

# Mainly for fathers





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All the quotes used in this booklet are kindly provided by bereaved fathers.

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**“Only hours in my life but  
a lifetime in my heart.”**



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# Introduction

We are very sorry that your baby has died. We hope that this booklet will help you over the next few days and months. It contains information that many fathers whose baby or babies have died said they needed to know. In time, your partner might find it helpful to read it too.

You may also want to read our booklet *Saying goodbye to your baby*, which covers other things you may need to think about in the next few days and weeks; for example, going home from the hospital, a post mortem examination, a funeral, registering your baby's birth or stillbirth, employment rights and financial benefits, and the postnatal check-up.

It also discusses how you may feel over the next few weeks and months, and suggests things that other parents have found helpful. If your partner is still in hospital and her midwife or nurse doesn't have a copy of *Saying goodbye to your baby* to give you, or if you have left the hospital, you can order a copy via our website or by phone, or read the booklet online (see page 34 for contact details).

We cannot be sure when you will get this booklet. We suggest that you read the sections that are important to you now.

**If your partner has already left the hospital** and you are reading this for the first time, some sections may not be relevant to you. But we hope that the rest of this booklet will be helpful.

**If your baby died in the neonatal unit**, you may have already started to do some of the things we suggest here. Again we hope that you will find the rest of this booklet helpful.

**If your baby has died but labour has not begun**, and if there is time, you and your partner may find it helpful to read our booklet *When a baby dies before labour begins*.

**If your baby was born dead before 24 weeks of pregnancy**, your and your partner's feelings are very likely to be the same as those of parents whose baby was stillborn later in pregnancy. Some hospital staff may refer to the death of your baby as a late miscarriage. You may find this term very upsetting and rightly feel that it underestimates the significance of what has happened. However, it is used because the legal requirements for registration and funerals for these babies, and the financial support that you may be entitled to, are different.

# How you might feel

Grief is very individual. Everyone reacts in their own way and each circumstance is different. But the grief that parents feel when a baby dies is often deeper and lasts much longer than most people expect.

Many parents say that they did not know it was possible to feel such sadness. You may experience all sorts of physical and emotional reactions after the death of your baby, some of which you may not expect.

## Physical reactions

Physical reactions to grief can be very similar to intense fear. You may have palpitations or chest pains. You may feel a heavy weight on your chest or find yourself sighing a lot. You may feel sick and have diarrhoea; you may have a lump in your throat or butterflies in your stomach. You may not feel like eating anything, or you may find that you can't stop eating.

You may feel exhausted but find it difficult to sleep. Your sleep may also be disturbed by very vivid dreams or nightmares.

If your baby spent time in the neonatal unit, you may also have had to cope with a whole range of emotions as his or her condition changed. You may have had the stress of travelling long distances to and from the neonatal unit. You may be physically as well as emotionally drained.

*"When my son died, my grief took me to a place I'd never been to before – a whole new set of emotions."*

## Emotional reactions

Most parents feel shocked and numb, especially soon after their baby's death.

*"I was numb for a few days, in shock. Then the anger, guilt, a roller coaster of raw emotions and a growing and overwhelming feeling of sadness, isolation and helplessness."*

Grief tends to come in waves. At first these are very close together and can feel overwhelming. Gradually there are periods of calm, but new waves can sweep in, often when you least expect them.

Many parents feel tearful and may find themselves crying or sobbing when they least expect to. Some people wake up and find that they have been crying in their sleep. Some wake up feeling all right for a split second, and then remember what has happened.

*"I remember the morning after my daughter died so clearly. I awoke and after barely a moment realised that she had gone. I sobbed and sobbed."*

Both parents can lose their confidence and self-esteem. It's common for mothers in particular to feel guilty and blame themselves for their baby's death and to feel that they have let their baby, their partner or their family down.

Anger is a frequent reaction to loss. You may be angry with yourself, with your partner, with God, or with the health professionals who cared for your partner or your baby. You may also be angry with parents who have healthy babies, or irritated by other people in general. When your own life has fallen apart, it can be very difficult to accept that, for most people, life is going on as usual.

