Putting you in the picture about the services we offer at St George’s Ward, Wallingford Maternity Unit
Our values and philosophy

Our aim at St George’s Ward is to give you high quality midwifery care within a relaxed, informal atmosphere. We know that this is a time of great change in your life, accompanied by many hopes, worries and excitement. We try to be as flexible as we can to suit your individual choices and needs, and to help you and your family in the journey from pregnancy – through the birth – to the early days of parenthood.

Our maternity unit

St George’s ward is a small unit within Wallingford Community Hospital. It is part of the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust. Maternity care is provided by a small group of community midwives, who work closely with trained Maternity Care Assistants (MCA). Student midwives also work alongside the midwives. There are no doctors present at any time. Women are referred to the Women’s Centre in Oxford if they need to be seen by a doctor. The unit is staffed during the day by midwives and MCAs and during the night by an MCA, with an ‘on-call’ midwife available.

Over 250 women have their babies here each year, with another 50 or so giving birth at home with support from our midwives. Most women come from south Oxfordshire (Wheatley, Thame, Wallingford and Didcot) while others come from areas such as Berkshire or Buckinghamshire.

Our unit is fully equipped for normal births. There are two birthing rooms, a popular birthing pool, a room with four beds for mothers and babies, and a comfortable lounge/dining room.

Food is nutritious and freshly prepared on site every day. There is an NHS physiotherapy department, private chiropractic and acupuncture service within the main part of the hospital. There is even a hairdressing salon on site. There is a pleasant garden to sit in during early labour and our unit is within walking distance of the centre of Wallingford.

Since August 2000 our unit has achieved ‘The UNICEF Global Baby Friendly Award’ for our commitment to helping mothers breastfeed.
Is it safe to give birth in St George’s Ward?

In 2007 The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) published a report on ‘Care of Women and their Babies during Labour’. You can read it on-line at www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/CG55IPCUNGFINAL.pdf. It looked at all the available evidence and advises you that “Giving birth is generally very safe for both you and your baby” whether you plan to give birth at home, in a unit run by midwives like St George’s Ward or in a maternity hospital. NICE examined up-to-date research which suggests that “women who give birth in a unit run by midwives or at home are more likely to have a normal birth and less likely to need assistance, for example using forceps”.

You may be advised by your midwife, GP or obstetrician to have your baby in a maternity hospital if you already have underlying health problems, or problems develop in your pregnancy. If we needed to transfer you to the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford, the midwife would accompany you in the ambulance and your birth partner would travel behind in the car. It takes around 30-40 minutes. From our own statistics in 2008 we transferred 11% of women in labour to Oxford and a further 7% of women and babies after the birth. Most of these transfers were not for emergency situations and a proportion of women and their babies returned to us for aftercare. Our transfer rate compares well to other similar units across the UK. However NICE wants you to be aware that “if something goes seriously wrong during your labour (which is rare) it could be worse for you or your baby than if you were already in hospital with access to specialised care”.

If you want to have your baby at St George’s ward:

- You should have no history of medical or obstetric problems
- your pregnancy should be straightforward
- you must be in natural labour between 37 and 42 weeks

If you do not meet the above conditions but still wish to have your baby with us, or at home with our support, please ask to talk to one of our Supervisors of Midwives.
Before the birth

During your pregnancy our aim is that one community midwife will provide most of your antenatal care. Some GPs may share your care by seeing you a couple of times during your pregnancy. If you experience reduced fetal movements in your pregnancy it may be possible for us to monitor your baby’s heartbeat at St George’s Ward and send the results via a telephone link to Oxford. If there are other complications, your antenatal care will be shared between the community midwife and GP, and the obstetricians at the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford.

In the middle of your pregnancy you may like to arrange an appointment for a tour of St George’s Ward, which is held twice a week. If you live in south Oxfordshire you can attend one of our monthly parent workshops to help prepare you and your birth partner for the birth.

