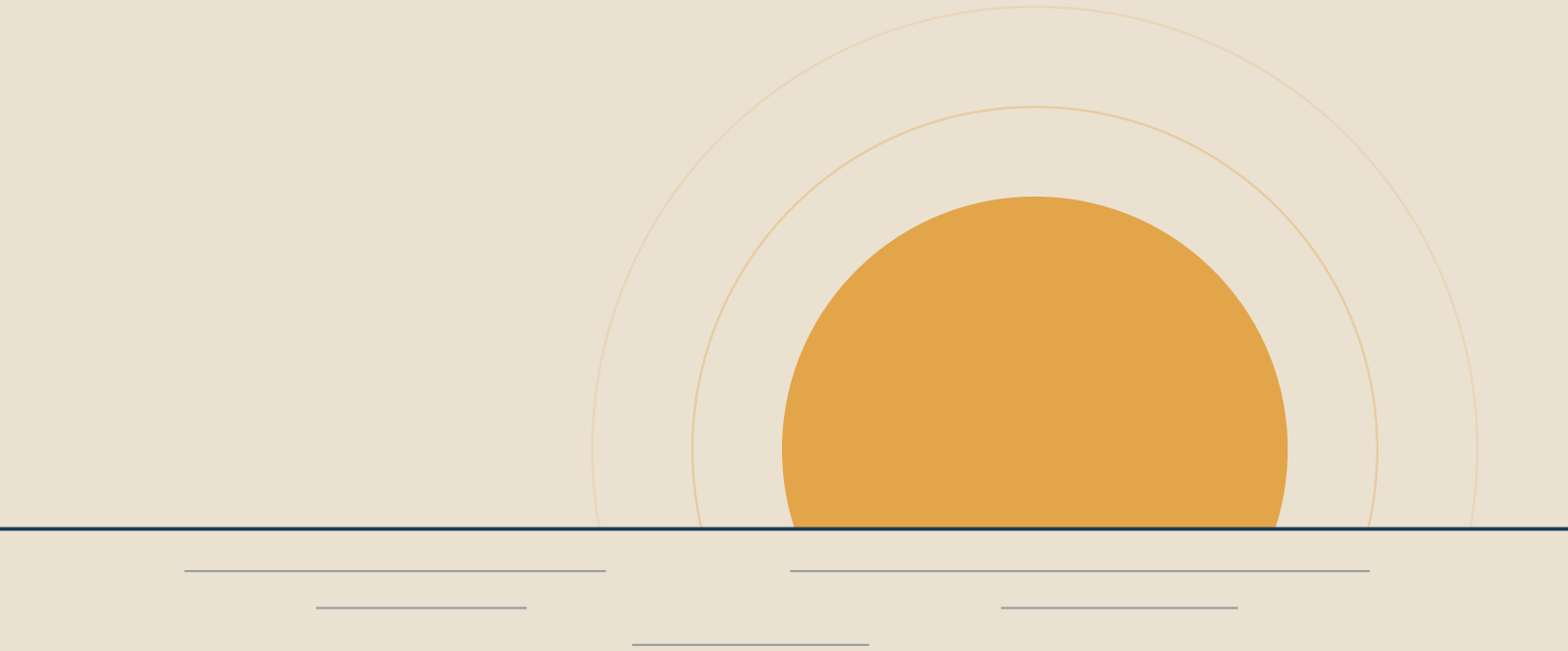
Mamavela

Having a Baby in the UK

Pregnancy care, costs, leave, benefits and the baby's paperwork in the UK, step by step, from official sources.



Free sample

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Before you start

You have a positive test, a hundred questions and, very probably, a dozen browser tabs open. This book is here to close most of them. It walks you through having a baby in the United Kingdom from the first phone call to a midwife to your baby's first vaccinations, with every money question answered along the way: what the NHS offers you and when, what you can claim, from whom, by which date, and what changes depending on whether you live in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Everything in these pages comes from official sources: the NHS website, NICE (the body that writes the clinical guidelines the NHS follows), GOV.UK, mygov.scot, GOV.WALES, nidirect and the NHS Business Services Authority. Each source is listed at the end with its full address and the date it was checked.

> **All amounts and rules in this book were checked on official websites as of October 2026.**
>
> Benefit rates usually change every April, and rules can change at any time. Before you sign or send anything, take thirty seconds to check the current figure on the page listed in the bibliography.

How to use this book

- **Read Part 1 now**, whatever stage you are at. It is the map: who looks after you, what happens when, and the three or four deadlines you really must not miss.
- **Use the chapters as you need them.** Money and work rights sit in Part 3; the first weeks after the birth sit in Part 4.
- **Print the checklists and fill-in pages.** They are designed to be ticked and scribbled on, and to live in the same folder as your maternity notes.
- **Look for the boxes.** Boxes starting with "When to call" tell you exactly who to ring and when. Boxes starting with "Good to know" are the small facts that save a phone call.

