



# Help for Bereaved Parents

KEY	
	Hospital Entrance
	Disabled Entrance
<small>*The QPark Shuttle Bus is a free service and is available from various locations around the QE site to transport patients and visitors to the main QE hospital, BWH hospital and QEP hospital buildings</small>	Disabled Parking
	Parking
	Railway Station

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Birmingham Women's **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TG  
Tel: 0121 472 1377 Fax: 0121 627 2602

**Antenatal Results & Choices (ARC)**

An organisation which offers support and advice to women and their families before and after elected termination.

73 Charlotte Street, London, W1P 2LB

Tel: 020 7631 0285

[www.arc-uk.org](http://www.arc-uk.org)

**Twins & Multiple Births Association (TAMBA)**

For parents who have lost one or both twins or more from multiple birth.

PO Box 30, Little Sutton, South Wirral, I66 1TH

Tel: 0151 348 0020

01732 868000 (helpline)

[www.tamba-bsg.org.uk](http://www.tamba-bsg.org.uk)

**Cruse**

Bereavement Care

Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1UR

Helpline 0870 167 1677

**Edwards Trust Sunrise**

43A Calthorpe Road, Birmingham B15 1TS

Tel: 0121 454 1705

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

**The Child Bereavement Charity**

(formerly known as Child Bereavement Trust)

Aston House, West Wycombe, High Wycombe,

Buckinghamshire HP14 3AG

Tel: 01494 446648

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

**References**

The information in this booklet is based on:

*SANDS 'Guidelines for Professionals 2007'*

## Cemeteries

**Witton Cemetery**, Moor Lane, Witton, Birmingham B6 7AE  
Tel: 0121 356 4363

**Quinton Cemetery**, Halesowen Road, Quinton, Birmingham B32 9AF  
Tel: 0121 422 2023

**Kings Norton Cemetery**, Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 9BU  
Tel: 0121 458 5583

**Woodland Burial**, West Hall Park  
Tel: 01386 792806

## Crematoria

**Lodge Hill**, Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 5AA  
Tel: 0121 472 1575

**Yardley**, Yardley Road, South Yardley, Birmingham, B25 8NA  
Tel: 0121 708 1831

**Sutton Coldfield**, Tamworth Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B75 6LG  
Tel: 0121 308 3812

## Useful Addresses

### **Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)**

A self help Organisation for families whose baby has died.

28 Portland Place, London W1N 4DE

Tel: 020 7436 5881 (parent's helpline)  
020 7436 7940

Local contact (Birmingham) 0770 942 5001  
[www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org)

### **Misscarriage Association (MA)**

A national organisation set up by women and men who have been through the pain of miscarriage.

C/O Clayton Hospital, Northgate, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF 3JS  
Tel: 01924 200799  
Local mobile number 07734 356500  
[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

## Introduction

The loss of your baby, whether during pregnancy, labour, or after birth, is a time of great anxiety and distress for you, your husband or partner, other children, your family and friends.

The aim of this booklet is to give you important information and advice so you can make informed choices without feeling too overwhelmed by the decisions you have to make.

In this Trust there are several midwives who are specially trained to give support to bereaved parents. While you are in hospital one of these midwives will try to see you, however occasionally this may not be possible (for example, at weekends, during the night) although we can reassure you that we will know of your admission and the other midwives and nurses caring for you can answer your questions.

We encourage you to ask questions, even if they seem trivial at the time. If the midwives or nurses cannot answer your questions, the Bereavement Midwives or the Chaplaincy department may be able to. Help and support is always available at this very difficult time.

## Taking Time

Taking time to think about what you want for your baby is important – go at your own pace. Only the registration of a baby, who was born alive and died later, needs to be completed quickly (i.e. within five working days).

Some parents wish to see and hold their baby straight away, and some choose not to. It is important to remember that you have a choice, and the staff caring for you will support you in your decision.

Once your baby has left the Delivery Suite or the Neonatal Unit, arrangements can be made for your baby to be taken to the Hospital Chapel for you and your family to see again if you wish. This can also be arranged after you have left hospital, by contacting the Bereavement Office during office hours.

By law, if your baby was born alive or after the 24th week of pregnancy he/she must be buried or cremated - take your time and discuss the options with your partner before deciding what arrangements you wish to make. You may want to provide some special clothes for your baby to be dressed in, or a shawl to wrap him/her in. If you haven't any of your own, the midwife or nurse caring for you and your baby may be able to provide something suitable. A small toy, such as a teddy bear, can be left with your baby.