*"I was taken by surprise by how suddenly short tempered and impatient I became with anything trivial. Small talk made me immensely frustrated, why would I be interested or want to talk about the weather, last night's TV or the football results? My son had just died."*

Many fathers feel very protective towards their partner. They may feel frustrated and inadequate because there is nothing they can say or do to comfort her. Some may also feel helpless because they couldn't prevent their baby's death.

*"My overwhelming sense was of being completely helpless, powerless and useless at not being able to do anything to save him."*

Parents who lose one of twins or triplets often face conflicting emotions: grief for the baby who has died, as well as hopes and fears for a vulnerable new baby or babies. This is especially confusing and hard to deal with.

# Dealing with feelings

Society generally expects men to be strong and supportive, and many men assume that this is their role. But this can mean that the fathers' needs and feelings tend to be ignored.

*"I think as a man you expect, and people expect you, to be strong for your partner...but I don't remember being strong. I remember crying a lot when I was alone and when I went back to work."*

You may find that crying and talking about your baby are good ways of releasing feelings. You may want to tell your story over and over again. You may find it helpful to write down what happened and how you feel day by day.

*"I work all over the UK and meet new people every week. So if people ask do I have any children, I tell them our story. I find it the best way to deal with things; it untangles the pain inside."*

Some people find it hard to express their feelings or talk about their baby. However you grieve, it's important that it's not combined with things that are in themselves damaging, such as working round the clock or drinking too much.

Some people only let go when they are by themselves, for example when alone in the car. However, it's important to be careful when driving. If you are feeling especially upset, it might be better to park in a quiet spot for a while.

*"When I was little, my father used to take me walking in the hills near our home. He had been taken there by my grandfather and I had always dreamed of taking my son there too. I go up to the hills when I need to be alone to think of him."*

Some fathers put their grief on hold for a while and concentrate on supporting their partner and on the things that need to be done. Their grief may emerge weeks or even months after their baby's death. This is not necessarily a choice, just the pattern that their grief takes.

Whether your grief is immediate or delayed, there will probably be times when your whole existence seems to be taken up with grief. Because grief can come in waves, you may find that you can sometimes cope perfectly normally for hours or even days. Some parents feel guilty about this and worry that they are being disloyal to their baby. But it doesn't mean that they have forgotten or don't care. It's quite normal to have periods of calm and normality between waves of acute sadness.

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**“Most people tell you, ‘Be strong’ and ‘Don’t cry’. This advice may be well meant but I found it unhelpful. Crying is not a sign of weakness, it’s a sign of the love and pride you have for the child who died.”**

# Telling other people

Breaking bad news is always hard and is often left to the father. It's especially difficult when you are shocked and distressed. There may be a few people whom you want to phone or text straight away. But others can probably wait for a bit.

If you phone family and friends you could start by saying, "I am afraid I have some bad news". This can help to set the tone and may reduce the number of inappropriate and upsetting questions. If your baby died around the due date, people are usually eagerly awaiting your news and are ready with questions about your baby's sex, name and weight. They will be shocked and may find it hard to take in what has happened. If your baby has died before labour has begun, some may even ask if the doctors are sure.

Family members and friends are unlikely to know what to say. Some parents say that they end up supporting the people who should be supporting them.

Try not to feel that you have to answer everyone's questions. Say only as much as you feel able to. Later, you could follow up your calls or texts with an email giving more information about what has happened. This can give people time to compose a more thoughtful response.

*"For more distant people and my business contacts I did send emails. Amazingly, because people have 'time' to be shocked and compose a reply, some of the most touching comments came from these emails."*

If you can't face breaking the news yourself, you could ask someone else to do it for you. You may want to tell this person what you would like them to say, including whether and how you want other people to contact you in the first few days. For example, you might prefer people to send cards, texts or emails rather than phone.

# Talking to children

*"I had to tell our son that Mummy would be having the baby but the baby was already dead...and that Mummy and Daddy would be very sad for a while, but that didn't mean that we didn't love him. If there was ever a time that I felt my heart was going to break, it was then."*

If you already have a child or children, you will need to think about what to tell them. This will depend on their age, on their ability to understand, and on the questions they ask. As a rule, it's better not to say too much at any one time and to let the child set the pace. If a child asks questions, try to answer as simply and truthfully as you can. If, for example, a child asks why the baby died, you could give them a short and factual reason or say that you don't know.

