Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Information for bereaved parents or relatives when a child or baby dies (including stillbirths)

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Parent or Relative Information

Bereavement services

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Our message to you

We would like to offer our sympathy and condolences to you and your family on the bereavement of your child, baby, or stillbirth. The loss of your child or baby is probably the worst thing that can happen to you, and no one will be able to tell you exactly how it feels as bereavement affects everyone differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve over the loss of a loved one. Grief takes on a whole range of emotions such as numbness, disbelief, anger, guilt, sadness, and emptiness to name but a few, and you may encounter several of these emotions simultaneously, making you wonder if you will ever be able to enjoy life again. This is a perfectly normal reaction considering all the upset and trauma you are encountering at the moment.

When your child or baby has died, we will want to help you to do whatever you think is right for you and your family. There will be some difficult choices to make, and it may be hard to know what to do for the best.

What we can do?

If you wish, the Nurse in charge can arrange for you to meet and talk to the mortuary staff involved in the care of your child or baby, after leaving the ward. This could be to discuss the bereavement process as a whole, such as:

- what happens when the baby leaves the ward?
- collection of Death Certificates
- viewing arrangements

- post mortem consent
- Registering both the birth and the death

This can be arranged between the hours of 8:00am to 16:00pm Monday to Friday. Special arrangements can be out of hours, but this will be at the discretion of the on call Technician.

The Mortuary staff will endeavour to be on hand to offer help and give support to all parents of a bereaved child or baby. You will be offered the opportunity to transfer your son or daughter to the Hospital mortuary,where you will be able to spend time with them; you may wish to dress them, to cuddle them (however this will not be allowed in the event of a sudden unexpected death) or simply just to sit quietly with them in the viewing room; this can all help with the grieving process and prepare parents for the transition from the Hospital ward to the mortuary. You may wish to return to see them again perhaps to bring a favourite toy or teddy; may be a photograph this can be discussed and arranged with the staff involved.

Mementos such as locks of hair, hand/ footprints and photographs can all be offered and taken by ward or mortuary staff except for sudden unexpected deaths. The coroner will only consent to this after the post mortem examination.

For anything that is unclear to you, please do not hesitate to contact the Mortuary Services Team on 01942 822000 during the hours stated above or via the Hospital switchboard

01942 244000 during evenings or at weekends.

Involvement of H.M. Coroner

H. M. Coroner can be either a doctor or member of the legal profession or both and is responsible for investigating deaths in certain circumstances.

All deaths of babies and children up to the age of 18, with the exclusion of stillbirths, need to be referred to H.M. Coroner. This is generally done by the Hospital Consultant /senior clinician, under whose care the child or baby was admitted, or a Senior Police Officer if the child or baby was admitted to the Accident and Emergency Department. Several specialist teams will be involved when a child or baby dies unexpectedly; these are the Police, SUDC team (Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood) and the Children's Safeguarding Team; each having a set of guidelines to follow before the coroner gives permission for a post mortem to be carried out.

The coroner will give permission for a post mortem when the cause of the baby's / Child's death, is unknown. A specialised Paediatric Pathologist will carry out the post mortem examination at a designated Paediatric Mortuary. Once the cause of death has been established, the coroner will then issue a Death Certificate or open and adjourn an inquest.

It is necessary for the coroner to hold an inquest to fully investigate and understand how and why the death occurred. The coroner will require information to be gathered, such as medical notes, GP records or any other information which will assist the coroner, with their inquiries. You will be informed by the coroner's office of the date and time and where the inquest will be held; this can take several months due to gathering information the coroner requires.

A death certificate will be issued (under the instruction of the coroner) by the doctor, if the coroner is satisfied with the care and treatment given to the baby / child, especially where there is a terminal illness involved or the death was expected.

If the Coroner does not wish for a post mortem to be undertaken, the Consultant or Senior Doctor may approach you to ask if you would consider a hospital post mortem; this is a voluntary post mortem, which cannot be undertaken without first obtaining your consent (please read the leaflets on post mortem and consent).