There are also private antenatal classes run by the National Childbirth Trust or local independent midwives. A yoga teacher offers private breathing and relaxation classes here at St George’s Ward or one-to-one teaching in your home. There are also local aqua-natal classes run by the independent midwives. We can give you contact details for complementary therapies such as aromatherapy, homeopathy or hypno-birthing which is the practise of self-hypnosis.

You do not need to make a firm decision about where to have your baby until you are in labour. However, if you think you may want a home birth it is worth discussing this with your midwife before the birth.

If you live outside Oxfordshire but you are thinking of having your baby at St George’s Ward, you need to tell your local community midwife and make an appointment to see us here. To help you choose where to have your baby, you may arrange to have a tour of St George’s Ward.

Towards the end of your pregnancy you might like to hire a TENS machine from St George’s Ward which you can use at home to help you cope in early labour. If you are planning a homebirth you might like to hire a portable birthing pool. We can give you contact details.
What to bring with you

For a stay at St George’s Ward you will need:

• your hospital notes
• day and night clothes
• bath towel, flannels and toiletries
• sanitary towels
• a mobile phone
• camera
• a plastic jug for washing your perineum after the birth.
• You may also like to bring a choice of CDs to play during your labour.

For your baby you will need:

• cotton wool
• baby clothes – vests, Babygros, mitts, hat, a shawl for going home in
• a towel
• disposable nappies if you prefer not to use our eco-friendly ones
• car seat.

Even if you are planning a home birth it is worth packing a bag with these items in case you need to be transferred to hospital.

During labour

You may have the birth partner(s) of your choice with you.

At St George’s Ward, as well as at home, our aim is to support you to labour normally and naturally. We only intervene (get involved) if it becomes necessary. We discuss everything with you and together we plan your care.

We encourage you to be in upright positions with beanbags, a floor mattress, rocking chair, birth stool or birthing pool. Soft lighting, visualisation techniques and music of your choice make for a calm
environment and help you to relax. We have ten different essential oils that you can choose from which can be used in a number of ways. For example, you can use them in the birthing pool, as a footbath, for massage, or as an inhalation. We have gas-and-air and occasionally we use Meptid which is given by injection. We are not able to give you an epidural.

We give one-to-one midwifery care during your labour and a second midwife will be available at the birth to lend extra support if necessary.

**After the birth**

We will actively encourage you to have skin-to-skin contact with your baby and help you to breastfeed early. We will help you to look after your baby. During your stay you may have a free trial of our eco-friendly nappies. The length of your stay may be just a few hours or a couple of days, depending on your needs. Some mothers have their babies at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital and return to St George’s Ward for a short stay afterwards.

**Visiting**

Visitors are welcome and there are refreshments available. Family and friends may visit from 10.30 - 11.30hrs, and 15.30 - 17.30hrs. Husbands and partners only may visit between 19.00 - 21.00hrs. Please respect the visiting hours as it is important for the new mother to rest for the short time she is with us.

To help us minimise the risk of infection we ask that you use the alcohol gel dispensers as you enter and leave the unit and do not sit on empty beds in the ward. Please do not bring children, other than those of the new mother, into the unit.
After you go home

We will continue to support you at home with visits and phone calls if you live in Oxfordshire. We also have a 24hr advice-line service (01491 826037) and continued support for breast feeding. This advice is given by the maternity care assistants or midwives. If you need further support you can phone us and drop in to St George’s Ward for supervised feeds. Alternatively we can support you at your local Baby Café, such as the Baby Lunchbox in Berinsfield or the Didcot Lunchbox in Didcot.

Comments from women who have had their babies with us

“Thank you for making the birth of [our baby] an absolutely wonderful experience for both of us. You all could not have been more helpful and supportive especially to two very over excited first time parents”.

“Lovely and homely here. Really relaxing time with lovely staff and food.”

“Very calm environment to bring new life into the world.”

How to contact us

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Reading Road
Wallingford
Oxford OX10 9DU

Tel: 01491 826037
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.