Young children take things very literally, so it's important to choose your words carefully. There are some words and phrases it may be better to avoid. For example, using the words "asleep" or "sleeping" may make a child afraid of going to sleep. Saying "lost" may make a child very frightened of getting lost themselves. Calling the baby an "angel" or saying the baby is "with the angels" may cause problems if in future someone says to your child "you are an angel..." or "be an angel...".

Although experts agree that it's difficult for a child under the age of about 6 or 7 to understand the concept and permanence of death, it's important to say exactly what you mean. So telling them the baby has died is probably best.

Whatever their age, children are sensitive to what their parents are feeling and to what is happening around them. They need to know that they are still important and loved. They may also need extra attention, which it may be difficult for you to give. You could ask a supportive friend or relative whom your child or children know well to help look

after them. It's a good idea to tell whoever helps with your child or children exactly what you have said to them. This will help to ensure that the children hear the same words and phrases from everyone.

Later on, you may find it helpful to read our booklet *Supporting children when a baby has died*. We also stock a number of books that parents can read with their children to help them discuss what has happened and how they feel. You can order these from our website or by phone.

## Making decisions

*"I wish someone had told me that there was no need to rush, that we could take time to make up our minds about what would be best for us."*

When a baby has died, there are decisions to be made and things that need to be done. It can be very tempting, perhaps especially for men, to focus on practical matters and on getting through a list of tasks. However, although it can be helpful to have something practical to do, it's important to try to take time and not to feel that you need to make decisions or do things in a hurry.

The decisions you make and the things that you do will affect the memories you have of your baby and how you look back on this time. It's important to try to get things right for both you and your partner. If possible, try to make all important decisions with her. She may be too shocked to think clearly right now, or she may still be under the influence of medication she was given during labour. If she is critically ill, it may be some time before she is able to think clearly enough to make choices. There is no hurry. Most decisions can wait.

# Creating memories

When a baby dies before, during or shortly after birth, parents have very few, if any, memories of him or her, and very few physical keepsakes. Hospital staff now offer parents opportunities to create memories of their baby and to collect keepsakes that will help them to remember him or her.

Although you may feel unsure about doing this, many parents have told us how precious photos and other items can be, especially in the years to come. Having keepsakes to show family members and friends may also help them to understand what the death of your baby means to you.

The staff will usually suggest some things you could do. When you are shocked and numb it can be hard to think clearly or to take in what people are telling you. Take the time to think about and do what is right for you. If, for any reason, you don't want to do what they suggest, please tell them. You may also have other ideas about what you want to do.

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**“You have to pack a ‘lifetime’ into the short time you have with your child. Create as many memories as you can. There is no need to rush, so slow down, even if you think it would be better to sort things out quickly.”**

## Seeing and holding your baby

The idea of seeing and holding your baby may seem very odd or frightening, especially if you haven't seen a dead person before. But, for many parents, the time they spend with their baby becomes their most precious memory and an experience that they would not have missed for the world.

However, if your baby died quite a long time before the birth, his or her appearance may have deteriorated. This is often difficult to predict. In this case, the midwife or nurse will discuss this with you when your baby is born.

*"I was terrified when asked if I would like to see and hold my baby. I couldn't think of anything worse, but the midwife handed me my little girl in a pink babygro, and I held and held and held her...it was the best thing I have ever done."*

Some parents decide not to see their baby. Or one partner decides to see the baby while the other doesn't. This is a very individual matter and neither of you should feel under any pressure to see or hold your baby if you don't want to. The most important thing is for each person to decide what feels right for them.

## Photographs

*“The community midwife suggested that I pack a camera to take pictures of our baby – I can remember thinking how terrible to take pictures of a dead baby. The pictures we now have of him are truly precious: vivid and beautiful memories of our treasured son. I’m so grateful she mentioned something so simple, important and caring.”*

The midwife or nurse will usually offer to take photos of your baby. You can also take your own photos. A digital camera is best because it produces lasting images that can be stored on a disc or on a computer and copied. If you use your phone, remember to download the pictures as soon as you can, in case you lose your phone. If you use a camera with a film, it’s important not to send the film by post to be developed in case it gets lost.

