

Saint Mary's Hospital
Newborn Services

Information for Parents

When a baby dies in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit

My Baby's Neonatal Consultant _____

My Baby's Surgical/Other Consultant _____

Consultant Secretary _____

Bereavement Team Contact: Office answer phone (0161) 276 6551

Mobile _____

Please use this space to write down further contact numbers

Name _____ Number _____

Name _____ Number _____

Appointment with the Registrar _____

Appointment with the Funeral Director _____

Space for notes

Introduction

The death of your baby is an unimaginably sad and tragic event. The days following your baby's death will be difficult and you may find it hard to think about all the arrangements that need to be made. This booklet will offer some practical advice that you may find helpful.

The Bereavement Team on the Newborn Intensive Care Unit and the Family Support Centre in the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital are available to support you through this difficult time.

If English is not your first language, translators are available to help you.

The coroner's responsibility

Following the death of a child in Manchester, the doctor is required to make a report to the Manchester Coroner. The coroner will require a clear understanding of why your baby has died. If for any reason the cause of death is not clear, or there are unanswered questions, the coroner may request further enquiries to be made, which may include a post mortem. It may take 24-48 hours for this decision to be made.

If the coroner orders a **Coroner's Post Mortem**, this is a legal requirement and your consent is not required. The doctor will explain what will happen and you will be contacted by the Coroner's Officer. More information about the role of the Manchester Coroner can be found at www.manchester.gov.uk/coroners.

If the coroner does not request a post mortem examination, the doctor may feel there could be information gained that would be helpful to you, and you will be offered a **Hospital Post Mortem**.

If you are unsure and would like further information, please ask the nurse caring for your baby or a member of the Bereavement Team for the booklet:

Deciding about a post mortem examination. Information for parents. Produced by Sands, the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society. The booklet is also available at www.uk-sands.org.

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death is a document issued by the doctor if the cause of your baby's death is agreed with the coroner. This is a legal document that contains your baby's details and the cause of their death. You will need to give this to the registrar to register the death of your baby.

If we are unable to give you the MCCD before you leave the hospital, you will be told when and where to collect it.

If the coroner has requested a post mortem, and/or opened an investigation or inquest, a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will not be issued by the doctor. The coroner will issue the documentation needed to register your baby's death when the inquiry is finalised.

The coroner's investigation or inquest may take several weeks or months to be completed. However once the post mortem is completed, the coroner will issue the necessary documentation that will allow the funeral to take place.

Registration of birth and death

If the death is subject to a coroner's enquiry you will not need to register the death of your baby. The Coroner's Officer will contact you once the enquiry is completed. However, you will still be required to register your baby's birth.

Legally, both the birth and death of your baby must be registered. A birth must be registered within 42 days of birth, and **a death must be registered within 5 days**. If your baby is under 6 weeks old, the birth and death of your baby can be registered at the same time.

When a baby dies in the Manchester region, the death is required to be registered in Manchester. However, if you do not live in Manchester, you can choose to register your baby's death at your local Register Office by declaration. If you decide to do this, please discuss this with the Registrar as soon as possible as this may affect your funeral plans.

You can make an appointment at the Register Office, Heron House, 47, Lloyd Street, Manchester, M2 5LE, by telephoning (0161) 234 5005 (9.00 am - 4.30 pm, Monday - Friday).

It may also be possible to register your baby's death within the hospital. The Registrar attends the Family Support Centre on the ground floor of the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital on a Wednesday and Friday. The unit staff or a member of the Bereavement Team can help with this.

The Registrar will give you:

- A death certificate (copies can be purchased at a cost of £4 per copy).
- A green form. This is the certificate of burial or cremation and needs to be given to the funeral director.

If your baby died at the weekend or on a Bank Holiday, and it is your wish to hold the funeral as soon as possible, the Registrar is available to issue the necessary paperwork. Up to date contact details for the Registrar on a Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holiday can be found on the internet at:

http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200032/deaths_funerals_and_cemeteries/6698/register_a_death

The Children's (Paediatric) Mortuary

The Children's Mortuary is located on the 3rd floor of the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, which is directly above the Newborn Intensive Care Unit. Your baby will be taken there by the nurse caring for your baby and it may be possible for you to accompany your baby if you wish.

The staff who work there are very experienced with looking after babies and children who have died, from early pregnancy to 18 years old. They will treat your baby with the upmost respect, dignity and care.

In most cases, your baby will remain in the Children's Mortuary until your appointed Funeral Director comes to collect them.

If you would like to see your baby in the Children's Mortuary, please contact the Newborn Intensive Care Unit coordinator on (0161) 701 0946 to see when this is possible and to arrange a time.

