

NHS Maternity Rights — your checklist

Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group CIC · aemwg.org/maternity-safety

This checklist is for ethnic minority women using NHS maternity services in Scotland — written by AEMWG. It is not legal advice. Bring it with you. Tick what's been done. Note what hasn't.

1. Consent — every single time

- No examination, procedure or intervention without your YES — including students practising on you.
- You can say NO at any point, even mid-procedure, and the team must stop.
- You have the right to a full explanation of risks and alternatives in language you understand.
- If you said NO and were ignored, write down the time, the room, and what was said.

2. Communication & interpreter

- You have the right to a professional interpreter — free, on the phone or in person. Not your husband. Not a child.
- Ask: 'Please book an interpreter for me — my preferred language is ____.'
- If staff use a relative instead, that is not consent-quality care. Note it.
- Ask for written information in your language where possible.

3. Dignity & respect

- You have the right to be addressed by name, not by stereotype.
- Faith dress, accent or migration status must not change your clinical care.
- If a staff member spoke about you as 'these immigrants' or similar — note the words used.
- You can ask for a chaperone of your gender for any intimate examination.

4. Pain & post-operative care

- If your pain is being dismissed, ask: 'Please document in my notes that I have reported pain of ____/10 and was told ____.'
- Post-C-section / post-tear: you are entitled to time, help moving, and someone to fetch staff if you can't.
- Ask for the name of the senior midwife / doctor on duty.

5. Feeding choices

- Breastfeeding, formula or mixed — your choice. NHS staff cannot override it.
- You are entitled to lactation / infant-feeding support free of charge.
- If you were told 'in this country we feed formula' — write it down.

6. Your partner / support person

- You can have a birth partner with you. After birth, ask the named midwife how long they may stay.

- If asked to leave when the room is empty and the woman is still recovering, ask why — and note the answer.

7. Migration status / NRPF

- NHS maternity care in Scotland is provided regardless of immigration status. NRPF does not strip you of safe care.
- Hospitals should not share your maternity records with the Home Office for routine immigration enforcement.
- If you are worried, ask AEMWG to put you in touch with an NRPF-aware advocate.

8. Making a complaint — the safe way

- Step 1 — Ask for the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) number on the ward.
- Step 2 — Write down dates, times, names of staff if known, and exact words used.
- Step 3 — File a formal complaint with NHS Grampian Feedback Service (in writing, keep a copy).
- Step 4 — If unresolved, escalate to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).
- Step 5 — Tell AEMWG in parallel. We can stand alongside you and add your case to the policy work.

9. Keep your own record

- Ask for a copy of your maternity notes — you are entitled to them.
- Take photos of injuries (privately, with consent of anyone in the photo).
- Keep all discharge letters, medication lists and appointment slips.

If you've experienced racism or unsafe care in NHS maternity services, you can share it with us anonymously at aemwg.org/maternity-safety. Names and details are withheld. Your story helps change the system.