

Maternity care in Moray

Your questions answered

About this Q&A

This is an evolving set of questions and answers about maternity services in Moray. We will continue to update it as services develop and as new information becomes available.

We will also add to it over time using common questions and themes identified by maternity teams and midwives at Dr Gray's, so it reflects the things women and families most want to know.

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What is changing at Dr Gray's?

We are expanding maternity services so more women and babies can receive care in Moray, closer to home.

The NHS Grampian Board is being asked to approve a change in delivery strategy - moving from a single completion date to introducing the remaining parts of the full expanded consultant-led maternity service in phases.

Each part would begin as soon as the staff, resources and infrastructure needed to deliver it safely are in place. This allows families to benefit from additional services without waiting for every part of the full service to be ready.

Is NHS Grampian still committed to delivering the full service?

Yes. Our commitment to delivering the full expanded consultant-led maternity service remains absolute.

NHS Grampian's Chief Executive, Laura Skaife-Knight, is taking personal responsibility for the final push to complete delivery.

There are still difficult challenges to overcome, particularly in securing the staff and supporting services we need. We are determined to overcome these and introduce each remaining element as early as it is safe to do so later this year and into 2027.

Will the full service be available by the end of 2026?

No. Substantial elements of the service will be in place by the end of 2026, but the remaining elements are expected during 2027.

The roadmap sets out the estimated timing for individual developments and the requirements that must be met before they can begin.

Why is delivery taking longer?

The full service depends on having the right staff, training, round-the-clock theatre cover and specialist support in place.

Dr Gray's already has experienced consultant obstetricians, including doctors who have worked at the hospital for decades. A key requirement now is to recruit two additional consultant obstetricians, alongside more anaesthetists and theatre staff, to provide the cover needed for a safe, reliable 24-hour consultant-led service.

More than 70 additional staff have already been recruited to support the development of services at Dr Gray's. However, some of the remaining roles are among the most difficult to recruit to across the UK.

We are making a major investment in targeted advertising and engagement to attract the people we need and showcase what Moray and Dr Gray's can offer.

Recruitment is only one part of the work. Teams also need to complete training and put the working arrangements in place to provide safe, reliable care.

How will introducing services in stages help?

Phased delivery allows each additional service to begin as soon as it can operate safely, while work continues on the remaining parts.

Some developments depend on other services being ready first. For example, a full induction of labour service needs the appropriate labour, birth and postnatal care arrangements in place.

The aim is to make additional care available sooner wherever possible. It does not remove the delay to completing the full service or change our commitment to delivering it.

What new maternity care is already available locally?

- Planned Caesarean births for women whose care can be provided safely at Dr Gray's.
- Antenatal appointments and specialist obstetric clinics.
- Ultrasound scanning, including consultant-led ultrasound.
- A Day Assessment Unit for pregnancy monitoring, assessment and clinical review.
- Specialist support, including diabetes care in pregnancy, a dedicated maternity dietitian, perinatal mental health and bereavement support.

These are examples rather than a complete list. Your maternity team can explain which services are appropriate for you.

A 24-hour maternity telephone triage helpline also provides advice about urgent concerns and directs women to the right care.

When is the Special Care Unit expected to open?

Opening is currently expected for December 2026. Initially, the unit will provide care for babies born at 36 weeks onwards.

The unit will allow more babies who need additional monitoring and support to receive care locally, closer to their families.

Opening remains subject to completion of the required training, certification and standard operating procedures. These procedures set out how staff will run the service safely.

We will confirm shortly when the unit is ready to open.

Will the Special Care Unit mean every baby can be cared for at Dr Gray's?

No. It will increase the care available locally but, as has always been the case, some babies will still need more specialist care in Aberdeen or another appropriate specialist centre.

The maternity and neonatal teams will explain what care a baby needs and where it can be provided safely.

What new or expanded services are planned for 2027?

- In-person maternity triage, expected around April - a new assessment model that complements the telephone helpline and helps women get rapid access to the right specialist at the right time.
- Remifentanyl pain relief, estimated for spring or early summer - an additional pain-relief option during labour, available at Dr Gray's for the first time.
- Expanded inpatient antenatal care, estimated for summer - allowing many more women who need hospital care during pregnancy to stay at Dr Gray's.
- Expanded care during labour, birth and after birth, estimated for summer, subject to readiness - allowing more women to give birth and receive their postnatal hospital care locally.
- A full induction of labour service, estimated for summer onwards, subject to readiness - allowing more women to have their labour started medically at Dr Gray's, following the safe introduction of the supporting labour, birth and postnatal services.

These are new or expanded elements rather than a complete list of maternity services at Dr Gray's.

The timings are planning estimates. Each service will begin when its staffing and safety requirements, including any supporting services it depends on, have been met.

Will epidural pain relief be available at Dr Gray's?

Epidural pain relief is not currently available at Dr Gray's.

We are investigating whether it can be introduced safely as part of the expanded maternity service. Providing epidurals requires sufficient anaesthetic staffing to maintain the necessary 24-hour cover, and that remains dependent on recruitment.

If we are able to attract the additional staff needed to provide that service safely and reliably, we hope to introduce epidural pain relief at Dr Gray's.

Other anaesthetic and pain-relief options, including spinal anaesthesia for appropriate procedures and remifentanyl for labour, are available or are planned as services expand.

