

Saint Mary's Hospital
Newborn Services

Information for Parents

When a baby dies in the Newborn Services

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 Newborn Services 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 Medical examiner

Following the death of your baby, the medical team will contact the medical examiner. The medical examiners are senior consultants or general practitioners (GPs). They will look at the medical records and give independent advice as to what caused the death. They can also help to decide if the death should be reported to the coroner. This is a process that has to happen to ensure that all deaths within the trust are properly scrutinised.

The Medical Examiner and their staff (usually called medical examiner officers) can contact you to provide you with an opportunity to raise any questions or concerns about the cause of death or the care your baby received. This will usually be a telephone call. Your contact with the medical examiner is voluntary, so please let your bereavement support nurse know if you would like them to contact you and this can be arranged.

We understand you may want an urgent burial due to religious reasons and the medical examiner team will make every effort to avoid any delays in issuing the medical certificate to allow you to register the death.

The direct number for the Medical Examiner office is **0161 291 3266**

The coroner's responsibility

Following the death of a child in Manchester, the doctor is sometimes 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 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 as the process may take longer.

The nurse caring for you will send an electronic copy of the medical certificate to the register office along with your contact details. The register office will contact you by telephone to arrange an appointment for you to go in and register your baby's death.

The Manchester Register office is located at:

Heron House

47 Lloyd Street

Manchester

M2 5LE

0161 234 5005 (9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

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. You will then need to go into the register office later to finalise the registration.

The Mortuary

If your baby dies at St Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road then they will be cared for in the Children's Mortuary. This is located on the third floor of the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, which is directly above the Newborn Intensive Care Unit.

If your baby dies at Wythenshawe Hospital, they will be cared for in Lily's room which is on ward C3. They will then be taken to the hospital mortuary which is located on the ground floor of the hospital.

If your baby dies at North Manchester Hospital, they will be cared for in the mortuary which is on the ground floor of the hospital.

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 and they will treat your baby with the upmost respect, dignity and care. In most cases, your baby will remain in the 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 bereavement team on 0161 276 6551 and we can arrange to support you with this.

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 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.

The Funeral

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 if you have special requirements. The Children's Funeral Fund for England can help to pay for some of the costs of a funeral, including burial or cremation fees and a coffin, shroud, or casket. This is not means tested and is available to everybody. Your funeral director will claim the money back from the government, so you usually won't have to pay anything up front. You can get more information about this on the government website <https://www.gov.uk/child-funeral-costs>

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 eligible for a Funeral Expenses Payment which is a government scheme. You can find out more information about this on the government website or at www.moneyhelper.org.uk.

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

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. 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.

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:
Oxford Road: 0161 276 8792
Wythenshawe: 0161 291 2297
North Manchester: 0161720 2990

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 Newborn Services Bereavement Team who can provide support literature, books and activities for your children.

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

Newborn Services Bereavement Team

A small team of neonatal nurses are trained to support families following the death of their baby. You will be allocated a key worker who will contact you shortly to offer help and support in the days and months ahead.

You can contact the Newborn Services Bereavement Team on 0161 276 6551. If you reach the answerphone, 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:

Oxford Road: 0161 701 0946

Wythenshawe: 0161 291 2932

North Manchester: 0161 625 8227

Counselling support

There is a more specialised therapeutic support available to you with the Newborn Services Counselling Team. 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 Newborn Services 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. This is an opportunity to ask any questions about your baby and the time they spent on Newborn Services. 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.

In the future

Your baby will not be forgotten on the Newborn Services. 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 Newborn Services 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 your baby died at Wythenshawe or North Manchester and you would like us to send you a page or would like your words included in the Book of Remembrance, please contact the Newborn Services Bereavement Team.

The Nursing and Medical Staff on the Newborn Services 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

- Register the Birth and Death of your baby – you will get a phone call from the register office to arrange this
- Contact a funeral director of your choice.

Saint Mary's Hospital contact numbers:

Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Reception Oxford Road
0161 701 2700

NICU Coordinator Oxford Road
0161 701 0946

Neonatal Unit Wythenshawe
0161 291 2932

Neonatal Unit North Manchester
0161 625 8227

Newborn Services Bereavement Team (answer phone available)
0161 276 6551

NICU Counsellor
0161 276 6045

Family Support Centre (Royal Manchester Children's Hospital)
0161 701 8700

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

Newborn Services 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