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Guidance for women choosing to opt out of the Antenatal Screening Wales ultrasound protocol.

Author: Louise-Emma Shaw
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Ultrasound is a common and recommended screening procedure undertaken during pregnancy and uses sound waves to create a picture of organs and structures inside the body. It is a useful clinical tool to examine a baby's anatomy and placental site, as well as providing information on a baby's growth, surrounding liquor volume, and umbilical cord blood flow. Ultrasound has an excellent safety record when used by appropriately trained staff, who understand how to monitor mechanical and thermal indices, and infection prevention and cleaning protocols are followed. (4)

In Wales current recommendations for universal ultrasound scans in pregnancy are (1, 2)

- Early pregnancy (11+2 – 14+1): The purpose of this scan is to determine viability, accurately date the pregnancy and detect multiple pregnancies. Some major structural anomalies may be seen at this time. This is also an opportunity to measure the nuchal thickness IF the woman consents to screening for Downs, Edwards and Patau syndromes.
- Anomaly (18+0 – 20+6) : - This scan is to screen for significant structural anomalies in the fetus, and to locate the position of the placenta. Where the placenta is low lying a repeat scan is offered at 32 weeks. (3)

Additional scans may be offered according to individual maternal/fetal factors.

As for any procedure women should be informed of the purpose and nature of any investigation, and have the option to accept or decline any, or all, screening programmes. Some may wish to have an ultrasound for a single purpose such as placental localisation or presentation only, and this poses challenges to the sonographer who are bound by professional obligations and legal duties in undertaking and reporting on scan results

This pathway has been developed to consistently outline available scanning options for women receiving care in SBUHB, when maternal requests fall outside of the usual antenatal screening programme in Wales. This guidance document aims to provide clarity for safe care decisions in this instance and reduce variation in care access for women and their babies.

This guidance document aims to support clinicians when providing care outside of the recommended antenatal screening programme, outlining a locally agreed professional standard for individual care planning in these cases, and ensuring clinicians are confident in meeting their professional accountability.

References

1. Antenatal Screening Wales Policy, Standards and Protocols 2023 *Public Health Wales*.
https://nhs.wales365.sharepoint.com/sites/PHW_ScrInfProComms/Antenatal%20screening%20documents/Programme%20introduction/Standards%20and%20Protocols%202023%20English%20amends%20April%202025.pdf?CT=1743467228171&OR=ItemsView
2. NICE NG201 Antenatal Care 2021
3. Jauniaux, E., et al. Placenta Praevia and Placenta Accreta: Diagnosis and Management. Green top guideline 27a. BJOG; 126: 1-48
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.15306>
4. Imaging ultrasound before 24 weeks of pregnancy. WHO. 2022
<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/362037/9789240051461-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

Disclaimer

Ultrasound in pregnancy is performed to confirm a viable pregnancy, to give an estimated date of birth (from early pregnancy scan), assess for multiple babies (twins, triplets etc), assess fetal anatomy (**effective between 18-22 weeks of pregnancy**), measure fetal growth and the amount of amniotic fluid around the baby, and to assess the placenta site. There are no known harmful effects from having an ultrasound scan.

You have requested to have an ultrasound scan to assess a single aspect of the pregnancy (please insert aspect here)

.....
..... . Whilst doing this the sonographer may notice or suspect abnormalities in the other aspects of the scan. In this situation the sonographer has a duty to report their concerns to you and your care provider (midwife or obstetrician). **Certain checks are also not possible to complete to an acceptable standard outside of the recommended gestational time frames.**

Hospital Sticker

I understand that whilst the sonographer will be looking for
.....they may identify other concerns with my pregnancy and acknowledge their duty to report these findings. **I have been counselled by a midwife and/or obstetrician on the possible risks of not having the recommended routine screening ultrasound scans and the limitations of a single scan performed at advanced gestation.**

Signed.....

Name (Print)

.....