## Creating Memories

The midwife caring for you in labour, or the nurse caring for your baby on the Neonatal Unit, will be aware of your distress and understand that you may feel you do not want physical memories relating to your baby, but it has been found that some parents are pleased to have these later. These may include photographs, footprints, identification bracelet and/or a lock of hair, which will be presented together in a special memento pack. You can decline any or all mementos if you wish.

## Photographs

The midwife/nurse caring for you will suggest to take photographs of your baby if possible, although photographs are never taken without parental consent. We will offer to take photographs for you, or you may wish to bring in your own camera to take additional photographs of your baby. If you use your own camera, please advise those developing the film about its sensitive nature, as some people may find the photographs distressing.

## Lock of Hair

If possible, a lock of hair can be obtained from your baby and this might give some comfort if placed in a locket or just kept in a special place. If you do not wish to have your baby's hair cut, please tell the midwife or nurse and your wishes will be respected.

## SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) Teardrop Sticker

This sticker is placed on the outside of the mother's notes to identify that she has lost her baby. This ensures that everyone who comes into contact with the bereaved mother is aware of her loss and prevents insensitive questions being asked, especially in subsequent pregnancies.

## A Garden of Remembrance

There may be a local Garden of Remembrance where you may like to plant a tree or shrub to remind you of your baby. You can choose a plant which flowers or blossoms around the time of your baby's anniversary.

## Information Which You May Find Useful

### Birmingham Women's Health Care NHS Trust

Metchely Park Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TG  
[www.bwhct.nhs.uk](http://www.bwhct.nhs.uk)

### Bereavement Office

0121 623 6882

### Chaplaincy Office

0121 472 1377 ext 4208

### Sue Elkin, Nurse Specialist in Gynaecology

0121 607 4737

### Department for Work and Pensions

[www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers)

## Register Office

### Holliday Wharf

Holiday Street  
Birmingham  
B1 1TJ

Opening hours: Monday - Friday 09.00 - 16.00

Tel: 0121 675 1000

Fax: 0121 675 1050

[www.birmingham.gov.uk/registeroffice](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/registeroffice)

**appointments only** Tel: 0121 675 2902

### Council House, King Edward Square, Sutton Coldfield

Opening hours: Monday - Friday 09.00 - 16.00 **appointments only**

Tel: 0121 675 2902

The Trust will pay for a simple but dignified funeral for your baby, but you can make a donation towards the cost if you wish to do so.

The Trust has a contract with a Funeral Director who will organise the date and place where the funeral will be. We will act on your behalf, therefore there is no need for contact between yourselves and the Funeral Director.

## Other Information

### Babies' Book of Remembrance

There is a Book of Remembrance which is kept in the Hospital Chapel – a page for each baby. If you would like an entry inscribed for your baby, there is a form for you to complete which should be returned to the Bereavement Midwife. You will be informed when your entry has been made.

### Annual Service of Remembrance “Celebrating Brief Lives”

Each year since 1994 a special service in memory of ‘special babies’ is held during Baby Loss Awareness Week in October at a local parish church. Parents of all faiths are invited. Those parents who have attended have found them sad but comforting to know that they are not alone in their loss. A few weeks before the service you will receive an invitation to attend. Other children, friends and relatives are very welcome.

### “Still In Our Hearts”

This is a ceremony held in the spring. It offers parents the chance to remember their baby. It is not a religious service, but may include some readings from various cultures.

### A Service in the Hospital Chapel

If your pregnancy ended very early through miscarriage, or was terminated because of an abnormality, you may find a service in the Hospital Chapel helpful and comforting if there is no body to grieve for. This can be arranged shortly after the loss or later, by contacting Nurse Specialist or Chaplaincy department.

You can, if you prefer, organise a personal ceremony at home or in some place which carries special meaning to you and your partner.

## Naming or Blessing Your Baby

Naming can be very important, even for very small babies. Choosing a name is one way of doing something positive for your baby. It helps to give focus and identity to thoughts and feelings about the baby.

It may be impossible to tell the sex of very tiny babies, but you may want to choose a name suitable for either sex.

Some people find it helpful to have a brief ceremony for naming or blessing their baby. You may like to ask someone to do this with you – there are Christian, Muslim and Hindu chaplains within the hospital who will support you in this or you may want to ask someone from your own community. In the hospital we can offer naming ceremonies that can be religious or secular, according to what is right for you. To access further information please visit our website [www.bwhct.nhs.uk](http://www.bwhct.nhs.uk) home page - services - Chaplaincy.

