



Northern Health
and Social Care Trust



Information following the loss of your baby

The aim of this booklet is to provide you with information about some of the decisions and arrangements that you and your family will now need to make after the loss of your baby or babies. It also explains the yearly memorial events organised by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to help families and staff remember babies who have died.

It is a very traumatic and distressing time for you and your family and the staff that you meet will be sympathetic towards your feelings and will spend as much time with you as you need.

Please feel free to ask questions and tell staff if you have any religious or cultural requirements, this is very important.

Arrangements

Your baby will usually remain with you while you are in hospital, if you prefer they can go to the hospital mortuary to wait for a post-mortem examination or for the funeral to be arranged.

The staff caring for you will take photographs of your baby. If you do not wish to take these photos home with you at this stage, the staff will place them in your case notes and you can access them when you feel ready. Only one printed version of the photographs will be produced at the time and there will be no further copies available.

If you wish, staff can also help you make some mementos of your baby which you can take home.

Post-mortem

Staff will provide an information leaflet and talk to you about the option of carrying out a post-mortem examination and the consent process. The decision you make to either give consent or decline the offer of a post-mortem will be recorded on a special consent form which you will be asked to sign. In exceptional circumstances a post-mortem examination may be sought by the Coroner.

The post-mortem examination will provide additional information which may help the doctor explain to you in more detail why your baby died. Unfortunately, in a small number of cases, a post-mortem examination does not provide the reason for a baby's death.

If your baby is having a post-mortem, this will take place at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. At the earliest opportunity arrangements will be made for your baby to be taken to Belfast and brought back following this. When your baby returns, if you have been discharged home, your Funeral Director or a family member will make arrangements with the mortuary department for your baby to be collected.

You will be given an appointment to see your consultant between six and eight weeks after your discharge home. During this appointment the post-mortem results will be discussed. Occasionally the results from the post-mortem examination may not be available to your consultant by the time of this appointment. We therefore recommend that you contact the consultant's secretary via the hospital switchboard prior to the appointment to make sure these are available. If the results are not available the appointment can be rearranged.

Contact telephone numbers:

Antrim Area Hospital: 028 9442 4000

Causeway Hospital: 028 7032 7032

Funeral

Funeral arrangements are made by the family and staff can give you more information and help. Most families find a Funeral Director can help support them with arrangements at this difficult time.

Registration

If your baby is stillborn (born after 24 weeks gestation), you need to register the stillbirth of the baby in the local council offices prior to the funeral taking place.

If your baby was born alive and subsequently died, the birth and the death need to be registered at the local council offices before burial, or by five days following the baby dying if this is sooner than the burial.

Staff can guide you as to where your local council office is located.

Cremation

If you choose cremation, this is arranged by the family. We advise that you use the service of a Funeral Director in these circumstances as it can only be arranged by Belfast City Council.

Follow up arrangements

Once you are discharged from hospital you will be offered the support of a community midwife to visit you at home.

You can also get support from the children's social work team. If you had your baby at Antrim Area Hospital please telephone 028 9442 4600 and if you had your baby at Causeway Hospital telephone 028 7032 7032. Please ask to be put through to the children's social work team.

Memorials

Books of Remembrance

The Northern Trust recognises that memorials are an important part in your grieving process. Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital have a Book of Remembrance in which you can have your baby's name inscribed on an individual page with a verse or message and picture. The choice is yours.

If you decide you would like to have an entry made in the Book of Remembrance for the hospital in which your baby died, you should contact the Ward Sister.

Sister Sandra Rankin, Neonatal Unit, Antrim Area Hospital
Tel: 028 9442 4170

Sister Karen Graham, Maternity Ward, Causeway Hospital
Tel: 028 7034 6128

Remembrance Service

Each year the Northern Trust holds a Remembrance Service on the third Sunday of May in a local church in the Antrim area. All bereaved parents, their families and professionals involved are welcome to attend. The service is for both patients of Antrim Area and Causeway Hospitals.

The services are conducted by the Antrim Area Hospital chaplains and they rotate the venue between the four main church denominations. The Books of Remembrance are re-dedicated at this service each year.

This service will be advertised in the local papers and also in GP surgeries.

If you wish to receive an invitation to the yearly Remembrance Service, you should contact the secretary for Dr J McAloon, Consultant Paediatrician at Antrim Area Hospital on 028 9442 4506.

Snowdrop Walk

An annual Snowdrop Walk is arranged for the third Sunday in February each year and takes place at Shane's Castle, Antrim. This event gives families the opportunity to plant snowdrop bulbs in memory of their baby. It is a time for remembrance and reflection and also an opportunity to meet with others who have experienced a similar loss.

If you wish to receive an invitation to the yearly Snowdrop Walk, you should contact the secretary for Dr J McAloon, Consultant Paediatrician at Antrim Area Hospital on 028 9442 4506.

Further help and support

We hope this leaflet has helped you to make decisions that are right for you and your family.

If you require further information on any of these issues, please discuss them with the staff looking after you.

As well as the support available from your doctor, midwife or social worker, you may wish to contact the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS).

They offer support and information on stillbirth and neonatal death through local support groups, publications and a helpline.

SANDS (NI)

22 Church Street

Portadown

BT62 3LQ

Northern Ireland Helpline: 077 4099 3450

Email: support@sandsni.org

www.sandsni.org



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IN PEOPLE**

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