Date

Sonographer:

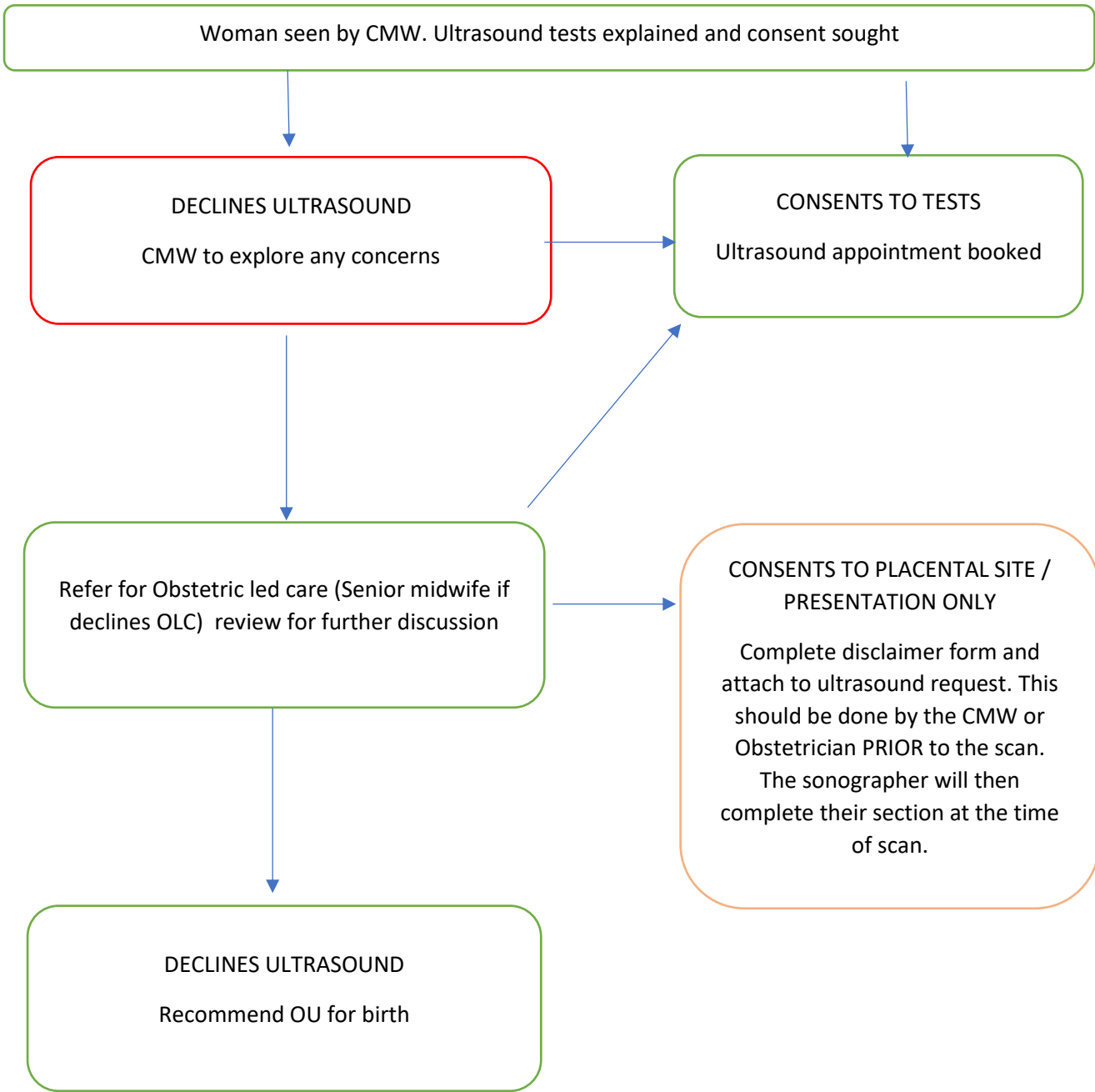
I understand that I am scanning for....., and will not take any measurements unrelated to this without explicit consent.

Signed.....

Name (PRINT)

.....

Date



Maternity Services

Checklist for Clinical Guidelines being Submitted for Approval

Title of Guideline:	Guidance for women choosing to opt out of Antenatal Screening Wales ultrasound protocol
Name(s) of Author:	Louise-Emma Shaw
Chair of Group or Committee approving submission:	Antenatal Forum
Brief outline giving reasons for document being submitted for ratification	
Details of persons included in consultation process:	N/A
Name of Pharmacist (mandatory if drugs involved):	NA
Issue / Version No:	1
Please list any policies/guidelines this document will supercede:	
Date approved by Group:	29 April 2026
Next Review / Guideline Expiry:	April 2029
Please indicate key words you wish to be linked to document	Ultrasound, antenatal screening,