If neither of you want photos now, you could ask the midwife or nurse to take some and keep them in the mother’s hospital notes. Hospitals are now encouraged to store keepsakes such as photos so that the mother can ask for them if she changes her mind.

If this is what you want, it’s important to check that the staff will do it for you; not all hospitals store photos and keepsakes. If they don’t, you could ask the staff to give them to you in a sealed envelope so that you, a relative or a friend can store them in case you want to see them later on.

This may also be important because hospitals store photos in the mother’s medical notes and only the mother can ask to have them. Taking copies home in a sealed envelope will mean that either or both of you can see them later on if you decide you want to.

If you and your partner don’t want any photos taken, just say so.

If you do want photos, you may decide to have some of you or your partner with your baby or of all three of you together. Some parents include other family members, such as their other children and the baby's grandparents. Some take photos of their baby's hands or feet, or of their own hands holding their baby's hand or foot. Take as much time as you need to get all the photographs that you may want.

If your baby was one of twins or more, you may want photos of the babies together. These photos could be important for the surviving twin or triplet when they are old enough to understand that they had a twin, or that they were one of triplets.

## **Other decisions**

You and your partner can also make other decisions; for example, about washing and dressing your baby, giving your baby a name, having a funeral, taking your baby home for a while, and whether to have a post mortem examination. You will find more information about these options in our booklet *Saying goodbye to your baby*.

If you have already bought baby clothes and equipment, you will need to decide what to do with them. You might be tempted to clear them away before your partner comes home. Or well-meaning friends or relatives may offer to do this for you. But it's probably better if the two of you do it when you feel ready, even though it can be a very painful and emotional thing to do. Some parents decide to do this very quickly; others wait several weeks or months before they feel ready.

# Getting support

It's important to remember that neither of you has to rely only on each other for all your support. It can be very helpful for both of you to have other sources of support as well.

*"Friends and family did their best but I became increasingly desperate to speak to or have some contact with a man who had gone through something similar to me, to check that how I was feeling was OK, normal, and that I wasn't going mad."*

You may find it helpful to talk to other fathers who have had similar experiences, or to an understanding relative or friend. You can also go onto the Sands Forum or ring our Helpline for information and support. Our Helpline staff will put you in touch with your nearest Sands group if you would like, or arrange for you to talk to another bereaved father.

*"What was very difficult for me was the overwhelming grief my partner felt for our baby and feeling helpless to make it better. What helped was giving her space and time and some support. That support was not only from me, family and friends, but also from the local Sands group."*

It may also help both of you to have a complete break now and then. Although nothing may seem pleasurable at present, try doing something you used to enjoy such as watching some sport, seeing a band with friends, or doing something physical such as walking, running, or swimming.

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**"Nobody is strong enough  
to carry two people's grief."**

# You and your partner

The stress on couples when a baby dies can be considerable. It's very difficult to give support and understanding to someone else when you are desperately sad and in need of support yourself. Grief is very individual, and the way that it comes and goes means that, often, you and your partner don't feel or need the same things at the same time. You may also have different ways of expressing and dealing with your feelings.

For most mothers, the death of a baby is intensely physical as well as emotional. The baby who has been growing and moving inside the mother is suddenly gone. But, after the birth, her body still reacts as though she has a baby to care for. At times mothers may be overwhelmed by their feelings. They may cry and want to talk a lot about what has happened, how they feel, and how they are getting through each day.

Many fathers also cry and talk about how they feel and what has happened, but some may find this impossible and express their feelings only when they are alone. Some may spend hours on the internet trying to understand why their baby died. Others may take refuge in physical activities such as sport, gardening or DIY. Some fathers ignore their grief or hide their feelings in order not to upset their partner. Instead, they focus on supporting her and planning for the future.

Other people often reinforce these tendencies by assuming that men will be strong and keep going, or that they are not affected in the same way as the mother. Fathers are also generally expected to return to work very quickly, which encourages them to focus on "getting on with life".

Many fathers find it hard to deal with frequent and open expressions of emotion. It can be incredibly hard to see your partner's distress and be unable to help. Some fathers feel unsure about what they can say to their partner or feel pressure to express more emotion than they are

able to. Some fathers say that there are times when they simply want to “switch off”, “close down” or “get away” for a bit.

Many mothers feel upset and frustrated if their partner closes down. So it’s important to try to listen and acknowledge your partner’s feelings. It may also be helpful to discuss the fact that men and women often grieve in very different ways. You could explain that, although you are grieving too, you can only do it in your own way. You could also say that you are not sure how to help her when she expresses such sadness and despair.

In some cases it’s the mother who does not express her feelings openly while the father does. There is no fixed pattern; it’s important to remember that everyone grieves in their own way and at their own pace.

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**“Mutual understanding  
and respect were the  
things that got us through;  
each of us felt alone but we  
tried as far as we could to  
stay alongside each other.”**

# Certificates and registration

## If and when to register

**If your baby was born dead before 24 completed weeks of pregnancy** your baby's birth cannot be registered at a register office. However, many hospitals give parents a certificate of birth to commemorate their baby. If your hospital does not do this, you could provide a certificate and ask them to sign it. You can download a blank certificate from the Support section of our website. Or you can email or phone our Helpline and ask them to send you a certificate by post.

If you want to arrange your baby's funeral yourself, you need a form from the hospital to give to the funeral director. This confirms that the baby was born before the "age of viability" (that is, before 24 weeks) and showed no signs of life.

**If your baby was stillborn after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy** you need to register your baby's stillbirth with the registrar of births, marriages and deaths within 6 weeks (3 weeks in Scotland, 3 months in Northern Ireland). You do not have to register a name for your baby, but you cannot add a name or change it later.

**If your baby was born alive at any stage of pregnancy and then died** you need to register your baby's death within 5 working days (8 working days in Scotland). You can register the birth at the same time. You do not have to register a name for your baby, but you cannot add a name or change it later.

## Who can register a birth or a stillbirth?

**If the baby's parents are married**, either the mother or the father can register the birth or the stillbirth.

**If the baby's parents are not married** and both parents want the father's name in the register, they must normally go to the register office together.

**If an unmarried mother goes to the register office alone**, and both parents want the father's name in the register, she must give the registrar a declaration, signed by the father in front of a justice of the peace, a magistrate, a practising solicitor or a notary public, confirming that he is the father. Contact the register office for the name of a local justice of the peace or notary public.

**If an unmarried father goes to the register office alone**, and both parents want his name in the register, he must give the registrar a declaration, signed by the mother in front of a justice of the peace, a magistrate, a practising solicitor or a notary public confirming that he is the father. If the mother cannot leave the hospital and the time limit for registration is approaching, contact the local register office for advice.

## Who can register a neonatal death?

If a baby is born alive and then dies, the death can be registered either by both parents together or by just one parent, whether or not they are married. If the baby's birth has not yet been registered, this can be done at the same time (but see **Who can register a birth or a stillbirth?** above). The hospital staff will give you information about the local register office, where it is and when to go.

## **Urgent funerals**

The stillbirth or death of your baby must be registered before the funeral can take place. If, for personal or religious reasons, you need to hold the funeral very quickly, most registrars will register a stillbirth or a death out of normal office hours if necessary.

**Some of the registration procedures may change in Scotland in 2015 and in England, Wales and Northern Ireland at a later date. If so, the hospital staff will tell you what you need to do.**

# Rights and financial benefits for fathers

The following information is correct as of August 2014, but rights and benefits may change. Please check the websites and helplines listed at the end of this booklet to ensure that you have the most up-to-date information.

## What are you entitled to?

This depends on many things, including the length of the pregnancy, whether your baby was stillborn or lived for a short time after the birth, whether you are employed and your earnings before the birth.

Page 27 covers the time off work that you may be entitled to.

## Financial benefits

It may seem strange and perhaps upsetting to think about claiming benefits when your baby has died. However, many bereaved parents find themselves facing unexpected financial strain. So it's important to find out about all the rights and benefits to which you may be entitled.

Maternity and paternity benefits are complicated. They are administered by several government agencies and, in some cases, by employers. Some benefits need to be claimed within 28 days of your baby's birth, so it's important to find out about your entitlement as soon as you can.

