

## Information factsheet

# Information for bereaved parents

## Understanding what is involved in a post mortem and detailed review of care

**This factsheet has been written to help you understand what is involved in a post mortem and detailed review of care when your baby has died after 22 weeks of pregnancy. You may have many questions after reading this information, so please talk to your midwife, obstetrician or a member of the bereavement support team. If at any time you feel uncertain about anything, remember that the healthcare professionals looking after you are here to help.**

When a baby dies, it can feel very important to understand why. Sometimes a baby's death is clearly related to a medical reason, but often the cause is not clear straight away, and therefore certain investigations may help to find out what happened.

Not all baby deaths are understood, and more research is needed to understand why babies die. There are, however, two possible investigations that might provide some answers.

These are:

- a post mortem
- a review of care.

You will find some information about these investigations below.

### **Post mortem**

A post mortem is a medical examination of your baby's body. It is carried out by a perinatal pathologist (specialist doctor) who will try to find out the reason for your baby's death.

Choosing to have a post mortem examination can be a difficult decision. Although it does not always find a definite cause, a post mortem examination may help you find out why your baby has died, and the likelihood of the same problems happening in a future pregnancy.

There are different types of post mortem examination. If you would prefer not to have a full post mortem examination, you may choose to have a limited examination of your baby. This may be an external examination, or the examination may be restricted to certain organs.

Your midwife or obstetrician will discuss your options with you and answer any questions you may have. This will enable you to make an informed decision, and together you can decide what is best for you and your baby.

The time it takes to receive post mortem examination results varies, depending on the tests carried out. It can take up to 20 weeks for the results to become available. You will be offered an appointment to discuss the results with your obstetrician when they are available. You may find it useful to write down any questions you may have.

For more information about post mortems and the options available to you, you can visit: [www.sands.org.uk/support-you/understanding-why-your-baby-died/post-mortem-examination](http://www.sands.org.uk/support-you/understanding-why-your-baby-died/post-mortem-examination)

## Review of care

A detailed review of the care given to you and your baby during your pregnancy, labour and birth will be completed. This is known as a hospital perinatal or neonatal review, and will be held even if you decide not to have a post mortem.

A member of the bereavement team will discuss this review process with you and answer any questions you may have about it.

If your baby was:

- born between 22 weeks and 23 weeks, 6 days of pregnancy and/or weighed more than 500g but showed no signs of life
- stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy
- born after 22 weeks of pregnancy and subsequently died within 28 days of birth
- born after 22 weeks of pregnancy and received neonatal care before they died.

then the hospital review will involve the national Perinatal Mortality Review Tool (PMRT). This ensures a standardised, structured review process is followed nationally.

Examining your care in detail will enable us to give you as much information as possible about why your baby died. The review will also tell us if any improvements can be made to the care we offer you or other families in the future.

Once the review is complete, you will receive a written report of the findings, and be invited to meet your obstetrician to discuss it. This review is different to a coroner's investigation or inquest.

## What happens during the review?

A team of professionals, which includes obstetricians, midwives, neonatologists (doctors who specialise in caring for babies) and a pathologist (if you have decided to have a post mortem) will:

- examine the record of your care during pregnancy, labour and birth (and your baby's care record, if appropriate)
- review the results of any tests or investigations you may have had, including post mortem results, if appropriate
- answer any questions you have identified and address any concerns you may have
- talk to the team involved in your care
- look at local and national guidance and policies to ensure the care you received was appropriate.

This team may include external independent clinicians (clinicians who are not employed by University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, UHS).

## How you will be involved

The questions you would like to have answered, and your views of the care that you have received

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will form an important part of this review. Therefore, if you would like to ask any specific questions or give your perspective on any aspect of the care you have received, you are encouraged to speak to us before the review is completed, if possible. You could talk to your midwife, obstetrician or contact a member of the bereavement team.

Things you might like to consider:

- any questions you may have
- your thoughts and feelings about the care you received:
  - during your pregnancy
  - during labour and birth
- the care you and your baby received after birth

Please email the team at: [bereavementteam@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:bereavementteam@uhs.nhs.uk) or if you would prefer, you can telephone: **07392 128352**.

## How long will the review take?

It may take several weeks to gather all the information required for the review to be completed. We understand that this is a long time to wait and if you would like to meet with a member of the bereavement team before the review takes place, we can arrange this for you. Please get in touch via the contact details above.

## What happens next?

Once the review is completed, you will be offered an appointment with your obstetrician who will discuss the findings with you. We can also send you a written report by post or email if you prefer.

## If you'd like to know more about the PMRT

The PMRT is an online tool, but the information it collects is not public. For more information about the PMRT review and to find out how your information is used please see the useful links section below:

## Further questions

If you have any questions or would like more information about anything in this factsheet, please speak to your midwife, obstetrician or a member of the bereavement team on: **07392 128352**, who are all here to support you during this time.

## Useful links

### Sands

[www.sands.org.uk/support-you/understanding-why-your-baby-died/post-mortem-examination](http://www.sands.org.uk/support-you/understanding-why-your-baby-died/post-mortem-examination)

### University of Oxford Perinatal Mortality Review Tool (PMRT)

<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/pmrt/information-for-bereaved-parents>

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