If the Coroner has requested a post mortem, or you have requested a Hospital Post Mortem, this will take place at the Children's Mortuary. If you wish to see your baby following a post mortem the staff will explain to you what to expect.

If you have any questions about the care your baby will receive in the mortuary, you can contact the staff there on (0161) 701 2254.

If you do not wish to come back to the hospital, you can arrange to spend time with your baby at the funeral director's premises.

Taking your baby home

Once the Coroner has agreed an MCCD can be issued, there is no legal reason why you cannot take your baby home. You may wish to have your baby at home just for a few hours or for several days before the funeral. If you would like to take your baby home, please speak to the nurse caring for your baby.

You may wish to ask your appointed funeral director to advise you on how to care for your baby at home. It is important to keep your baby cool to slow the natural changes that take place after death. You can do this by turning off the heating, keeping the room ventilated and putting icepacks under the sheets.

If you do not want to take your baby home, it may be possible to use the cool room facilities of a local hospice to spend time with your baby before the funeral.

A funeral director

Holding a funeral for your baby is a legal requirement and although it is possible to make the funeral arrangements yourself, most parents ask a funeral director.

It may be helpful to contact a funeral director as soon as possible as they can guide and advise you on the practical and legal requirements.

There is no set cost for a funeral and the cost may vary. Many funeral directors charge a very nominal amount for a baby's funeral. The cost may increase however for any special requirements. The fees required for the funeral are cemetery and crematorium fees.

You, or a family member or friend, may wish to enquire with a few different local funeral companies to find out about the services they offer and the fees they would charge.

If you are on a low income and in receipt of certain benefits, you may be able to get a Funeral Payment from the Social Fund using the SF200 form. For more information see www.gov.uk/funeral-payments or alternatively contact your local Jobcentre Plus or Jobs and Benefits Office.

The Funeral Director will need the green form the Registrar gave you before making final arrangements.

Arranging the funeral

This may be the first time you have needed to arrange a funeral or the first time you have ever had to attend one. It can be difficult to know what to do and where to begin and making decisions at this time, when you are shocked and grieving, is not easy.

Arranging a funeral is something very important you can do for your baby and you may want to talk to family and friends for suggestions before making definite arrangements. The Bereavement Team can support and guide you through this.

You will need to decide whether your baby will be buried or cremated. If your baby is to be cremated the doctor will need to prepare the necessary paperwork.

A funeral can be religious or non-religious, traditional or a ceremony of your own design. It is important that you take your time and you may want to ask for help from close family and friends.

Some parents wish their baby to be flown to another country for the service. Should you make this choice, your funeral director will advise you how to do this.

A funeral arranged by the hospital

Hospital funerals arranged by Saint Mary's Hospital are held at either:

Southern Cemetery	OR	Manchester Crematorium
Nell Lane		Barlow Moor Road
Chorlton		Chorlton
Manchester		Manchester
M21 7GL		M21 7GZ

If you choose to have your baby buried there is a special plot, named the Baby Garden, in Southern Cemetery, Manchester. Your baby will not have an individual plot but will be buried in a multi-faith shared grave with babies of all religions. Some parents find it comforting to know that their baby will not be alone.

As this is a shared grave you will not be able to have an individual head stone, but your baby's name will be engraved on a memorial stone provided by the cemetery and placed after a length of time to allow the earth to settle (around 6-12 months).

There are some limitations about the mementos you can leave at the grave in the future.

If you would like further information about the cost of a hospital funeral, please speak to the nurse caring for your baby, a member of the Neonatal Bereavement Team or call the Family Support Team on (0161) 701 8700.

Chaplaincy-spiritual care department

The Multi Faith Chaplaincy Team offer pastoral, emotional and spiritual support to families of any religious faith or non-religious families.

If you would like support from a chaplain please contact the Multi Faith Centre during office hours on (0161) 276 8792.

Supporting children

Brothers, sisters and children can be greatly affected by the death of a baby and grieve just like adults, although they may show it in different ways.

Although adults may want to protect children from the sadness of death, it is important that children are given truthful information to help them make sense of what has happened. It can help now, and when they are older, if they are involved and know what is happening.

Children's understanding of death varies with age but even a young toddler will be aware of, and react to, the sadness around them. Adults may notice a change in behaviour of young children as they often do not have the language to express their feelings verbally.

It is important to advise your child's nursery or school that your baby has died so they are able to support them.

If you have concerns about telling your children about the death of your baby, or their response and behaviour, you can seek advice from the Neonatal Bereavement Team who can provide support literature, books and activities for your children.

The Neonatal Bereavement Team holds an annual support event for bereaved siblings. This is an opportunity to be with other children and express their thoughts and feelings through creative art.

Advice is also available online from:

SANDS

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charity in their booklet *Supporting children when a baby dies*.
www.uk-sands.org.

