

Temporary closures of maternity units



“” NCT position statement

The NCT is concerned about the number of maternity units temporarily closing to admissions. We know this is a significant problem since our maternity service user representatives have told us about a number of closures over the recent months. We are calling on the Government and local managers to address this problem. It is vitally important that women and their partners are not turned away from the hospital where their baby's birth has been planned, when they are in labour.

The Government has pledged that all women and their partners will be guaranteed their choice of place of birth by the end of 2009. Ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to provide care for women who have booked with a service is fundamental to the commitment to greater choice and improved access for vulnerable and disadvantaged families.

Whilst temporary closures may occasionally be necessary on the grounds of safety (for example if there are insufficient midwifery or medical staff, no available beds, or infection) these should be rare events. Maternity services should be managed so that maternity units are not closed because of insufficient capacity. Telling women that their maternity unit might close at short notice and turning women away in labour causes anxiety and distress, and may have safety implications.

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For further press information, please contact NCT Press Office on 020 8752 2404 or email: press@nct.org.uk

The NCT (formerly the National Childbirth Trust) is the UK's leading charity on pregnancy, birth and early parenthood. Every year the charity supports thousands of parents through an incredible life-changing experience, offering relevant information and mutual support through our network of over 300 local branches, UK wide helplines, antenatal and early days courses, breastfeeding counselling and peer support schemes.

Operating for over 50 years, the NCT is recognised as the voice of pregnant women and new parents throughout the UK. The charity works continuously for improvements to maternity care and better services and facilities for new parents. We are viewed by many as independent experts in matters relating to pregnancy, birth and early parenthood and are an influential and trusted advisor to UK governments, royal colleges, private sector bodies and other charities.

For more information visit www.nct.org.uk or call the NCT Enquiries line at 0300 33 00 770.

NCT
Alexandra House, Oldham Terrace,
London W3 6NH

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