

Your Birth Rights



Human rights laws mean you have the right to receive maternity care and to make your own decisions about your care.

Do you know your Birth Rights and Choices?

Seeing birth through a framework of human rights, and the organisations that continue to push for this approach, has really helped improve birth over the past decade.

The charity Birth-rights define your human rights in birth as follows:

- **Every woman has a right to receive safe and appropriate maternity care.**
- **Every woman has a right to maternity care that respects her fundamental human dignity.**
- **Every woman has a right to privacy and confidentiality.**
- **Every woman is free to make choices about her own pregnancy and childbirth, even if her caregivers do not agree with her.**
- **Every woman has a right to equality and freedom from discrimination.**

In every aspect of your pregnancy, labour and birth, you have a choice over what happens to you, and you are the key decision maker in the room.

Article 2 – Protects the right to life

This means that you have the right to basic life saving health services. This includes maternity care. That means sending a midwife or paramedic to you if you home/freebirth. That means not denying you maternity care and support if you do not comply to guidelines and policies in hospital. That means not refusing you entry if you do not submit to a vaginal exam.

Article 3 – Prohibits inhuman or degrading treatment

This means not withholding pain relief and causing unnecessary suffering if you do not agree to submit to other procedures or subjecting you to procedures that you find triggering or degrading if you do not want them, such as VE's .

Article 8 – Protects the right to respect for private and family life

That means you have the right to choose your place of birth and choice of birth partner. It gives you the right to physical autonomy and integrity. This means that no medical procedure can be carried out without your consent. Failing to give you sufficient, objective and unbiased information for someone to make an informed choice, including by not providing adequate interpreting services, will also violate this article 8.

Article 14 – Prohibits discrimination in the application of the other human rights and entitles people to equal treatment in their maternity care.

This makes it unlawful for NHS organisations or individual caregivers within the NHS to discriminate against pregnant people on the grounds such as disability, race, religion, immigration status and national origin.

References to read more :

1. <https://www.birthrights.org.uk>
2. <https://www.aims.org.uk>
3. <https://www.sarawickham.com/articles-2/human-rights-in-childbirth-resources/>
4. [https://www.aims.org.uk/journal/item/montgomery-consent-law - Montgomery case - Medical patriarchy no longer has any place in maternity care.](https://www.aims.org.uk/journal/item/montgomery-consent-law-Montgomery-case-Medical-patriarchy-no-longer-has-any-place-in-maternity-care)

Doula Victoria says " Knowing your birth rights are an essential part of your antenatal, hypnobirthing preparation. They form part of your birthy toolkit. By knowing you have rights, you will feel empowered & in control of your birth experience, on your terms, your way."