

Taking a deceased baby home (at any gestation)

Key Points

- Protocol for taking a deceased baby home
- Whom to inform and the paperwork
- Leaving the hospital

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1. Introduction

Occasionally a family who have had a stillbirth, late fetal loss or neonatal death may wish to take the baby's body home. Staff should support parents who want to do this; there should be sensitive and efficient procedures in place. There is no legal obstacle to this as long as the required certification has been completed and a post-mortem is not requested by the coroner. If parents have opted for a post-mortem, it should be discussed sensitively that taking baby home prior to this may affect the findings of the post-mortem in the first instance.

The midwife should ensure parents are fully aware of and understand all the choices open to them.

Where cases are referred to the coroner, the option of taking a baby home needs to be discussed with them. If in doubt the coroner's office should be contacted. They will advise and can be paged out of hours. The coroner's agreement to release the body to the parents should be recorded in the mother's Epic record.

2. Protocol

If the parents are taking their baby home themselves, provide them with a '**Transport Form**' (**Appendix 1**) stating that their baby has died, and they are transporting the body home. This affords the parents protection in the unlikely event of them being in an accident or stopped by the police.

The midwife should explain that the baby will need careful handling, especially if it has been in the mortuary as he/she will be cold and fragile. Explain the importance of keeping baby's body cool and give the funeral director's telephone number in case more specific advice is needed. Provide guidance on what they can take their baby home in e.g., Moses basket. The baby's body may be released from labour ward or from the mortuary. If the body is released from labour ward the mortuary must be informed so that they can record that the baby has been released.

Please give them the leaflet '**Advice and Guidance for parents wishing to take their deceased baby home**' (**Appendix 4**).

Ensure all relevant staff are informed and in agreement about policy concerning the removal of bodies from the hospital premises.

3. Whom to inform

The midwife should inform the relevant professionals that the baby is being taken home:

- LW Coordinator or Manager
- Mortuary staff
- The Bereavement Midwives
- Community Midwife Teams
- G.P
- Health Visitor

4. Leaving Hospital

A member of staff must accompany the parents and baby to the car. The baby should be transported to the car in a Moses basket. There is no legal requirement for a deceased baby to be transported in a car seat and the Moses basket may be the preferred method of transport. The Moses basket should be secured with the seat belt to avoid injury to other occupants.

When the parents are ready to take their baby home, ask them to sign the **'release form' (Appendix 2)** and photocopy it. Please give the original form to the bereavement midwives and send a copy to the mortuary and give a copy to the parents

This states what time they are taking the baby home and whether the baby will be returned to the hospital or that the parents are going to make the funeral arrangements themselves.

Frimley Park

If the baby is to be returned to the hospital, arrange for the parents to drive round to the back of the hospital and a member of staff to meet them close to the mortuary entrance. Alert security so that they will give access to the rear of the hospital.

Wexham Park

If the baby is to be returned to the hospital the parents should contact the labour ward co-ordinator to arrange.

Frimley Park under 23+6 weeks

If the baby was born under 23+6 weeks gestation a 'Certificate of practitioner in respect of fetal remains form' needs to be completed and photocopied twice. One copy goes to the mortuary and the original goes with the parents. Fetal remains forms can be found in the MATABCDS Drive under 'Bereavement' – 'additional paperwork.'

Wexham Park under 23+6 weeks

If the baby was born under 23+6 weeks gestation, then complete the 'Application for the cremation in respect of a baby born dead before 24 weeks gestation' form, and 'Certificate of medical practitioner in respect of a baby born dead before 24 weeks gestation' form. Make two photocopies. One copy to be uploaded to EPIC, the other copy goes to the mortuary and the original goes with the parents.

FPH & WPH 24+ weeks

If the baby was stillborn at 24 weeks and over, the 'stillbirth certificate' needs to be completed fully and legibly. Please ensure that the person who has filled in the form has printed as well as signed their name and their NMC personal identification number has been clearly written. The stillbirth certificate needs to be placed in the bereavement midwives folder next to the co-ordinators desk. This will be scanned to Guildford Registry office. The parents can make an appointment to register their baby using the special phone number provided.

WPH 24+ weeks

If the baby was stillborn at 24 weeks and over, the stillbirth certificate will be emailed, front and back, to Slough Registry with parents contact details. Parents will then receive a phone call from the Registry Office with an appointment to register their baby. Please ensure that the person who has filled in the form has printed as well as signed their name and their NMC personal identification number has been clearly written.

Please also complete the 'cremation 3' and 'cremation 9' forms as usual and if the parents wish to have the baby cremated then they will require these forms. If the parents plan to bury their baby, then please give the completed forms to the bereavement midwives in case the parents change their minds.

Finally ensure **'the Maternity Bereavement checklist on EPIC,' Care after Death Checklist (over 24 weeks) and the 'taking a deceased baby home checklist' (Appendix 3) is completed** so all the relevant actions/ paperwork are complete.

