

# Bereavement support after the death of a baby on the neonatal unit

## Information for children, families and carers

When someone we love dies, we experience overwhelming feelings of loss and sorrow, which we call grief. When a baby or child dies, it is especially devastating, and is often said to be the most painful experience anyone can go through.

This factsheet outlines the different ways in which our neonatal family care team can help support you and your family through this difficult time. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

### Grieving

After the death of your baby, it's natural to feel a whole range of emotions, including shock, sadness, anger, love, guilt, loneliness and confusion. Grief is unpredictable and it's normal to switch between these feelings on a daily and weekly basis.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Grief is a deeply personal experience; it has no set time frame, and everyone copes with it in their own way, even within the same family. What is helpful for one person may not be at all helpful for someone else.

### Getting support to help cope with grief

The effects of grief can be overwhelming, and it can be hard to take in information, to make decisions or to imagine how you are going to cope.

Talking about your baby can be a great help when you are grieving. Many people turn to close relatives and friends for comfort, but this can be difficult if your loved ones are grieving too. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk to someone who is not part of the family, someone who is not a friend, but someone who understands the grieving process and can help you make sense of what has happened. This could be your GP, your health visitor or a member of our neonatal family care team.

## Neonatal family care team

Our team is here to support you and your family during this difficult time.

### Family care lead nurse

Our family care lead nurse can provide practical and emotional support in the days and weeks following your baby's death. They can:

- arrange for you to see your baby again
- create memories and keepsakes with your baby
- provide sibling support
- liaise with your midwives to make sure you receive the right postnatal care
- guide you through the process of a perinatal mortality review tool (PMRT)
- help with funeral arrangements
- offer financial advice
- signpost you to bereavement counselling
- offer bereavement follow-up care (we will offer all bereaved families follow-up care with their named consultant and a member of our team)
- answer any questions you may have

### Clinical psychologist

Some families choose to meet with our clinical psychologist to talk through how they are feeling. This might involve:

- talking on the phone or by email
- meeting for a one-off consultation
- meeting for a series of sessions

Clinical psychology support is available to anyone in your family. Things that you may wish to discuss with our clinical psychologist include:

- how you are feeling
- what you are going through
- the grieving process
- how to talk to children about death

## Explaining the loss of a baby to other children

If you have other children, you may worry about explaining the death of your baby to them and how they might react. Children's understanding of death differs depending on their age. However, all children need honest, clear information about what has happened and for their routines to remain as close to normal as possible. They also need reassurance that it is ok for them and for you to have different feelings at different times.

The following websites contain helpful advice on how to explain the loss of a baby to children:

- Sands 'Supporting children': [www.sands.org.uk/sands-bereavement-support-book](http://www.sands.org.uk/sands-bereavement-support-book)
- Tommy's 'Support for siblings after a neonatal death': [www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support/neonatal-death-information-and-support/support-siblings-after-neonatal-death](http://www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support/neonatal-death-information-and-support/support-siblings-after-neonatal-death)
- ZERO TO THREE 'Talking about the loss of a baby with young siblings': [www.zerotothree.org/resources/1073-talking-about-the-loss-of-a-baby-with-young-siblings](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1073-talking-about-the-loss-of-a-baby-with-young-siblings)
- Child Bereavement UK 'Explaining miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn baby to young children': [www.childbereavementuk.org/information-explaining-baby-loss](http://www.childbereavementuk.org/information-explaining-baby-loss)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact us.

Neonatal family care team

Telephone: **07827 271166** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

If we are unable to take your call, please text us or leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

If you need to contact someone urgently and cannot get through to our neonatal family care team, please contact our neonatal nurse co-ordinator on **07880 078907**.

## Useful links

### Sands (stillbirth and neonatal death charity)

Sands works to support anyone affected by the death of a baby.

Website: [www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk)

### Child Bereavement UK

Child Bereavement UK supports families when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.

Website: [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

## Twins Trust

Twins Trust offer a bereavement service to support families of twins, triplets or more, where a baby has died.

Website: [www.twinstrust.org](http://www.twinstrust.org)

## Child Death Helpline

Child Death Helpline is a freephone service for anyone affected by the death of a child. The service is run by volunteers, who are all bereaved parents.

Telephone: **0800 282 986**

Website: [www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

## Aching Arms

Aching Arms is a charity run by bereaved parents that supports families who have suffered the loss of a baby during pregnancy, at birth or soon after.

Telephone: **07464 508994**

Email: [support@achingarms.co.uk](mailto:support@achingarms.co.uk)

Website: [www.achingarms.co.uk](http://www.achingarms.co.uk)

## The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends is a service run by bereaved parents to support other bereaved families. They offer online support and information about local support available to you.

Telephone: **0345 123 2304**

Website: [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit [www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital)

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