If you would like us to arrange a naming or blessing service for your baby, the midwife/nurse or Bereavement Midwife will contact the Chaplaincy department or another appropriate person.

## Releasing Babies to Parents

There is no legal reason why parents should not take their baby home to make their own arrangements for the funeral. For your protection, and to avoid misunderstandings, there is some important paperwork, which will be given to you to complete.

## Registration

Registration must be completed before a baby can be buried or cremated if he/she was born alive and then died or was stillborn (after the 24th week of pregnancy). There is no legal requirement to register your baby if he/she was not born alive before the 24th week of pregnancy. In England & Wales all births, stillbirths and deaths have to be registered by the Registrar of Births and Deaths.

Although registering a baby's death is very distressing for many parents, it is one small way of beginning to cope with what has happened. Even so, if you do feel unable to see the Registrar in person, then you can ask another 'Qualified Informant' to deal with the registration for you. This may be a grandparent or another close relative, but only applies for a neonatal death (not a stillbirth). You have to give the person you choose all the information the Registrar needs.

## Registering a Stillbirth

The midwife or doctor who attended the delivery of your baby will complete a Medical Certificate of Stillbirth which the Bereavement Midwife will give to you as soon as it is available.

You must take the certificate to the Registrar of Births and Deaths within 42 days of your baby's delivery. An appointment system is available at Birmingham Register Office 0121 675 1000. If you have any queries on registration matters, please contact the Registrar nominated to handle births and deaths at the Registry Office.

The Registrar will ask for:-

- 1) The mother's name, occupation, date and place of birth, and any other names that the mother might have used, including maiden name if applicable.
- 2) The father's name, occupation, date and place of birth, and any other names that the father may have used.
- 3) The date of your baby's delivery.

The Registrar will enter your baby's name in a Stillbirth Register. You can have your baby's first name(s) entered if you wish, as well as the surname, so you may want to give some thought to names for your baby before registering.

The Registrar will give you a white certificate after registration (a Certificate for Burial or Cremation). This is free of charge. It is needed before a funeral can take place and you should give it either to your Funeral Director or, if you have asked the Trust to arrange the funeral for you, to the Bereavement Midwife.

## Arranging a Private Funeral

By arranging the funeral privately you will have more choice over the type of funeral that you want. If you would like your baby to be buried in his/her own private grave where you can erect a headstone afterwards, then you will need to arrange a private funeral through your Funeral Director.

To arrange a private funeral you should contact a local Funeral Director of your choice – you should be able to find information in your local telephone directory or via the internet. It is worth bearing in mind that you are free to contact several Funeral Directors and obtain quotations in advance.

If you are receiving Income Support you may be able to get help from the Social Fund. Your Funeral Director will be able to give you advice and provide the necessary forms for you to complete.

The Funeral Director will need the Certificate of Burial/Cremation which was given to you at registration (a special letter will be provided by the Trust if your baby was not registered i.e. if less than 24 weeks and not alive).

## Help From the Hospital

If you feel you cannot, or do not, wish to organise a funeral yourselves, the Trust will arrange a simple funeral for your baby. You can choose whether you want your baby buried or cremated. If you choose burial, your baby will be buried in a grave shared with other babies in a special part of the cemetery, although only your baby's funeral will take place at that time. As several babies' coffins are buried in one grave it may be several months before the plot is finished and grassed over. It is important to bear in mind that because it is a shared grave there can be no lasting memorial, i.e. headstones or other markers, on the plot.

You can, if you wish, be involved with the funeral. There is no restriction on the members of your family who want to attend.

To arrange a funeral the Bereavement Midwife will ask that you return to the hospital (by prior appointment) with the Certificate for Burial/Cremation to discuss the funeral and to sign the appropriate documents.

## How Long Before The Results Are Available?

Usually the full results will be available in 12-16 weeks. This delay is due to the detailed examination and investigations which are necessary. However post-mortems do not always provide a definite cause of death.

## Funerals

**It is important you take your time and choose what is right for you and your family, and we will wait for you to contact us.**

By law all live-born or stillborn babies (after 24 weeks of pregnancy) must have a formal funeral. Babies born under 24 weeks of pregnancy can also have a funeral.

This may be your first experience of bereavement, and you may not realise what is involved, but the Bereavement Midwife will discuss the options available to you.

The baby's funeral can be a way of moving on a little, or perhaps marking the end of the first stage of grieving. For others in your family, it can be a way of acknowledging your baby's death as well as their own grief.

