



## Family Bays – Partners on the wards

**The role of a birthing partner continues on the postnatal wards.**

**We are running a trial, welcoming one supportive partner to stay with you, outside of visiting hours and overnight in our new Family Bays. This leaflet will explain what they are, how you can use them and what guidelines are in place for everyone's safety and comfort.**

### Introduction

This short information leaflet tells you, the person giving birth, about our new Family Bays, so you can decide if this is something you would like for your postnatal experience (the time after you have given birth). A 'partner' means a person you chose to support you when giving birth at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. We kindly ask the partner to remain the same person throughout your stay.

We want to support families in a safe, compassionate environment. Partners have their own guide to read, which can be found on our website

(<https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/leaflets/family-bays-trial-information-for-partners>). Both documents were co-produced with local families by Royal Berkshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership and our Maternity Team.

### What are Family Bays?

There are currently five Family Bay bed spaces available on Iffley Ward, and 4 beds on Marsh Ward for those coming to us for an elective Caesarean birth. Iffley and Marsh are the wards where you will come if you need to stay in hospital after the birth.

The Family Bays are the only bays where one chosen partner can stay 24/7; it must be the same person throughout your stay. All other visitors must leave by 8.30pm and return after 8.30am. Partners can also stay in side-rooms, which are given to those who need them based on various circumstances.

It is your choice whether you want to stay in the Family Bay. We appreciate this choice is made for a number of reasons, including responsibilities at home (for example older children) and also any beliefs or cultural preferences. We understand some people will not want their partner or other people's partners on the wards. Please speak to your midwife who can reassure you and discuss options to ensure you feel safe and cared for on our wards.

### When will I find out if we can have a Family Bay?

If you need to stay on the postnatal ward after your birth, the midwife in charge will tell you whether a Family Bay is available when you arrive on the ward. If you are offered the Family Bay this is yours until you are discharged (go home) or transferred.

If a bay is not available but you want your partner to stay overnight, please speak to the midwife who will advise when a space may become free. You will be added to a request list; those who

have a clinical need may be given priority. This is a trial so we appreciate your feedback via the online survey. Your feedback will affect whether we expand to include more Family Bays.

### What can we do to make the Family Bays a success?

For security, safety, dignity, comfort and everyone's wellbeing, we have worked with families who have recently stayed on the wards to set some ground rules.

**For security partners need to sign in and out of the wards** using the sign in sheet available in the Family Bay. They must use the door buzzer to enter and exit the wards. **Partners must stay in your Family Bay overnight and not walk around the wards.**

**There is strictly no smoking, or vaping on the wards and please do not leave the ward overnight.** This increases the midwives workload, is disruptive, and introduces third hand smoke (carried on your clothes) onto our wards.

**The bed is for you, not your partner;** this is for safety and hygiene reasons. Partners have the reclining chair next to the bed. To reduce clutter around the bed your partner may only bring one small bag/rucksack.

**There is one designated partner toilet** which can be found just outside of the Family Bay. Showers are only for those who have given birth.

**Partners need to wear shoes and clothes at all times** – the only exception being to provide skin to skin with their baby, which is actively encouraged.

**We are not able to offer partners meals.** There are canteens, cafes and shops in the hospital and the opening hours are shown in your welcome booklet. We also have a small Family Kitchen on each ward, where everyone is welcome to store, prepare and heat up food. There are teabags, instant coffee and milk in the fridge – please take rubbish away with you. Any food brought onto the wards needs to be sealed and labelled with your name and the date. Wellbeing is more than food and we encourage partners to **return home to rest, refresh and replenish supplies** during your stay.

We need to maintain a calm and **peaceful** space, especially overnight, so we ask everyone to:

- ✓ Be mindful of noise levels, allowing people to rest. Please be considerate when making phone or video calls on the wards.
- ✓ Keep voices low overnight, avoid making calls or using devices without headphones.

### What happens if someone breaks the guidelines?

If, at any time, you, your partner or any of your visitors, witness behaviour that violates these guidelines, is threatening or worries you in any way, please speak to the midwife caring for you. If you aren't satisfied with the response, you can contact the unit coordinator by calling 0118 322 5111 and ask for 'Bleep 179' to escalate your concern.

**We reserve the right to ask partners to leave the wards and security will be notified that they may only return during visiting hours.**

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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Next review due: March 2026

## Our Maternity Strategy and Vision

*'Working together with women, birthing people and families to offer compassionate, supportive care and informed choice; striving for equity and excellence in our maternity service.'*

You can read  
our maternity  
strategy here



Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent