



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust



Information for parents  
of babies who die on  
or around the time of birth

## Information for parents of babies who die at or around the time of birth

This booklet has been written to help with some of the practical and emotional aspects following the death of your baby. We hope this information will help you to make the choices that are most appropriate for you and your family. Take your time to find out what you want to do, as there is no need to do anything in a hurry. The doctors, midwifery and nursing staff will do what they can to answer your questions and provide any information that you may need. There are faith leaders of all denominations available to you.

### How long can we spend with our/my baby?

Following the death of your baby you may wish to spend time with them. The staff understand that this time together is very important and they will try to respect your wishes.

*“The time we spent with our baby was one of the most important and precious times for us”*

*SANDS member Brighton.*

You may find washing and dressing your baby a special time. You may also ask a member of your family, a friend or a member of staff to wash and dress your baby if you feel unable to do so. You may use your own clothes, shawl, basket or carrycot if you wish, or the hospital can provide these if you prefer. You may leave a special toy, memento or photo with your baby.

You and your family may see and hold your baby as often as you wish, although you may not be able to spend as long with your baby if they are having a post mortem, (staff will talk to you about this). Your baby may stay with you in hospital or you may take them home.

*“Taking our baby home was very special, it helped her to take a place in our family. Seeing her little body change during the .. day confirmed to us that she was really dead and I think that was important” - SANDS Member Brighton.*

When you are ready your baby will be taken to the hospital mortuary. Any special clothing, toys or mementoes will stay with your baby at all times.

You can arrange to see your baby again by contacting your maternity/neonatal unit at any time where you can spend time with your baby in private. Alternatively, you can contact the bereavement office in office hours. If you prefer, you can see your baby in the chapel of rest.

When you see your baby again, they may feel cold to touch and their colour may be different from when you last saw them.

## Can keepsakes be arranged?

### Photographs

Photographs may be taken of your baby by either yourself or the staff; please discuss it with them. If you find it difficult to take the photographs home with you when you leave the hospital, should you wish, they may be kept in your baby's notes for you to have in the future.

## **Memento folder**

Staff can help you to make a special memory folder which may include photographs, handprints, footprints, cot card, name bracelet and a lock of hair. If you do not wish to take this folder home with you, it may be kept in your baby's notes for you to have in the future.

## **Can there be a naming, blessing or other ceremony in the hospital?**

You may wish for a ceremony to recognise the birth of your baby, which may or may not be a religious ceremony. A hospital chaplain will be happy to discuss this with you, or, alternatively, the staff can telephone your own faith leader to arrange this. Other members of your family are welcome to attend if you wish to include them.

## **Is there religious and spiritual support?**

If you would like to talk or pray with a chaplain of your own tradition at any time this can be arranged. The Hospital Chaplaincy service is free of charge and we will not expect you to adopt any particular viewpoint.

## **What if the doctors suggest further investigations?**

If a post mortem is necessary, the doctors will discuss this with you. The examination is usually performed within the first few days following your baby's death and the doctors will discuss with you how long it will take. You may request a copy of the examination report.

Post mortems on babies are often carried out by specialists in other hospitals. Your baby may be transferred to and from these specialists by our hospital.

Although the post mortem may not explain why your baby died you may feel reassured to know that everything possible had been done to find out. Sometimes information gained from a post mortem examination can contribute to the treatment of babies with similar problems.

You will still be able to see your baby following the post mortem if you wish.

## Follow up

You will be invited for an appointment to see one of the medical team who looked after you and your baby about 6-10 weeks after you go home. This will give you the opportunity to discuss the care of you and your baby and any questions that you may want to ask. The doctor will discuss with you the results of the post mortem examination or any other tests. It may help to make a list of questions to have with you.

## How is the stillbirth or birth and death registered?

### If your baby was stillborn

If your baby was stillborn at twenty-four weeks or later, you have to register the stillbirth within 6 weeks and before the funeral can take place. If your baby was stillborn before 24 weeks there is no need for registration.

To register, take the Medical Certificate of Stillbirth, (given to you in hospital), to the local Registry Office. If you are married only one of you needs to go, but you must take your marriage certificate with you. If you are not married and would prefer both the mother's and father's names to appear together on the register, please note that you are both required to be

present when you visit the local Registry Office to sign the necessary documentation. If you are in a civil partnership we recommend that you consult with the Registry Office.