### You will need to decide:-

- Whether you want your baby buried or cremated (there may not be any ash remaining if you have your baby cremated)
  - Whether you want to make arrangements privately through a Funeral Director or your own choosing
- OR**
- If you would like the funeral to be arranged by the Trust.

You may want to choose a toy or some other item, like a photograph, to go into the coffin with baby. You may also like to choose some special clothes for baby to wear.

The mother or father may register their stillborn baby or baby's birth alone, when they are married to each other. Parents who are not married to each other have to see the Registrar together if they want to have the father's name entered in the birth or stillbirth register.

If you wish, the Registrar will give you, free of charge, a special Stillbirth Certificate for you to keep. This too can show your baby's full name. A full Stillbirth Certificate is also available to the parents at the time of registration, showing parent's details as well as the baby's details, but a fee is charged for the full certificate.

## Registering a Neonatal Death

For babies who die after birth, even if they live for only a very short time, both birth and death must be registered. In order that you can register the death, the doctor who looked after your baby will give you a Medical Certificate of Death. You must take this to the Register of Births and Deaths within five working days of your baby's death. The birth / death may be declared at any Register Office, but can delay the funeral arrangements as the completed paperwork is then sent to the town of birth.

The Registrar will ask for:-

- The mother's name and occupation
- The father's name and occupation
- The date of your baby's delivery
- Your baby's name
- The date of your baby's death (shown on the Medical Certificate of Death)

When registering the death, the Registrar will record your baby's first name(s) as well as the surname, so you may want to give some thought to names for your baby before registering.

The Registrar will give you a green certificate after the registration (a Certificate for Burial or Cremation). This is free of charge. It is needed before a funeral can take place and you should give it either to your Funeral Director or, if you have asked the Trust to arrange the funeral for you, to the Bereavement Midwife. A white certificate is also issued free of charge to notify the Social Fund, part of the Department of Work and Pensions.

## Registration in Coroner's Cases

In a few cases the Coroner's Office is informed of a baby's death because the doctor is unable to issue a Death Certificate.

The Registrar may also inform the Coroner to seek advice if the cause of death entered on the certificate is not clear, but this happens rarely.

You will be informed at the hospital by the doctor or the Bereavement Midwife if the Coroner is to be involved. The Coroner will issue a special certificate to enable registration and the funeral to take place.

## Special Registration for Urgent Burial

Some parents, for religious or cultural reasons, may want to have their baby buried as quickly as possible. If the death occurs near a Bank Holiday or a weekend the local Registrar will be able to issue a Certificate of Burial to allow this to go ahead, provided the death is not reported to the Coroner and the baby is not to be cremated. The Bereavement Midwife will give you more information.

## Post-Mortem Examination

It will be recommended that a post-mortem examination be carried out on your baby. It can be very difficult and distressing to think of such an examination, but sometimes a post-mortem is the only way to provide information which may help you to understand what (if anything) was wrong with your baby.

## Other Reasons for Post-Mortem Examination

It may be that the doctors do not know the cause of your baby's death and so cannot issue a Death Certificate, or more information is needed to confirm the cause of death. In these circumstances the doctor is legally responsible and will have to report the death to the Coroner for advice. If the Coroner decides a post-mortem is necessary it can be done without your consent.

Post-mortem examination is helpful to confirm antenatal diagnosis such as abnormalities seen on scans, especially if you had your pregnancy terminated because abnormalities were detected in your pregnancy.

By doing a post-mortem examination, important information can be gained which can help you in the future if you wish to have another baby, or help other couples who have similar problems. In these cases you do not have to agree to a post-mortem unless you feel you want to, and the post-mortem will not be carried out without your written consent.

More information will be given in writing as well as verbally for you to consider before giving your consent.

## Where Will The Post-Mortem Be Carried Out?

If this is a Coroner's post-mortem it is usually carried out at the Coroner's mortuary by a pathologist of his choice, but your baby will be brought back here or taken by your Funeral Director to their Chapel of Rest.

If you have given your written consent the examination will be carried out here in this Trust. We are very fortunate to have our own Perinatal Pathologist who specialises in the examination of babies. The examination will be carried out with care in a sensitive manner. In most cases you will be able to see and hold your baby again after the post-mortem.

## How Long Will This Take?

There is usually no delay in performing the examination, once written consent has been received by the pathologist, but it is only carried out on weekdays (Monday to Friday). If your baby is under 24 weeks, the examination may take a little longer to perform because of the baby's size and so there may be some delay in releasing the body for a funeral. Delays may also occur if the pathologist feels he needs longer to confirm the cause of death.