5. Auditable Standards

Completion of all checklists.

6. Monitoring compliance

This guideline will be monitored through the incident reporting system.

7. Communication

If there are communication issues (e.g., English as a second language, learning difficulties, blindness/partial sightedness or deafness) staff will take appropriate measures to ensure the patient (and her partner, if appropriate) understand the actions and rationale behind them.

8. Equality impact assessment

This guideline has been subject to an equality impact assessment.

9. References

Perinatal Society of Australia & New Zealand (2020) Clinical Practice and Guideline for Care Around Stillbirth and Neonatal Death. Section 1: Overview and Summary of Recommendations. Available at: <https://stillbirthcre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Clinical-Practice-Guidelines-for-Care-Around-Stillbirth-and-Neonatal-Death2-2.pdf> (Accessed 21.11.22)

Sands. (2022) National Bereavement Care Pathway for pregnancy and baby loss. Termination of Pregnancy due to Fetal Anomaly (TOPFA): Full Guidance Document. Available at: <https://nbcpathway.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/NBCP%20TOPFA%20July%202022.pdf> (Accessed 21.11.22)

Schott J., Henley A., and Kohner N., (2016) Pregnancy Loss and the Death of a Baby Guidelines for Professionals. (4rd Edn.) London. Bosun Press on behalf of Sands (Stillbirth and neonatal death society).

Smith P, Vasileiou K and Jordan A (2020) Healthcare professionals' perceptions and experiences of using a cold cot following the loss of a baby: a qualitative study in maternity and neonatal units in the UK. BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth 20 (1): 175

Tommy's (2022) Spending time with your baby after a neonatal death. Available at: <https://www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support/neonatal-death-information-and-support/spending-time-with-your-baby> (Accessed 21.11.22)

Appendix 1a: Transport Form - Frimley Park Hospital only

Transport Form

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This form is to confirm that (mother's name)

of (home address)

whose baby was stillborn / died on _____

have taken their baby's body from
Labour Ward
Frimley Park Hospital
Portsmouth Road
Frimley
Surrey
GU16 7UJ

Date _____

They will be (delete as appropriate):

- returning the body to the hospital on _____
- making their own funeral arrangements.

Name of authorising member of staff _____

Position _____

Signature _____

Date _____

In case of concern, or if confirmation is needed, please contact:

Labour Ward Co-ordinator on 03006134035

Appendix 1b: Transport form - Wexham Park Hospital only

Transport Form

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This form is to confirm that (mother's name)

of (home address)

whose baby was stillborn / died on _____

have taken their baby's body from
Labour Ward
Wexham Park Hospital
Wexham Slough
SL2 4HL

Date _____

They will be (delete as appropriate):

- returning the body to the hospital on _____
- making their own funeral arrangements.

Name of authorising member of staff _____

Position _____

Signature _____

Date _____

In case of concern, or if confirmation is needed, please contact:

Labour Ward Co-ordinator - 0300 615 4521
Pregnancy Loss Midwives – 07771 937580

Appendix 2: Release Form

Release Form

This form is to confirm that I (mother's name)

of (home address)

Am taking my baby home at _____ Hrs on ____/____/20____

I will be (delete as appropriate):

- returning my baby to the hospital on _____
- making my own funeral arrangements.

Name of Mother _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 3: Taking a Stillborn Baby Home Checklist

Taking a deceased baby home Checklist

	Yes	No	Date	Signature
1. Confirm and record with the Consultant or Senior Registrar that there is no legal obstacle for the baby to be taken home.				
2. Confirm and record that a Post-mortem is not required/requested				
3. Confirm and record that this is not a coroner's case.				
4 Still birth or NND certificate must be given to the bereavement Team so that the relevant registry offices can be informed				
5. Inform the Labour ward Co-ordinator				
6. Give parents: Under 23+6/40 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of practitioner in respect of fetal remains • Application for cremation form for WPH • Transport form (appendix 1) From 24/40 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth registration information • Cremation forms 3 and 9 completed • Application for burial if applicable for WPH • Transport form (appendix 1) For NND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth registration • Cremation forms 4 and 5 completed • Transport form (appendix 1) 				
7. Parents to complete and sign the Release Form (Appendix 2)				
8. Mortuary staff informed from which department the baby is being released.				
9. Forms to be sent to the mortuary <u>Under 23+6/40</u> Copy - Certificate of practitioner in respect of fetal remains Copy – Release form <u>From 24/40</u> Copy - Cremation forms 3 & 9 Copy – Release form				
910 Inform GP and Community midwifery team that the Baby is being taken home.				
11 Give parents the Information leaflet 'Taking your deceased baby home from the hospital'.				

Appendix 4: Patient leaflet: Advice and guidance for parents wishing to take their deceased baby home

Maternity



Frimley Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice and guidance for parents wishing to take their deceased baby home



This leaflet is intended to help guide you through the practical steps to enable you to take your baby home from hospital.

