

When your baby dies

Help for you following a bereavement



Information for patients

Maternity Services



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



This leaflet has been developed from the questions that parents often ask following the death of their baby.

We appreciate that at a time like this you will be upset, perhaps feeling confused and emotional. You may not be able to absorb all the information being given to you. We have produced this booklet so that you do not need to worry about remembering everything. It aims to combine all the information you will need for the days following your loss. We have tried to provide as much detail as we can, but if you require any further assistance or advice please do not hesitate to contact:

Jessop Wing Bereavement Services

- 0114 226 8425
- sth.jessopwingbereavement@nhs.net *

or

The Neonatal Unit

- 0114 226 8456 (if your baby was on the unit)

If your baby died on the Neonatal Unit please go straight to page 5 (washing and dressing your baby).

* Please be aware that sending information from a personal email address to Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (STHNFT) is an insecure method of communication and occasionally emails may not reach the bereavement services team. STHNFT Bereavement Services accepts no liability for the contents of your email nor can be held responsible for undelivered emails.

Giving birth

We are very sorry your baby has died. In order to give birth, labour may need to be induced. If so, any medication required for induction will be discussed with you. It is not possible to predict how long either induction or labour will take. If medication is required for induction it may be more than 48 hours before labour starts.

How is my labour induced?

You may be given a tablet by mouth to prepare the cervix (neck of the womb); you can then go home and return 2 days later for vaginal pessaries that will make the womb start to contract. This treatment may not be suitable for you if you have certain pre-existing medical conditions. Please discuss with your midwife.

After the initial tablet you may start to bleed or have mild period pain. Most women do not experience any of the above symptoms. However, there is a very small chance that you could go into labour at this stage. If you are at all worried about pain or bleeding please contact the **Labour Ward Assessment Unit (Triage)** on:

- **0114 226 8091**

Returning to hospital

You will be asked to come to the 24 hour reception on labour ward where the staff will be expecting you. You will then be admitted to your own room on the labour ward. It is a good idea to have breakfast before you come in and bring a book / magazine or something to occupy you. We would also recommend that you bring in some comfortable clothing to wear for your labour and birth, and a small amount of toiletries such as shower gel, toothpaste etc. You may also wish to bring in clothes, teddies or keepsakes for your baby.

During your stay on Labour Ward you will be allocated a named midwife to care for you. Your midwife will explain to you the induction of your labour, choices of position in labour and pain relief methods available to you.

There are some common side effects of the drugs we use, these are:

- Diarrhoea
- Sickness
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Hot flushes / chills

If you have any of these, please do not worry but do mention them to the midwife caring for you.

Once your baby is born we recommend an injection to help deliver the afterbirth and prevent bleeding.

Occasionally the afterbirth is not delivered completely; in this case you may need to go to theatre and have an examination under anaesthetic to remove the remainder of the afterbirth. The doctor will discuss this with you.

Support during labour

Any family member can stay with you during your labour and birth. A small cafeteria on Level 1 of the Jessop Wing is available to them during the hours of 8.00am - 6.00pm daily, where refreshments can be purchased. Outside of these times there are several vending machines throughout the building or staff can direct your relative(s) to local shops.

You may have developed a relationship with your community midwife and if you feel you would like her to visit you, we will try to arrange this. Her caseload may, however, mean that she may not be able to stay with you, but every effort will be made to accommodate your wishes.

After the birth

Can I see or hold my baby?

Whether you see or hold your baby is entirely for you and your partner to decide. We will fully respect your wishes. If you are unsure, staff will be happy to discuss this with you. If you do not want to see or hold your baby please let the staff know before your baby is born. Your baby can be brought to you later if you change your mind.

What will my baby look like?

Immediately after birth, there may be some red or blue blotches on the baby's skin and, occasionally, some peeling. These changes are all normal. If your baby died some time before birth some of the skin changes may be advanced. If you are unsure about seeing your baby, you may wish to ask your midwife to describe your baby's appearance to you first.

If you are holding your baby at a later time, your baby's body will have been kept cool to avoid deterioration. You should be aware therefore that your baby may feel cold.

