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How do I access  
my birth notes?



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# Why access birth notes?

You might want to access your birth notes:

- To clarify details of the labour, birth or immediate postnatal period
- To help you make a complaint
- To help you process your trauma
- To share with someone independent who can explain what they mean



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# How much does it cost?

It won't cost you anything to see your birth notes.

In the UK, it is illegal to charge for access to your own medical records.

# Who do I write to?

- Send your letter or email to the records manager or patient services manager at the NHS trust or board for the hospital where you gave birth or, if you gave birth at home, the hospital trust or board whose care you were under. The address will be on the hospital trust or board website.
- There are websites that list the names of the hospital trusts and boards:

Hospital trusts in England:

<https://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/pages/nhstrustlisting.aspx>

Hospital trusts and boards in Wales:

<https://gov.wales/nhs-wales-health-boards-and-trusts>

Health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts>

Health boards in Scotland:

<https://www.scot.nhs.uk/organisations/>

# What should be in the letter?

- In the subject field of the email, type “Subject access request”
- Provide your full name and address, your NHS number if you have it, and the date you gave birth at the hospital
- If you want your child’s records, give their name too
- Ask for everything relevant relating to your care: paper and electronic records, scan reports, all correspondence, all nursing and midwifery records, any radiology images and all investigations and results
- You may also ask to see any relevant hospital guidelines and policies

# Internal Investigation

Sometimes the hospital will have carried out an internal investigation into mistakes made during your birth. So if you believe that to be the case, you can also ask for:

- Any duty of candour investigation report
- A Datix investigation report (Datix is incident-reporting software used in the NHS)
- The results of any internal hospital investigation in relation to your care
- Any witness statements relating to your care
- A Never Event Incident report (Never Events are serious safety errors that should not occur if proper preventative measures are implemented)
- A Serious Incident report (Serious Incidents are safety errors serious enough to warrant further investigation)

# What happens next?

- The hospital may acknowledge receipt of your request
- Legally, they are obliged to send your records to you within 25 working days of your request





# What if the hospital doesn't send my records?

Sometimes hospitals delay sending the records. They may also tell you that you've lost some of your records.

If that happens, remind them of their duties under the Data Protection Act 2018, and ask them if they've informed the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) of the data loss. Let them know that if they haven't done so, you will report the breach for them. This can lead to a more focused effort to find the records to avoid a fine for breaching the Act.



# Reading and understanding the records

- It isn't always easy to understand the terminology in medical records. You may want to hire an independent midwife to go through the records with you, or you can request a birth debrief with a midwife at the maternity unit, who will talk you through the records
- You may find errors in the records, or a version of events that differs from your own memory. If this is the case, you can include it in any complaint you make to the hospital, though it is difficult to get the records changed

# For more information

These websites offer more detailed advice on accessing medical notes:

<https://www.birthrights.org.uk/factsheets/accessing-your-records/>

<https://www.avma.org.uk/help-advice/guides/>



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