Hatton Garden
London EC1N 8JG
0800 018 6068 (helpline, Mon–Fri
10am–4pm)
info@haemophilia.org.uk
www.haemophilia.org.uk

Information, advice and practical help for families affected by haemophilia and other bleeding disorders. Some local groups.

Jennifer Trust for Spinal Muscular Atrophy

Elta House
Birmingham Road
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire CV37 0AQ
0800 975 3100 (helpline, 9am–5pm)
jennifer@jtsma.org.uk
www.jtsma.org.uk

The only charity in the UK dedicated to both supporting people affected by spinal muscular atrophy and investing in essential research.

Meningitis Research Foundation

Midland Way
Thornbury
Bristol BS25 2BS
08088 00 33 44 (24-hour helpline)
info@meningitis.org
www.meningitis.org

Promotes education and awareness to reduce death and disability from meningitis and septicaemia, and supports people affected by these diseases. Funds research to prevent the diseases, and to improve survival rates and outcomes.

Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

61 Southwark Street
London SE1 0HL
0800 652 6352 (helpline, Mon–Fri
9am–5pm)
020 7803 4800
info@muscular-dystrophy.org
www.muscular-dystrophy.org

Provides support, advice and information for people with muscle disease and their families and carers.

National Society for Phenylketonuria (NSPKU)

PO Box 26642
London N14 4ZF
020 8364 3010 (helpline)
020 7099 7431 (recorded information line)
info@nspku.org
www.nspku.org

Help and support for people with phenylketonuria, their families and carers.

Pelvic Partnership

26 Manor Green
Harwell
Oxon OX11 0DQ
01235 820921 (helpline)
support@pelvicpartnership.org.uk
www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk

Provides information and advice about the management of pelvic girdle pain (PGP), formerly known as symphysis pubis dysfunction (SPD), to women, their families and carers, including healthcare professionals. It produces written leaflets which are sent to all callers. The helpline and email support are staffed by volunteers who all have personal experience of PGP. PGP is a very treatable condition if women access care early, and the focus is to support women to do this early in their pregnancy, as well as supporting those with more long-term problems. Aims to raise awareness of PGP and how treatable it is.

Reach (Association for Children with Hand or Arm Deficiency)

Reach Head Office
PO Box 54
Helston
Cornwall TR13 8WD
0845 130 6225 (9am–5pm)
reach@reach.org.uk
www.reach.org.uk

Information and support for parents of children with hand or arm problems. Local groups.

Scope

6 Market Road
London N7 9PW
0808 800 3333 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)
Text from mobile – text SCOPE plus
your message to 80039 (texts are free
to the sender)
response@scope.org.uk
www.scope.org.uk

A national disability organisation whose focus is people with cerebral palsy. Provides information, advice and support services.

Sense (National Deafblind and Rubella Association)

101 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LG
0845 127 0060
0845 127 0062 (textphone)
info@sense.org.uk
www.sense.org.uk

Advice and support for families of deaf, blind and rubella-disabled adults and children. Provides information on local groups.

Sickle Cell Society

54 Station Road
London NW10 4UA
020 8961 7795
info@sicklecellsociety.org
www.sicklecellsociety.org

Information, advice and counselling for families affected by sickle cell disease or sickle cell trait. Provides financial help when needed and information on local groups.

Tamba (Twins and Multiple Births Association)

**2 The Willows
Gardner Road
Guildford
Surrey GU1 4PG**

**0800 138 0509
enquiries@tamba.org.uk
www.tamba.org.uk**

Services include a freephone helpline, Twinline, membership and specialist support groups, including bereavement.

Tommy's

**Nicholas House
3 Laurence Pountney Hill
London EC4R 0BB**

**0870 777 30 60 (advice and information)
020 7398 3460 (donation line)
info@tommys.org
www.tommys.org**

Provides pregnancy health information for the public and health professionals with the aim of helping all parents to have the best possible pregnancy outcomes. Operates a pregnancy information line staffed by midwives, and publishes books and leaflets on pregnancy and pregnancy complications.

UK Thalassaemia Society

**19 The Broadway
Southgate Circus
London N14 6PH**

**020 8882 0011
office@ukts.org
www.ukts.org**

Information and advice for families affected by thalassaemia.

Young Minds Parents' Information Service

**48–50 St John Street
London EC1M 4DG**

**0808 802 5544 (Mon–Fri 10am–4pm;
Wed 6pm–8pm)
ymenquiries@youngminds.org.uk**

www.youngminds.org.uk

Service for any parent who is worried about their child's mental health.

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USEFUL NUMBERS

Doctor:

Midwife:

Partner:

Birth partner:

Hospital:

Hospital reference number:

Health visitor:

Local taxi:

NHS Direct: 0845 4647

24-hour nurse-led helpline providing health information and advice.

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