Introduction

This could be the most traumatic and emotional time of your lives and you may be experiencing feelings that vary from shock to disbelief. During this time, it is not always easy to focus on what the midwifery and nursing staff are saying to you, and so this leaflet will help to clarify some of the practical advice that you will need.

Transporting your baby home

- You will need to sign a 'release form' to confirm that you will be taking your baby home.
- It would be advisable to have a family member/friend to take you all home, the journey may be very emotional, and this could compromise your safety.
- You can carry your baby either in your arms or in a Moses basket. If you do not have one, we may be able to provide one for you to borrow.
- The baby will need to be secured in the car in an approved baby transport device to avoid injury to other occupants.
- Parking your car as near to the maternity unit as possible would be advisable, staff will be able to suggest the best place for you.
- A member of staff will accompany you and your baby to your car.
- You will be given a copy of the Transport form. This will prevent any misunderstandings should you get stopped on the way home, or if you are involved in any road traffic accident during your journey.

What to expect at home

Unfortunately, the condition of your baby will start to change over time, so it is important that you try and slow down the progression of these changes.

The changes may be:

- Discolouration of the skin
- Peeling of the skin
- Slight oozing of blood from the nose
- Temporary stiffness
- Coolness of the skin

To help slow down this deterioration it is important that you are aware of how to care for your baby in the home environment

- Keep your baby in a cool room, with no heating on.
- Keep all windows closed, especially in hot weather.
- Ensure all pets are kept out of the room.
- Use a muslin / net / light cotton covering over baby's basket.
- It is important to keep your baby cool. This is best achieved by placing your baby on any kind of covered ice pack which will protect them and keep them dry.
- A cooling pad / cold cot (cuddle cot) may be available for you to borrow for use at home if you would prefer, rather than using ice packs.

What happens next?

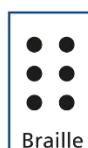
- You will need to contact the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths to register your baby's birth/death if your baby is over 24 weeks – you will be given a special number for this.
- You will need to contact a funeral director if you are making your own funeral arrangements.
- The Bereavement Maternity Team can provide you with a list of local funeral directors if required.
- If you come to the decision that you no longer wish to have your baby at home you will need to contact your chosen funeral director or the labour ward, who will make the appropriate arrangements directly with you.

This is a difficult and emotional time for all of your family, we have compiled a list of contact details that may be useful to you now and/or in the future.

	Frimley Park Hospital	Wexham Park Hospital
Maternity Bereavement Team	07824 321964 0300 6133578	07771 937580 0300 615 5054 0300 615 6603
Hospital Chaplain, via switchboard	0300 6134184	0300 6153000
Registrar of Births & Deaths	01483 518248	01753 787600
Sands	08081643332 support@farnboroughsands.co.uk	07936 392644 berkshiresands@hotmail.co.uk
Mamas Line (24 hours)	0300 013 2004	0300 013 2004

For a translation of this leaflet or for accessing this information in another format:

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Please contact (PALS) the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on:

Frimley Park Hospital

Telephone: 0300 613 6530

Email: fhft.palsfrimleypark@nhs.net

Wexham Park & Heatherwood Hospitals

Telephone: 0300 615 3365

Email: fhft.palswexhampark@nhs.net

Frimley Park Hospital Portsmouth Road, Frimley, Surrey, GU16 7UJ	Heatherwood Hospital Brook Avenue, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7GB	Wexham Park Hospital Wexham Street, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 4HL
Hospital switchboard: 0300 614 5000		Website: www.fhft.nhs.uk

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Legal Notice

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible. Please therefore always check specific advice or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

Full version control record

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Guidelines Lead(s):	Monica Eve, Hannah Hawckett, Aileen Meyrick, Sarah O'Rourke Lead Midwives for Pregnancy Loss FPH & WPH
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Key words:	Stillborn, stillbirth, late fetal loss, neonatal death, miscarriage, home, deceased baby
<p>This guideline has been registered with the trust. However, clinical guidelines are guidelines only. The interpretation and application of clinical guidelines will remain the responsibility of the individual clinician. If in doubt, contact a senior colleague or expert. Caution is advised when using guidelines after the review date. This guideline is for use in Frimley Health Trust hospitals only. Any use outside this location will not be supported by the Trust and will be at the risk of the individual using it.</p>	

Version Control Sheet

Version	Date	Guideline Lead(s)	Status	Comment
1.0	Sept 2016	Monica Eve, Tabitha Stuthridge, Joyce Cruse	Final	
2.0	May 2019	Monica Eve, Jo Cox, Claire Litchfield	Final	Updated and approved at OGCGC
2.1	November 2022	Monica Eve, Hannah Hawckett, Aileen Meyrick, Sarah O'Rourke	Draft	Updated guidance in line with EPIC documentation
3.0	February 2023	Monica Eve, Hannah Hawckett, Aileen Meyrick, Sarah O'Rourke	Final	