Are the dates guaranteed?

The dates are our current estimates. We wanted to be as open as possible but they do depend on recruitment, training and the readiness of the facilities and services that support maternity care.

Our commitment to completing the full service remains absolute. We will introduce each element as early as it is safe to do so, with the remaining developments expected during 2027.

We will provide updates as dates are confirmed or plans change.

I am pregnant now. Does this change where I will give birth?

This announcement does not itself change your current care plan or the arrangements for where you will give birth.

Please continue to attend your appointments and follow the advice of your maternity team. They will discuss your options with you, taking account of your individual needs, your preferences and the services available when you need them.

A service's estimated opening date should not be treated as confirmation that it will be available for your birth.

Can I choose to give birth at Dr Gray's?

NHS Grampian supports women's right to choose where they give birth, within the safety criteria needed to protect both mother and baby.

Your maternity team will discuss whether Dr Gray's is an appropriate option for you, taking account of your preferences, your pregnancy, your baby's needs and the services available.

As services expand, more women will have the option of giving birth locally. Once the full expanded service is in place, more than four in five women in Moray are expected to have that option - the highest proportion to date.

That describes the proportion expected to have the option. It does not mean everyone will choose to give birth at Dr Gray's or that it will be the right place for every pregnancy.

Can I still choose to give birth in Aberdeen?

Yes. NHS Grampian supports women's right to choose where they give birth, within the safety criteria needed to protect both mother and baby.

Expanding services at Dr Gray's is about increasing the choices available to women in Moray - not removing existing options.

Your maternity team will discuss the places of birth available to you, taking account of your preferences, your individual circumstances and the care you and your baby may need.

Will some women and babies still need care in Aberdeen?

Yes. Some women and babies will continue to need specialist care in Aberdeen or another appropriate centre.

The aim is to provide as much care as possible locally while ensuring everyone can access the level of specialist support they need. Your maternity team will explain any recommendation about where you receive care.

What happens if I need care that Dr Gray's cannot provide?

Some women and babies will continue to need specialist care that is only available in Aberdeen or another specialist centre.

If your needs change during pregnancy, labour or after birth, your maternity team will make sure you receive the appropriate level of care and will explain any recommendation to transfer your care.

Our aim is to provide as much care as possible locally while maintaining the safety arrangements and access to specialist services that protect women and babies.

If a new service opens while I am pregnant, could my birth plan change?

Potentially, yes.

If a new service becomes available while you are pregnant and it is appropriate for you, your maternity team can discuss whether this gives you additional choices about your care or where you give birth.

Any changes would be discussed with you, taking account of your preferences, your individual circumstances and the safety criteria for that service.

What does "consultant-led" mean?

Consultant obstetricians are specialist doctors in pregnancy and birth. In a consultant-led maternity service, they work alongside midwives, anaesthetists and other clinical teams to provide care, including for women who need additional medical support.

Dr Gray's already provides consultant obstetric care. Completing the full expanded service means putting the staffing and supporting services in place for safe, reliable 24-hour provision.

Your care will depend on your individual needs. Midwives will continue to play a central role throughout pregnancy, birth and after your baby is born.

How can I contact the maternity helpline?

Call 0300 131 2112, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if you have an urgent concern about your health during pregnancy or the health of your baby.

The helpline was introduced in direct response to feedback from Moray women and families, giving people one straightforward number to call for urgent maternity advice.

Staff at Dr Gray's and Aberdeen Maternity Hospital work together to provide consistent advice and support, wherever you live in Grampian. They will assess your concern, explain what to do next and direct you to the right care.

How will I know when a new service is available?

NHS Grampian will confirm when each new service is ready to begin and explain who can use it.

The latest [Moray Maternity Roadmap](#) and Model 6 eligibility guidance for maternity care at Dr Gray's are available on the same page.

The roadmap shows the planned stages of development and will be updated as services progress.

We are publishing the eligibility guidance because women and families have asked for more detail about the criteria used at Dr Gray's. It is primarily a clinical document written for healthcare professionals, so some of the language and detail may not be easy to interpret without clinical context and it should not be used as a self-assessment tool.

If you are pregnant and want to understand what the guidance means for you, please discuss your individual circumstances, preferences and care options with your midwife or maternity team.

Do I need to do anything now?

You do not need to change your appointments or make new arrangements because of this announcement.

If you have questions, or a newly introduced service is something you would like to consider as part of your care or birth options, speak to your midwife or maternity team. They can explain whether it is suitable for you based on your individual needs and the eligibility criteria for that service.

For an urgent concern about your health during pregnancy or the health of your baby, call the maternity triage helpline on 0300 131 2112. Do not wait for a future service opening to seek advice.

Where can I find more information?

You can find the latest [Moray Maternity Roadmap](#) and the Model 6 eligibility guidance for maternity care at Dr Gray's on the NHS Grampian Moray Maternity Roadmap page.

For dedicated information, resources and support throughout pregnancy, birth and after your baby is born, visit [Birth in Grampian](#).

Birth in Grampian brings together maternity information for families across Grampian, including information about pregnancy, preparing for birth, your choices, local services, feeding your baby and support after birth.

Your midwife or maternity team can also explain what the roadmap, eligibility guidance and developing services mean for you and your family.