You will find all the information you need about maternity benefits in the booklet *Late miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death: what financial help is available?* You may have received this at the hospital or from your community midwife or health visitor.

If not, you can download a copy from the Money Advice Service website (see the top of page 38 for the link) or email or phone our Helpline to ask for a copy. For more information you can also check the websites listed on page 38.

## **If your baby was born dead before 24 completed weeks of pregnancy**

The grief that parents feel when a baby dies after a late miscarriage (that is, before 24 completed weeks of pregnancy) can be much the same as when a baby is stillborn. But for legal purposes, when a baby is born dead before 24 completed weeks of pregnancy, this is called a late miscarriage. Sadly, you are not entitled to paternity rights or benefits if your partner had a late miscarriage. But you may still have some entitlements.

### **You may be entitled to:**

**Sick Leave and Sick Pay, Compassionate Leave or Time Off for Dependants** from your employer.

## **If your baby was stillborn after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy OR if your baby was born alive at any stage of pregnancy and then died**

### **You may be entitled to:**

One or two consecutive weeks' **Ordinary Paternity Leave** from your employer. You should normally have informed your employer before the 24th completed week of the pregnancy that you planned to take Paternity Leave.

**Sick Leave and Sick Pay, Compassionate Leave or Time Off for Dependants** from your employer.

# Returning to work

Fathers' paternity entitlements mean that you may have to go back to work very soon after your baby died. This may be the last thing you feel like doing and you may feel torn between the demands of work and your partner's need for your support. Or you may feel that going back to work will bring a bit of normality back into your life.

You may want to contact your employer and colleagues before you go back to tell them what has happened. You will find more information about going back to work in our booklet *Returning to work after the death of your baby*. You may also want to suggest that your employer reads our booklet *Information for employers: helping a bereaved parent return to work*.

It's important not to demand too much of yourself at first. If possible, try to avoid making important decisions and taking on too much too soon.

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**“I was shocked at how little I could do, I constantly felt distracted, lacking energy, and looking back now, I really didn't function effectively for six months...”**

# Other people's reactions

Most people have little or no idea how to respond to bereaved parents – and perhaps especially to fathers. Fathers often find that people ask how their partner is but don't ask how they are feeling. If you want to, feel free to tell them – even if they don't ask!

*"It took a long time for someone to ask me how I was."*

Many people don't know what to say or what to do when a baby dies. Some may make tactless and hurtful remarks, believing that they are being helpful. It's especially hard if the people you normally rely on are not able to be supportive. This can be very hard to deal with at a time when you need others to rally round.

*"It's a time when you really find out who your friends are."*

In fact, the right words and the right help may come from very unexpected sources. The important thing is not to make any assumptions about who will do what. Instead you could tell family and friends what they can do to help. For example, you could tell them when you want to talk and when you don't; when you want them to come round and when you don't; when you need them to cook a meal, bring it round and leave; when you need them to do some shopping for you. Perhaps most importantly you may have to tell them when you need them to simply listen to you without providing reassurance or answers.

Most people will be relieved to know what they can do to help. You could also suggest that they read our booklet *For family and friends: how you can help*.

# Other issues

## **Sex after the death of your baby**

Most couples have to make adjustments to their sex life after the birth of a healthy baby, so it's not surprising that there can be difficulties when a baby has died. The mother may need quite a long time before she feels physically ready to have sex. One partner may find sex comforting and a way to express their love for their partner, while the other may feel it's far too soon.

Some parents may feel that it's wrong to experience pleasure when they are grieving for their baby. Either partner may associate sex with the death of their baby and be too tense or frightened to enjoy it. These feelings can cause real problems, especially if partners don't understand each other's point of view. The best solution is usually to try to talk to each other honestly and openly about how you are feeling.

When you do start to have sex again, you should consider using some form of contraception as it's possible to become pregnant again fairly soon after giving birth. Even if you want to try again, it's better to take your time and to plan the next pregnancy. You may find it helpful to read our booklet *Sexual relationships after the death of your baby*.