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org

Winstons Wish

Charity for bereaved children.
www.winstonswish.org.uk

Support for you

Neonatal Bereavement Team

A small team of neonatal nurses are trained to support families following the death of their baby. One of the team will contact you shortly to offer help and support in the days and months ahead. They are available to chat over the phone and can arrange a visit at your home.

You can contact the Neonatal Bereavement Team on (0161) 276 6551. If you reach the answer phone please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible. However this may not be the same day and if your query is urgent, please contact the NICU coordinator on (0161) 701 0946.

Counselling support

There is a more specialised therapeutic support available to you with the Neonatal Unit Counsellor. If you would like to access this service, talk to a member of the Bereavement Team or alternatively you can contact the counsellor directly to arrange private and confidential counselling sessions on (0161) 276 6045. It may be months later following the loss that you decide to attend counselling sessions to gain support for your grief. Do not hesitate to get in touch with the counsellor if this is the case.

Therapeutic counselling may also be available from your G.P, through a bereavement charity or from counsellors working privately who specialise in working with loss and grief. The Neonatal Bereavement team can help if you wish to explore the options or be signposted to the sources of support that may be most suitable for you.

Other support

Friends and family can be a great source of support at this difficult time. However, it can be helpful to speak to someone who is not a family member or close friend and someone who has had a similar experience. There may be active support groups in your area to meet with other bereaved parents. Some charities also have telephone help lines and online forums.

What happens next?

The hospital will inform your **GP**, **Health Visitor** and **Midwife**. They may contact you to offer support.

The hospital consultant will write to you to offer an appointment to meet with you in 6-8 weeks. This is an opportunity to ask any questions about your baby and the time they spent on NICU. It may be helpful to keep a note of any questions you may wish to ask at this appointment.

If you are waiting for any test results, or to discuss the post mortem, the appointment may be delayed until these are available.

If you would like to rearrange the appointment please contact the consultant secretary using the telephone number provided on the letter.

In the future

Your baby will not be forgotten on the Neonatal Unit at Saint Mary's Hospital in Manchester. During the first year following your baby's death, you will receive an invitation to attend the Saint Mary's annual **Baby Remembrance Service** in the summer, and an event held by the Neonatal Bereavement Team in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

In the Snowdrop Suite on the NICU at Saint Mary's Hospital, we have a **Book of Remembrance** and you are invited to dedicate a page in memory of your baby. This page is for you to create and you may choose to write your own inscription/poem/prayer and include a drawing directly on the page. Alternatively you can send your chosen wording to us and we will print it in the book. Please note that photographs will not be included within the book. If you would like us to send you a page or would like your words included in the Book of Remembrance, please contact the Neonatal Bereavement Team.

The Nursing and Medical Staff on the NICU at Saint Mary's are constantly seeking to improve the care they give to families who experience bereavement. To facilitate this, we ask parents if they would complete a brief **questionnaire/online survey** which you will receive in 6-12 months.

What to do in the next few days

- Collect your baby's Medical Certificate of Cause of Death from the doctors on the NICU or contact the Coroner's Office.
- Register the Birth and Death of your baby.
- Contact a funeral director of your choice.

If you are thinking of a hospital funeral, please contact the Bereavement Advisor in Family support at the Children's Hospital (0161) 701 8700.

Saint Mary's Hospital contact numbers:

Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Reception

(0161) 701 2700

NICU Coordinator

(0161) 701 0946

Neonatal Bereavement Team (answer phone available)

(0161) 276 6551

NICU Counsellor

(0161) 276 6045

Hospital Chaplains/Multi-Faith Centre

(0161) 276 8792

Family Support Centre (Royal Manchester Children's Hospital)

(0161) 701 8700

Children's Mortuary

(0161) 701 2254

Useful addresses

Manchester Registry Office

Heron House
47 Lloyd Street
Manchester
M2 5LE
(0161) 234 5005
9.00 - 4.30 pm Monday-Friday

Coroner

HM Coroner's Office
Crown Square
Manchester
M60 1PR
(0161) 219 2222

Neonatal Bereavement Team

Newborn Intensive Care Unit
Saint Mary's Hospital
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9WL

Organisations offering bereavement support

SANDS

020 7436 5881

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charity

www.uk-sands.org.

Child Bereavement UK

0800 02 888

www.childbereavementuk.org

The Twins and Multiple Births Association Bereavement Support Group (TAMBA)

0800 138 0509

www.tamba.org.uk/bsg

Child Death Helpline

0800 282 986

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Cruse

0844 477 9400

www.crusebereavement.org.uk

Baby Mailing Preference Service (MPS)

020 7291 3310

www.mpsonline.org.uk

(register online to help reduce the number of baby-related mailings you receive).

Money Advice Service

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk