

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' (Found in 'Taking deceased baby home' folder in Rowan suite cupboard at FPH or on Maternity Drive at WPH)** 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' (Found in 'Taking deceased baby home' folder in Rowan suite cupboard or on Maternity Drive at WPH)**

Ensure all relevant staff are informed and in agreement about HTA 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’ (Found in ‘Taking deceased baby home’ folder in Rowan suite cupboard or on Maternity Drive at WPH)**

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. Please remind parent/s that if their baby is over 24 weeks gestation they have a legal responsibility to arrange a burial or cremation for their baby.

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 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 Rowan suite cupboard ‘completed paperwork’ in tray. This will be scanned to Guildford Registry office by the bereavement midwives. 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 on Epic (over 24 weeks) and the 'taking a deceased baby home checklist' (Found in 'Taking deceased baby home' folder in Rowan suite cupboard or on Maternity Drive at WPH) 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. Who can I contact if I have any further questions?

Bereavement Midwives – 07824321964 / 0300 613 3578

Labour Ward FPH – 0300 613 4035

Labour Ward WPH – 0300 613 4527

9. References

Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth & Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand (2024). *Care Around Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Clinical Practice Guideline*. Available at: <https://learn.stillbirthcre.org.au/> (Accessed 30 July 2025).

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 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-020-02865-4>

Tommy's (2025) 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 30.07.25)

Full version control record

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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 NHS Foundation 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.

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	

3.1	July 2025	Monica Eve, Hannah Hawkett	Final	Updated guidance in line with Epic documentation and removal of appendix
4	February 2026	Hannah Hawkett, Anna Kemsley, Louise Hallisey	Final	Scheduled review. Ratified at OCGC February 2026