## **Another pregnancy**

The decision to try again is very personal. For some parents, another pregnancy is not an option for medical or personal reasons. Even for parents who may want to have another baby, the prospect is often very frightening. They may have lost confidence in their ability to have a healthy baby and may fear that this baby will die as well. At the same time, they may feel under pressure to have another baby from well-meaning family and friends who believe that this would make everything “all right”.

Sometimes one partner wants to try again, while the other is not ready or cannot even think about it. This can put an additional strain on the relationship. Again, it’s important to try to talk and listen to each other.

There is no “right” time to try for another baby, but it is generally agreed that the mother needs time to recover physically from the birth and to have had at least one period. This shows that her body has returned to normal.

# The longer term

Gradually the pain of grief becomes less dominant and overwhelming. However, waves of grief can be triggered unexpectedly.

*"I think about my daughter a lot and especially when I see children at the age she would be. I think about how she would look and what she would be doing if only she'd lived. It really hurts."*

Festivals such as Christmas and special days such as Mother's Day, Father's Day and family gatherings are times when parents often feel renewed sadness. The anniversary of your baby's death or due date may be especially hard. You and your partner might want to plan a day off together so that you can do something special to remember your baby.

Other reminders such as baby-related mail can also be a source of distress. Most hospitals try to ensure that parents don't continue to receive mailings from the Bounty Club. If, at the start of the pregnancy, your partner signed up to any other baby clubs or to Emma's Diary, you will need to cancel these yourselves. You can also reduce the amount of baby-related mailings by contacting the Baby Mailing Preference Service (see page 37 for contact details).

If, after about six months, you are finding it very hard to manage everyday life or work, it's a good idea to ask for professional help. Make an appointment with your GP and explain how you are feeling. If necessary he or she can refer you for specialist help and support.

*"I have moved on, I can talk about the day she died and not cry – sometimes. I am proud of the little girl we lost."*

# More information and support

Our booklet *Saying goodbye to your baby* covers the things that you may find helpful in the time immediately before and after your baby is born. It covers other things you may need to think about in the next few days and weeks, for example; going home from the hospital, a post mortem examination, a funeral, registering your baby's birth or stillbirth, employment rights and financial benefits, and the postnatal check-up. It also discusses how you may feel over the next few weeks and months, and suggests things that other parents have found helpful.

If the midwife or nurse looking after you doesn't have a copy of *Saying goodbye to your baby* to give you, you can order one from our website or by phone, or read the booklet online (see page 34 for contact details).

# How Sands can help

Sands is a national charity offering information and emotional support when a baby dies before, during, or shortly after birth.

17 babies are stillborn or die shortly after birth every day in the UK, and each year we support thousands of families whose babies have died.

At Sands there are people who understand what it's like, because many of us have been through this devastating experience ourselves.

You may not want anything from us right away. We are here to help whenever you feel you need it. That may be now or in a few weeks, months or even years.

As well as supporting mothers, fathers and same sex partners, we are also here to help other members of the family and the many other people who may be touched by a baby's death, including friends, colleagues and health care staff. All are welcome to contact us for support and information.

<b>Do you want to speak to someone on our Helpline?</b>	<b>020 7436 5881</b>
<b>Do you want to email the Helpline for support?</b>	<b><a href="mailto:helpline@uk-sands.org">helpline@uk-sands.org</a></b>
<b>Do you want to connect with others whose baby has died?</b>	<b><a href="http://www.sandsforum.org">www.sandsforum.org</a></b>
<b>Do you want to find out about a Sands group near you?</b>	<b><a href="mailto:helpline@uk-sands.org">helpline@uk-sands.org</a></b>
<b>Do you want to know about our other support booklets?</b>	<b>Please see page 35</b>
<b>Do you want to see what's on offer at our shop?</b>	<b><a href="http://www.shop-sands.org/shop/">www.shop-sands.org/ shop/</a></b>
<b>Do you want to know more about what we do?</b>	<b><a href="http://www.uk-sands.org">www.uk-sands.org</a></b>
<b>Do you want to make a donation or fundraise?</b>	<b><a href="mailto:fundraising@uk-sands.org">fundraising@uk-sands.org</a></b>
<b>Do you want to write to us?</b>	<b>Sands, 3rd Floor, 28 Portland Place, London, W1B 1LY</b>

## **Sands support resources**

If you would like more information on any of the subjects we have mentioned, please see our current list of Sands booklets below. You can read or download copies of our booklets on the Support section of our website [www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org) or you can order copies from our online shop [www.shop-sands.org/shop](http://www.shop-sands.org/shop) or by calling 0845 6520 448.