Can I wash and dress my baby?

If you wish to wash and/or dress your baby, a member of staff will be able to assist you. The hospital can provide clothes, particularly for a very small baby, or you may wish to use clothes you have specifically bought for your baby.

Photographs, hand and foot prints

Photographs can be taken by our medical photographers, with your consent, and offered to you at a later date. If you do not wish to see these at this time they will be stored in your medical notes. You may also

wish to take some photographs yourselves, including various other members of your family with your baby. A hospital camera and printer can be made available for you to use. You will be provided with an individual memory card.

Hand and foot prints can also be taken by staff and transferred onto a remembrance card for you.

Naming and blessing ceremony

Some parents find it helpful to mark the birth and death of their baby by having a simple naming service or ceremony. Although most ceremonies happen shortly after the death, a ceremony can be arranged at any time before the funeral, or be included in a funeral service.

- Christian chaplains can provide a naming and blessing ceremony. They will be happy to discuss with you how you would like this service to be.
- Muslim chaplains can provide bathing and shrouding and say the appropriate prayers.
- Other faith representatives can be contacted by the chaplaincy team by request.

As well as naming ceremonies, chaplains are available to offer pastoral, spiritual and religious support. They are able to listen and explore questions and concerns that you may have.

What will happen to my baby next?

You may keep your baby with you for as long or as short a time as you wish whilst you are on the ward. Some parents like to take their baby home with them for a short visit and this is usually possible. Before you leave you will need to ensure that you have an explanatory letter from the hospital. Please remember, however, that your baby needs to be kept cool to prevent deterioration. A portable cooling mattress is available for you to loan.

Whilst in the Jessop Wing, your baby will generally be cared for in the Bereavement Suite on Level 1.

If at any time after you leave hospital and before the funeral you wish to see your baby, this can be arranged. Please contact one of the following teams as appropriate:

Bereavement Services

- 0114 226 8425 (Monday to Friday: 8.00am to 4.00pm)

Labour Ward

- 0114 226 8223 (Evenings and weekends)

Neonatal Unit

- 0114 226 8456 (Evenings and weekends)

Other investigations and postmortem examination

You will be advised that various investigations may help to explain the death of your baby. They may also provide information for planning future pregnancies. These investigations include blood tests, swabs, examination of the placenta (afterbirth) and a post mortem if requested. All these tests will be discussed fully with you.

A post mortem is a medical and surgical examination of your baby's body by a paediatric pathologist, who specialises in identifying conditions that affect babies to find out why they have died.

Staff will discuss the consent form with you and provide an information booklet about the examination. Unless instructed by the coroner, you are under no pressure to agree to a postmortem or any other examinations and tests if you do not wish them to be carried out.

What should I expect when I go home?

When you go home you may bleed for up to 2-3 weeks and have mild period type pains. You should not use tampons until your next period starts.

You may take painkillers. You may also have some leakage of milk from your breasts; wearing a well fitted bra helps with any discomfort this causes. We will also give you some medication to help with this before you leave the hospital if you wish.

It is important that you contact your GP if:

- You have severe pain which is not relieved with mild painkillers
- You feel feverish
- You have excessive bleeding
- You have an offensive vaginal discharge

Registration

Will I have to register the death of my baby?

If your baby was born alive and then died you will legally need to register both the birth and death. It is a legal requirement for a death to be registered within 5 working days.

If your baby was born after 24 complete weeks of pregnancy and showed no signs of life you will need to register the birth as a stillbirth. The registration for a stillbirth has to be completed within 42 days.

If your baby was born before 24 weeks of pregnancy and showed no signs of life, you do not need to register the birth.

Who can register my baby?

If the mother is married to the baby's father, either one of you can register your baby.

If the mother and father are not married to each other, the father alone cannot register the baby. If both parents' details are to be included in the entry, both of you need to attend together. If the mother attends on her own, only her details will be included.

Where and when will I have to register my baby?

Registration needs to be at the local Office of Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths in the district where the death occurred. For the Jessop Wing this is:

- **The Register Office**
Town Hall
Pinstone Street
Sheffield S1 2HH (entrance on Norfolk Street)

You will need to take the paperwork given to you at the hospital to the register office. You will then be issued with a white or green certificate of burial or cremation which your funeral director will need before they can arrange the funeral of your baby.

All registrations are by appointment. The office is open between:

- 8.45am - 5.15pm, Monday to Thursday
- 8.45am - 4.45pm, Friday

Telephone number: 0114 203 9427

Email: registeroffice@sheffield.gov.uk

Appointments can be booked on line via the Sheffield City Council website:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/births-deaths-marriages/register-death>

Funeral

How will I arrange the funeral service?

Bereavement Services will be able to advise you on funeral options for your baby. We can liaise with the hospital appointed funeral director on your behalf - **please see section A: Hospital arranged funeral.**

Alternatively, you may decide to use a funeral director of your choice: please note, you may then have to pay the appropriate costs - **please see section B: Privately arranged funeral.**

A: Hospital arranged funeral

The following arrangements are made at no cost to you:

- A car to collect you and/or your baby and take you to the place of the service
- If parents travel with their baby to the place of the service, return transport is provided
- A simple casket with nameplate
- A chaplain, faith leader, or other person of your choice to conduct the service

For burial

A simple chapel or graveside service followed by burial into a grave shared with other babies.

Burials take place at Tinsley Park Cemetery. Your baby will be buried in an individual casket, but the grave is shared with up to 20 babies.

Individual baby graves may be purchased through the funeral director via the Children's Funeral Fund, subject to eligibility.

For cremation

A simple service in the crematorium chapel.

There are 3 crematoria in Sheffield; City Road, Grenoside and Hutcliffe Wood.

Anything extra to the above will need to be negotiated with the funeral director and paid for via the Children's Funeral Fund, subject to eligibility.

Joint committal service

Babies born between 16 and 23 + 6 weeks of pregnancy will be offered a joint committal service at a Sheffield Crematorium or Sheffield Cemetery. These shared services commemorate a number of babies of similar age. Some parents choose to attend and others decide not to.

The service is coordinated by Bereavement Services and led by a chaplain and there is no cost to you. Additional information is available upon request.

B: Privately arranged funerals

If you wish to make your own arrangements the options of cremation, or burial into the shared grave at Tinsley Park Cemetery are available to you. In addition, you may purchase a family grave, or a small grave just large enough for your baby to be buried. You will need to speak to a funeral director to obtain relevant prices for the graves. Subject to eligibility criteria, funeral costs may be met by the Children's Funeral Fund. If you decide to make your own arrangements a chaplain may still be able to take the service for you if required.

Muslim graves are available at City Road, Tinsley Park and Shiregreen cemeteries. These are purchased graves, and you will need to make

arrangements with a funeral director. Subject to eligibility criteria, funeral costs may be met by Children's Funeral Fund.

Jewish graves are available in Abbey Lane Cemetery, but consent must be obtained from the Sheffield and District Reform Jewish Congregation prior to contacting a funeral director. These are purchased graves, and you will need to make arrangements with a funeral director. Subject to eligibility criteria, funeral costs may be met by the Children's Funeral Fund.

Can I include personal items in the casket?

You may decide that you would like to include some personalised items in the casket with your baby. These may include a small toy, a letter or family photograph. If cremation is to occur, please avoid synthetic items such as teddy bears and acrylic blankets, jewellery and plastic items. All items must be flammable.

What if I do not wish to attend a funeral?

If you do not wish to attend a funeral, your baby will be cremated at City Road Crematorium. If you would like some simple prayers said in your absence, both Bereavement Services and/or the chaplain will be happy to discuss your preferences with you.

Remembering your baby

Remembrance items

The Jessop Wing has a Bereavement Suite with a garden where glass teardrops can be hung on metal weeping willow trees. The teardrops cost £20 each and can be engraved with your baby's name and up to two dates. Further information is available from Bereavement Services.

