

Children's centres

Did you know you are welcome to go to your local children's centre before your baby has been born?



Why visit your local children's centre?

Hertfordshire Children's Centres support families through pregnancy and until your child is five. Most centres offer antenatal services working closely with midwives and health visiting teams. Baby health clinics also run in children's centres in most areas.

Children's centres offer lots more, including help to:

- prepare to be a parent
- meet other parents in your area
- access information about feeding your baby
- talk about early education and childcare options
- find out about other local services that support parents
- have support around sleep routines
- take part in family learning activities
- collect Healthy Start vitamins.

If you are unsure of the support you need just give your local centre a call and they will be able to help you.

You can find your local children's centre/ register with that centre by visiting www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/childrenscentres

Just select the options as shown in the picture shown on the right. You can also request that a children's centre contact you by filling in a short online form by visiting www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/ccrequest

A screenshot of the Hertfordshire Council website. The navigation bar at the top includes 'Home', 'Our services', and 'About the council'. Below this, there are dropdown menus for 'Our services', 'Schools and education', 'Childcare and advice for parents', and 'Children's centres'. The main content area is titled 'Children's centres' and includes a sub-header 'If you're pregnant or a parent/carer of a child under 5 your children's centre would love to meet you.' Below this are several links: 'What is a children's centre?', 'What support can children's centres offer me?', 'Register with a children's centre', and 'Refer a family to a children's centre'. The last two links are circled in red. To the right of the text is a graphic with balloons labeled 'Rhyme time and story time', 'Antenatal and postnatal support', 'Baby clinic', 'Stay and play sessions', and 'Baby massage'. Below the main content are two more sections: 'Find a children's centre' and 'Parenting courses'. The 'Find a children's centre' link is also circled in red.

Turn the page to see what other professionals you will meet at the children's centre, hospital or GP surgery.

Midwives

The hospital midwife will complete the antenatal booking appointment, and you will be able to arrange your scans.



The midwife at the hospital will ask you to make further appointments with your community midwife based either at your GP surgery or local children's centre.



You can also book antenatal classes including ones about breastfeeding that will help you feel more confident about your journey to parenthood.

Tours of maternity units are available at the two main maternity units in Hertfordshire, Lister Hospital in Stevenage and Watford General Hospital.

Lister Hospital Watford General Hospital

Following the birth of your baby and until your baby is ten days old the community midwifery team will call and visit you at home to check all is going well



Neonatal/special care baby unit

Your baby may be born too early or need specialist care, therefore they may need to be admitted to a neonatal/special care baby unit.

In the unlikely event that your baby may need this specialist care following their birth they will be looked after in the neonatal unit/special care baby unit, by specially trained neonatal nurses and doctors, who with other professionals work as a team to care for you and your baby. These nurses and doctors will support you and care for your baby until they are well enough to go home.

Neonatal units specialise in looking after babies who are:

- born too early (prematurely)
- full term but very small
- full term but require extra support because of a medical condition.



Health visitor

Health visitors are registered nurses who have additional training in community public health nursing.

They offer support to you and your family during the early years of your child's life until the age of five.

In some areas of Hertfordshire health visitors will meet you when you are 28-34 weeks pregnant. They will then contact you 4-7 days following the birth of your baby and will arrange to visit you at home when your baby is 10-14 days old. This is called a new birth visit. It's at this stage that your health visitor takes over from your community midwife, marking a new stage of your parenting journey.

At the new birth visit you will be given a Bookstart Baby gift of free books to share stories rhymes, and songs with your baby.

The health visitor will arrange a further visit between 6-8 weeks to review your baby's progress and discuss how you are feeling.

You can find out more about health visitors by visiting the **Hertfordshire Community Trust website**.



Feeding your baby

Hertfordshire Children's Centres work in partnership with health colleagues to offer the best possible support around feeding your baby responsively.

Hertfordshire Children's Centres and health colleagues have been trained to work to Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards.

Children's centres offer you support to introduce your baby to solid food when the time is right, working closely with health visitors.

You can find infant feeding support in your local area by visiting www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/breastfeeding

Further information and support can be found on the following organisations websites.

Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative

National Childbirth Trust

The Breastfeeding Network

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

First Steps Nutrition Trust

Start4Life

La Leche League GB