The registrar will ask for:

- Your names, dates and places of birth and occupations.
- The date and time of your baby's delivery.
- If you named your baby, your baby's name.
- Your home address.

Your baby's name will be entered on the stillbirth register and you will be given a form which is the certificate for burial or cremation, to give to the funeral directors.

### **If your baby died after birth**

If your baby dies after birth we recommend that you register both birth and the death at the same time, within five working days. Registration of birth may take place at any Registry Office, but the registration of death should be carried out at the local Registry Office.

If you are married, only one of you needs to go, but you must take your marriage certificate with you. If you are not married and would prefer both the mother's and father's names to appear together on the register, you are both required to be present when you visit the local registrar's office to sign the necessary documentation. If you are in a civil partnership we recommend that you consult with the Registry Office.

### **Registering the death when you have already registered the birth**

If you have already registered the birth you do not have to register the death in person. You may wish to ask a close relative to do it for you.

To register the death, the Registrar will need the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death that the doctor gave you and the following information:

- Your names, dates and places of birth and occupations.
- Your baby's first name(s) and surname and the date any time of your baby's birth and death.
- Your home address.

You will be given a certificate for burial or cremation to give to the funeral director and a form for the Department of Social Security.

Please contact the Registry Office in advance to let them know you are coming.

It is sometimes helpful to get a friend or a close relative to go along to the Registry Office with you, as it can be a very difficult process.

## Where are the registry offices?

### **Brighton & Hove Registry Office**

Brighton Town Hall

Bartholomew Square

Brighton, BN1 1JA. Tel: **01273 292016**

or

### **The Registry Office**

Council Offices

Oakland Road

Haywards Heath

West Sussex, RH16 1SU. Tel: **01444 413415**

# How do we arrange a funeral?

## Time to think

Following your baby's death, a funeral will need to be arranged. It is important that you feel you are able to make the arrangements that are appropriate for you and your family.

The majority of funeral directors will not make any charge for conducting the funeral of a baby. There may be nominal charges if you would like a burial. Family or friends may be able to recommend a local funeral director who can discuss with you the arrangement they offer.

Alternatively, if you would like some help and advice about funeral arrangements please contact the bereavement office at the hospital where your baby died and/or one of the chaplaincy team. They can help you to explore various options.

The funeral service can be taken by your minister, the hospital chaplain, yourselves or someone provided by the undertakers. The funeral does not have to be religious in any way at all.

*“Most of us felt more peaceful after the funeral, as we had then completed everything that needed doing and had done all we possibly could for our babies”-*

*SANDS Member Brighton*

## If your baby was stillborn before twenty-four weeks

If you do not wish to make any arrangements the hospital will arrange a cremation service at the Woodvale crematorium. You do not have to attend this service if you do not wish to.



## **If you arrange a funeral privately**

You may wish to contact an undertaker and they will help you to organise the funeral.

## **What other ways are there of remembering our/my baby?**

### **Remembrance services**

If your baby died at the Royal Sussex County Hospital or at the Princess Royal Hospital you will be invited to the annual Remembrance Service the first year after your baby's death. You may wish to be invited to this service each year. The Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children also invites parents and families of babies and children who have died there to its annual Remembrance Service held in Brighton.

### **Memorials**

Each crematorium has options for different memorials in the grounds. You can discuss your wishes with crematorium staff. Telephone numbers are at the end of this booklet.

### **Hospital book of remembrance**

The Royal Sussex County Hospital has a Book of Remembrance for babies, which is kept in the Hospital Chapel. The staff will give you a form to return to the Chaplain's office. The Princess Royal Hospital Book of Remembrance is kept in the Hospital Chapel. There is no charge for an entry in the hospital Book of Remembrance. The Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital also has a Book of Remembrance.

## Ashes

You need to request, in advance, if you wish the cremation ashes to be returned to you after the service. There is only a small amount of ashes remaining after cremation and you may prefer to bury or scatter them in a place special to you. You may need permission to do this on private property. If your baby is cremated at Woodvale Crematorium, prior to the funeral, you will need to make arrangements to collect the ashes.

## Headstones

If you chose a burial service for your baby then you may wish to arrange for a memorial headstone, and to arrange this you need to purchase the burial plot from your local council.

## Memorials in the park

Brighton & Hove City Council can arrange for trees to be planted or benches to be dedicated in local parks, call the City Parks Department on **01273 293049** or **293080**. If you wish to dedicate a bench on the beach, call the Seafront Office on **01273 292715**. For other areas, contact your local council.