What this book is, and what it is not

This book explains what official guidance says, in plain English, and helps you organise yourself. It does not replace your midwife, GP, obstetrician or health visitor, and it is not legal or financial advice. Your own care may differ from the standard schedule because of your health, your history or local arrangements, and that is completely normal. When something does not feel right, the answer is never in a book: call your maternity unit.

A word about words

The UK has its own vocabulary for pregnancy and birth. You will meet terms like "booking appointment", "maternity notes", "red book", "qualifying week" or "MatB1". Each one is explained the first time it appears, and again in the glossary at the end. This book talks about "mothers", "mums" and "birthing parents" and about "partners", because families come in many shapes: married or not, with a husband, a wife or a co-parent, through donor conception or surrogacy, or as a solo parent. Wherever the rules are different for you, there is a section that says so.

Chapter 1. The UK system in one page

NHS maternity care is for everyone who is pregnant

NHS pregnancy care is available to everyone who is pregnant. It includes your antenatal appointments, screening tests, ultrasound scans and care during labour and birth. If you live in the UK, you do not pay for any of it. If you are visiting from abroad and do not usually live in the UK, the NHS will still offer you pregnancy care in England, but you may be asked to pay for it afterwards.

Who looks after you

Who	What they do for you	When you meet them
Midwife	Your main professional through pregnancy, birth and the first days after. Most of your antenatal appointments are with a midwife.	From the booking appointment (by 10 weeks where possible) until your health visitor takes over, usually around 10 days after birth
GP (general practitioner)	Your family doctor. You do not usually need to see a GP to start pregnancy care in England, but you should if you have a long-term condition or take regular medicine. The GP also does the 6 to 8 week checks after the birth.	Before or alongside your midwife if you have health needs; at 6 to 8 weeks after birth
Obstetrician	A doctor specialised in pregnancy and birth. You will see one if your pregnancy needs extra care, for example twins, diabetes or high blood pressure.	Only if needed, or if you ask to discuss something
Sonographer	The professional who performs your ultrasound scans.	At the 12-week and 20-week scans, and any extra scans
Health visitor	A qualified nurse or midwife with extra training in family health. Supports you and your baby from birth to school age.	May offer a home visit from 28 weeks of pregnancy; new baby review at home around 10 days after birth
Registrar	Records your baby's birth and issues the birth certificate.	Within 42 days of the birth (21 days in Scotland)

Your maternity notes

At your first midwife appointment you will be given your maternity notes, in an app, a book, a folder or on a secure website depending on where you live. They contain your appointments, your test results and useful phone numbers such as your maternity unit and the early pregnancy unit. The NHS asks you to keep your maternity notes with you at all times until you have your baby, so that any healthcare professional can read about your pregnancy if you need urgent care. If yours are on paper, put them in your bag today and leave them there.

The four nations

Health and some benefits are run separately in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In practice:

- **Your NHS care follows the same broad pattern everywhere**, but the details in this book come mostly from NHS England. Your local maternity service will tell you how it works where you live.
- **Most employment rights and the main payments are the same across Great Britain**: maternity leave, Statutory Maternity Pay, Maternity Allowance, paternity leave and pay, Shared Parental Leave, Child Benefit. Northern Ireland has its own legislation but very similar rules, explained on nidirect.
- **Some help is different in Scotland**, which has its own Pregnancy and Baby Payment, Best Start Foods and the Baby Box instead of the Sure Start Maternity Grant and Healthy Start.
- **Wales** has Baby Bundles in eligible areas.
- **Birth registration deadlines differ**: 42 days in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 21 days in Scotland.

Chapter 23 puts all the differences in one table.

Emergency and advice numbers

Number	When to use it
999	A life-threatening emergency, at any stage of pregnancy or after the birth
NHS 111	You are not sure what to do, or you need help when your GP or maternity service is closed (by phone or online)
Your maternity unit or triage line	From 20 weeks: anything worrying about you or your baby, including changes in baby's movements. The number is in your maternity notes.
Early pregnancy unit (EPU)	In the first weeks: bleeding or pain. The NHS suggests the GP or EPU before your first midwife appointment, then the midwife or EPU up to 19 weeks.
Samaritans 116 123	Free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if you need someone to talk to

Good to know.

In Wales, NHS 111 Wales is the health advice service. In Northern Ireland, urgent medical care when your GP surgery is closed goes through the GP out of hours service, whose numbers are listed by area on nidirect. Wherever you live, 999 is for life-threatening emergencies.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already feel useful, and that you can see how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, pages to fill in, sources you can check.

The full book has 61 pages.

Get it here: https://mamavela.com/shop/having-a-baby-in-the-uk/

One-time payment, instant PDF.