A remembrance book is available for parents to make a personalised entry. This can be undertaken either during your stay in hospital or at a later date. Many families return to the hospital to write in the remembrance book when they have been able to gather their thoughts. Again, Bereavement Services will be able to help arrange a suitable date and time if you wish to do this.

Baby Memorial Service

An annual Baby Memorial and Thanksgiving Service is held each Spring. Unless you indicate otherwise, you will receive an invitation to attend. Many families find it helpful to join other similar parents at this event. For further details contact Bereavement Services.

Further help

Follow-up care

Your GP and community midwife will be made aware of the death of your baby. Your community midwife will then offer to visit you when you return home. If you would prefer not to be seen, you will be given the contact details of both your GP and community midwife if you have any concerns.

Your consultant will contact you by letter with a follow-up appointment. At this appointment you will have the opportunity to discuss your baby's birth, your medical care and the results of any tests you consented to during your stay in hospital. Future care plans for any subsequent pregnancies may also be discussed. Please be aware that this can be up to 12 weeks after the death of your baby, and will depend on whether a postmortem has been performed. This time lapse allows for the postmortem results to be available at the consultation.

Frequently asked questions include:

- Was there anything wrong with my baby?
- Did my baby suffer?
- Why did it happen, could it have been prevented?
- Is there anything we can do to prevent it re-occurring?
- Will there be any extra tests available in my next pregnancy?
- When can we try for another baby?

Psychological wellbeing midwife

We have a psychological wellbeing midwife who can offer emotional support both during and after your hospital stay. She will be able to signpost you and your family to other services available if necessary.

Is it possible to become pregnant straight away?

You can start having sex again once bleeding has settled. We usually recommend that you wait until after you have been back for your clinic appointment and had a chance to discuss your results with the doctor before you become pregnant again.

Financial assistance

A range of financial support is available to bereaved parents. Full details are included in the Money Advice Service leaflet in the bereavement support pack.

Useful contacts

The following organisations offer support to bereaved parents:

ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices)

Support and information for parents throughout antenatal screening. They provide advice and support on decision making following test results including the decision to terminate. Ongoing support is available to parents who decide on termination

- Helpline: 0845 077 2290 or 0207 713 7486
- Email: info@arc-uk.org
- Website: www.arc-uk.org

BLISS

The special care baby charity, provides support and care to premature and sick babies across the UK including support and advice following bereavement.

- Helpline: 0808 801 0322
- Email: hello@bliss.org.uk
- Website: www.bliss.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

Aims to improve the care offered by professionals to grieving families following the death of someone important in their lives.

- Helpline: 0800 02 888 40
- Email: support@childbereavementuk.org
- Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

The Compassionate Friends

Provides advice and local support from and for bereaved families.

- Helpline: 0345 123 2304
- Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk
- Website: www.tcf.org.uk

CRUSE Bereavement Care

Cruse provides counselling, support, information and advice following the death of someone close.

Sheffield Branch:

- Helpline: 0114 249 3328
- Email: sheffield@cruse.org.uk

National Office:

- Helpline: 0808 808 1677
- Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk
- Website: www.cruse.org.uk

The Lullaby Trust

Provides specialist support for bereaved families and anyone affected by a sudden infant death.

- Helpline: 0808 802 6868
- Email: support@lullabytrust.org.uk
- Website: www.lullabytrust.org.uk

Miscarriage Association

Information, advice and support for women who have had, or are having, a miscarriage. Local contacts and groups.

- Helpline: 01924 200 799 (9.00am-4.00pm, Monday-Friday)
- Email: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Perinatal Institute

Undertakes audit, research and education to support improvements in the quality and safety of maternity care.

- Helpline: 0121 607 0101
- Website: <https://www.perinatal.org.uk/>

SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society)

National network of support groups for bereaved parents.

Sheffield branch:

- Helpline: via National helpline
- Email: Sheffield@sands.org.uk

Chesterfield branch:

- Helpline: via National helpline
- Email: chesterfieldsands@gmail.com

National office:

- Helpline: 0808 164 3332
- Email: helpline@sands.org.uk
- Website: www.sands.org.uk



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