## What other support and counselling is there?

### Counselling

Many parents find it helpful to talk about their feelings with a counsellor or another person trained in bereavement. Your GP, Health Visitor or Midwife may be able to arrange counselling for you. Counselling is available via the maternity unit. You do not have to pay for this service.

### Bereavement support

At the Princess Royal Hospital bereavement support is offered by MAPS (Midwives & Parents Support) or through the Chaplaincy department. The bereavement support midwife will contact you within a few days and will be available for you to talk to, either by phone or by visiting you. MAPS also facilitate a support group which meets on the 1st Friday in the month at 7.30pm in the room adjacent to the Antenatal Clinic. It is informal and totally confidential.

At the Royal Sussex County Hospital the 'Just Friends' group of maternity staff and the chaplaincy team will provide support. The Accident & Emergency department offers a counselling service for the parents and families who present via A&E. Details of other counselling and support services are listed on the back of this booklet.

# The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)

SANDS is a national network of bereaved parents who offer befriending in groups and as individuals. It is a registered charity interested in improving the services to parents whose babies die around birth.

## Brighton and Hove SANDS group

Although experiences vary the feelings and problems that death brings are often very similar. The group offers support to anyone whose baby has died, whether very recently or a long time ago.

*“When our babies died, many of us felt we must be the only people to suffer such a terrible loss. The death of a baby is a deeply shocking and distressing experience. It has helped us enormously to know that we are not alone”*

*- SANDS Member Brighton*

## Brighton & Hove SANDS Group - 07799 031645

SANDS has published a number of information leaflets and a book called ‘When a Baby Dies’. SANDS Headquarters has a list of recommended books about the death of a baby for all members of the family.

You can contact SANDS Headquarters for further information, advice or for a publication list at:

**Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society**

28 Portland Place, London W1N 4DE

**0207 436 5881** (Help line) or

**0207 436 7940** (Publications / Administration).

## Helpful telephone numbers

**The Royal Sussex County Hospital 01273 696955**

**Chaplains Ext. 64122**

**Bereavement Office Ext. 64611**

**Midwifery Manager Ext. 64385**

**Trevor Mann Baby Unit, Ext. 64377**

**A&E Counsellor Ext. 64261**

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Ext. 64588**

(PALS acts as a friend within the system to help deal with any difficulties that may arise)

**Counselling Services 01273 381210**

(open Wednesday afternoon and all day Thursday).

**The Princess Royal Hospital 01444 441881**

**Chaplains Ext. 68232**

**Special Care Baby Unit, Ext. 68489**

**Bereavement Office Ext. 68101 / 68107**

**PALS Ext. 65909**

**Midwives and Parents Support Group (MAPS) 01444 448669**

## Registry offices

**Brighton Town Hall 01273 292016**

**Haywards Heath Council Offices 01444 413415**

## Crematoria

**Woodvale Crematorium**

Lewes Road, Brighton **01273 604020**

**Downs Crematorium**

Bear Road, Brighton **01273 601601**

## **Local and national support**

### **Arc National Helpline**

Ante Natal Results and Choices **0207 542802**

### **Child Bereavement Trust**

Administrative centre telephone: **01494 446648**

Information & support service line: **0845 357 1000 / 01494 446648**

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

### **Compassionate Friends**

A self-help organisation for parents whose children have died

**National Office** - 6 Denmark Street, Bristol BS 1 5DQ

**01179 665202**

### **Cruse - Bereavement Care**

An organisation that promotes the well-being of the bereaved

Brighton and Hove

**01273 234007**

### **FSIDS (The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths)**

15 Belgrave Square, London SW1 X 8QB

**Helpline 0207 2332090**

### **Miscarriage Association**

Headquarters **01924 200799**

Brighton contact numbers **01273 888681** and **01273 387915**

### **On The Level - Youth counselling**

26 Ship Street, Brighton BN1 1AE

**Helpline and drop-in sessions 01273 887886**

**Office 01273 230130**

## **Relate**

Relationship Counselling

58 Preston Road, Brighton BN1 4QF

Monday to Friday 9.30am - 9pm

**01273 697997**

## **Samaritans**

24 Hour help for the suicidal and despairing

102 Clarendon Road, Hove BN3 3WQ

**01273 772277**

**National number 0345 909090**

**This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath**

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