

Best practice in bereavement care

Parents' perspectives and collaborative working with healthcare professionals have informed these best practice recommendations.

- Care should be individualised so that it is parent-led and meets personal, cultural and religious needs.
- Clear communication with parents is key, and should be sensitive, honest and tailored to meet their needs.
- In any situation where there is a choice to be made, parents should be listened to and given the time, information and support they need to make their own decisions about what happens to their baby and to them.
- Assumptions should not be made about how an individual will feel about their loss or the intensity and duration of grief that a parent may experience. It is important that staff acknowledge and assess the feelings that individual parent's experience, making referrals to further support where appropriate.
- A partner's grief can be as profound as that of the mother; their needs for support should be recognised and met.
- Women and their partners should always have their care led and coordinated by staff who are specifically trained in bereavement care and in an environment that the parent feels is appropriate to their circumstances.
- All staff who care for parents before, during or after the death of their baby should have opportunities to develop and update their knowledge and skills, and should have access to good support for themselves.
- All parents whose babies die should be offered opportunities to create memories. Their individual wishes and needs should be respected.
- The bodies of babies and pregnancy remains should be treated with respect at all times.
- Good communication between health and social care teams is crucial to ensure that all professionals are aware of parents' preferences and decisions and so that parents do not need to repeatedly explain their situation. Collaboration and coordination are key.

“As you grieve and live life in a new normal it is the little things that people say to you that you remember. A positive interaction can be replayed and brings comfort. A negative interaction can run on replay again and again and often creates a barrier to the process of grieving.”

(M.E., parent)