Medical Certificates (Death)

If a Coroner's post mortem has taken place, the coroner will issue the Death Certificate; if no post mortem is held; the Doctor at the hospital completes the Certificate. The Bereavement Officer will contact you to advise when this is ready. Please note that the Bereavement office is closed over the weekend and Bank holidays, so there will be no service available during this time

In the event of a stillbirth (24 – 40 weeks gestation), procedures are slightly different. The death does not need referring to the coroner and either the doctor or midwife will issue the Stillbirth Certificate; this will be given to you prior to you being discharged from the Hospital; but you will still need to follow the same procedure to register the death (a double appointment can be arranged to register both the birth and death of a stillbirth).

Registering the death

You may wish to start making arrangements for the funeral, but the death has to be registered before it is possible to complete these. It is a legal requirement for a death to be registered and this should be done in the district where the death occurred; for Wigan Hospital, this will be the Registrars within the Wigan Borough; there is no time limit on registering a stillbirth, but it is better to do this sooner rather than later, then arrangements

for the funeral can be made.

The hospital bereavement service and Wigan Council have established a working partnership; in which the Registrars of births, deaths and marriages have agreed to keep the onsite death registration service for bereaved parents. This service includes the registration of stillbirths, where both the birth and death can be registered together. Bereavement services will liaise with both Maternity and the Registration Services in making arrangements for a Registrar to attend the RAEI site. The service is accessible Monday to Friday; providing there are appointments and the availability of the Register to attend.

Should there be no availability to register at the hospital, and you are being discharged home you will be contacted by the registration services to arrange a face to face appointment at the Life centre

Wigan Life Centre is about a 20 minute walk or a short taxi ride from the Hospital. The Town Hall at Leigh has a Registry Office; information on opening times can be obtained by calling the number below, as the days and times may vary. Leigh Registry office can be found 8 miles away from the Wigan Hospital.

Registrar of Births & Deaths

Wigan Life Centre (North)

The Wiend

Wigan

WN1 1YN

Telephone 01942 489003

Opening Times

Monday to Friday, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm

By appointment only

Leigh Registry Office

Town Hall, Market St

Leigh

WN7 1DY

Telephone 01942 489003

Opening Times

Monday, Tuesday by appointment only

& Wednesday 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

Please note when contacting the above No. (01942 489003) it will connect to an automated message at Wigan Council contact centre; please follow the online prompts.

To register the death you will need the following paperwork / information.

- Medical Certificate of Cause of Death – this is given to you by the Bereavement Officer at the Hospital and written by the Doctor who was looking after your baby or child. H.M. Coroner will issue this if a post mortem has been instructed.

Or

- Certificate of Stillbirth given by the Doctor or Midwife.

- The child or baby's full name, home address and the date and place of birth.

- The parents' full names, home addresses and occupations

You will be given the Death Certificate which is completed by the Registrar from the information the Doctor and yourself have provided.

You will also be given a certificate for burial or cremation, which you need to give to your Funeral Director before final arrangements can be made. Additional Cremation certificates are required if you are planning to have your child or baby cremated.

Your funeral director can arrange these through the Bereavement or Coroner's offices.

A separate register is used for stillbirths, so the Registrar will provide you with a Certificate of Stillbirth along with any documentation required for burial or cremation.

You will also be given a White Certificate (form BD8 Rev), which you should use to tell Social Security about the death (not for stillbirths).

Additional copies of Death Certificates are available from the Registrars; but a small fee will be incurred for this service.

When a newborn baby dies whose birth has not been registered, it is possible to register both the birth and death at the same time and should be registered within 5 days; this can be longer if the coroner is involved. If you are married, only one parent needs to go to the Registry Office. If you are not married, it is essential for the mother to be present, and both parents need to attend if you wish the father's particulars to be recorded.

Arranging a funeral for a child or baby

The following points may help you decide what arrangements you would like to make for your child or baby. There is no hurry to make arrangements, unless there are special religious or cultural reasons. It is a very personal occasion.

Never be rushed into making any important decisions and never be afraid to ask for any special requests, which may be helpful to you and your family; ask the Funeral Directors for any explanations if you do not understand. The cost of a funeral may vary; some funeral directors may provide their services free of charge for a child or baby funeral; please ask your Funeral Director about this. The Funeral Director will arrange to meet with you to discuss what you require and will organise this on your behalf.

The Funeral Director will need the Certificate which the registrar gave you before final arrangements can be made. If your child or baby is still in the Hospital mortuary, the Funeral Director will arrange to collect him or her and take them to wherever you have requested, i.e. chapel of rest, hospice or home.

Stillbirth

The hospital will provide parents who have encountered a stillbirth the offer of a hospital funeral; this is usually undertaken by a local Funeral Director contracted to the hospital; but if this is not what you want, you can choose your own Funeral Director. But you must be aware that any private arrangements could incur a cost which you will have to discuss with the Funeral Director you have chosen.

Cremation

If you choose to have your child or baby cremated, there could be a brief Service of Committal at the Crematorium Chapel. You can return to the crematorium to collect the ashes, or your Funeral Director can do this on your behalf. Very occasionally when a stillbirth (dependent on gestational age) is cremated, there may be no / or a very small amount of ashes left. Ask the Funeral Directors to discuss this with the Crematorium beforehand. It is your choice on what to do with the ashes.

There will probably be a book of remembrance at the Crematorium in which your child or baby's name can be inscribed. It may be possible for the residual ashes to be buried or scattered in your local churchyard or alternatively, you can bury or scatter the ashes in a place special to you, in your garden for example.

Burial

If you would like your child buried, you should approach your Minister or Funeral Director, who will help you to arrange this.

Further help for parents and families

Occasionally parents find it useful to return to the Hospital to talk with the Doctors who have cared for their child or baby. You may have some questions or concerns that you would like answers to; this can be arranged through the Bereavement Officer by telephoning

01942 822524 or speaking to the Bereavement Midwife via switchboard.

Bereavement support

Child Death Helpline is a service provided for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age from pre-birth to adult, under any circumstances, however recent or long ago.

The Helpline is open every day throughout the year:

Every evening 7:00 pm until 10:00 pm

Monday to Friday 10:00 am until 1:00 pm

Tuesday & Wednesday 1:00 pm until 4:00 pm

The contact telephone number for this service is 0800 282 986 or 0808 800 6019 from a mobile phone.

A bereaved parent will answer all calls and an interpreter service is also available.

Web: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Other useful information

Alder Centre Bereavement Counselling Royal Liverpool Hospital for Children N.H.S. Trust Eaton Road Liverpool L12 2AP	Web: www.alderhey.com Tel: 0151 252 5391 Opening Hours Monday to Thursday 9 am until 5 pm Friday 9 am until 4:30 pm Email. alder.centre@alderhey.nhs.uk Twitter The alder centre @AlderCentre
Cruse Bereavement Care 126 Sheen Road Richmond Surrey TW9 1UR	Web: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Helpline 0808 808 1677 Available on Facebook, Inst

Child Bereavement UK 2nd Floor Ashley House Ashley Way West Widnes Cheshire WA8 7RP	E-mail: cheshiresupport@childbereavementuk.org Helpline 0800 028 8840 Tel: 01928 577 164
Child Bereavement UK Youth Zone, Victoria Place Carlisle CA1 1LR	E-mail: cumbriasupport@childbereavementuk.org Tel: 0800 028 8840
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society(SANDS) 28 Portland Place London W1B 1LY	Web: www.uk-sands.org *General Enquiries 0207 436 7940 0207 897 6094* Helpline 0808 164 3332 Email helpline@sands.org.uk (10 am until 3 pm Monday to Friday)

Other useful information (continued)

R.A.E.I. Mortuary Wigan Lane Wigan WN1 2NN	E-mail: mortuary@wwl.nhs.uk Tel: 01942 822000 (direct line) Opening Times Monday to Friday 8 am until 12:30 pm and 1:00 pm until 4 pm
R.A.E.I. Bereavement Office Wigan Lane Wigan WN1 2NN	Web: www.wwl.nhs.uk E-mail: bereavement.office@wwl.nhs.uk Tel: 01942 822524 (direct line) Contactable Monday to Friday 10:00 am until 12:30 pm and 1 pm until 3:30 pm

H.M.
Coroner

Paderborn
House

Civic
Centre

Howell Croft North

Bolton

BL1 1JW

Web: www.bolton.gov.uk

Tel: 01204 338799

Fax: 01204 338798

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday

9 am until 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm until 4 pm

DWP (formally DSS)	Web: www.dwp.gov.uk 0845 606 0265 bereavement service help line *0845 301 3011*
Wigan MBC Registrar of births, deaths & marriages	Web: https://www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount/My-Account.aspx



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