### **Sands booklets**

*When a baby dies before labour begins*

*Saying goodbye to your baby*

*Deciding about a post mortem: information for parents*

*Deciding about a funeral for your baby*

*Mainly for fathers*

*Supporting children when a baby has died*

*Sexual relationships after the death of your baby*

*Information and support for grandparents*

*For family and friends: how you can help*

*Returning to work after the death of your baby*

*Information for employers: helping a bereaved parent return to work*

*Another pregnancy? After a late miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death*

*Long ago bereaved*

# Useful addresses

## Other charities that offer support

### **Bliss - the special care baby charity**

**[www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk)**

Support, advice and information for families of babies in intensive care and special care, including in situations of loss and for future pregnancies.

**Helpline: 0500 618 140   Email: [hello@bliss.org.uk](mailto:hello@bliss.org.uk)**

### **Child Bereavement UK**

**[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)**

Supporting families when a baby or child dies and when a child is bereaved, including support in another pregnancy.

**Support and information: Freephone 0800 02 888 40 or 01494 568900**

**Email: [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)**

### **Miscarriage Association**

**[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)**

Support and information for those affected by pregnancy loss, including support in another pregnancy.

Network of support groups and telephone contacts throughout the UK.

**Helpline: 01924 200 799   Email: [info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk)**

### **TAMBA Bereavement Support Group**

**[www.tamba.org.uk/bsg](http://www.tamba.org.uk/bsg)**

Support for families who have lost one or more children from a multiple birth, including support in another pregnancy.

(Part of the Twins and Multiple Births Association – TAMBA)

**Helpline: 0800 138 0509   Email: [staceywills@tamba.org.uk](mailto:staceywills@tamba.org.uk)**

## **Winston's Wish**

**[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)**

Help and support for bereaved children and young people up to the age of 18.

**Helpline: 0845 203 0405    Email: [info@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk)**

## **Other useful addresses**

### **Baby Mailing Preference Service (MPS)**

**[www.mpsonline.org.uk/bmpr](http://www.mpsonline.org.uk/bmpr)**

Free site where you can register online to stop or reduce baby-related mailings of samples, advertisements etc.

**Address: DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London, W1W 8SS**

**Tel: 020 7291 3310    Email: [bmps@dma.org.uk](mailto:bmps@dma.org.uk)**

# Where to get more information about rights and benefits

## **Money Advice Service**

**[www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)**

For up-to-date summary of financial benefits.

In the "Search the site" box enter one of the following phrases:

*"Late Miscarriage / Stillborn / Died shortly after birth"*

## **Government websites**

These UK government websites contain more detailed information about the different benefits to which you may be entitled and how to claim them, as well as links to downloadable claim forms, email addresses, telephone numbers etc.

**England, Wales, Scotland:** **[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)** Select *Benefits*

**Northern Ireland:** **[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)** Select *Money, tax and benefits*

Enter what you are looking for into the search box at the top of the page and click on *Go*.

For most benefits you can also phone or visit your local Job Centre or JobCentre Plus (in Northern Ireland: Jobs and Benefits Office, or Social Security Office).

**For more help and advice on employment or financial issues:**

**Working Families**

**[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)**

A campaigning charity which supports and gives a voice to working parents. Gives financial and other advice over the phone or by email.

**Helpline: 0300 012 0312 Email: [advice@workingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@workingfamilies.org.uk)**

# About Sands

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, was founded in 1978 by a small group of bereaved parents who were devastated by the death of their babies, and by the total lack of acknowledgement and understanding of the significance and impact of their loss.

Since that time, we have supported many thousands of families whose babies have died, offering emotional support, comfort and information. Today Sands operates throughout the UK and focuses on three main areas of work:

## **We support anyone affected by the death of a baby**

Bereavement support is at the core of everything we do. Some of the services that we offer include:

- ▶ Helpline for parents, families, carers and health professionals
- ▶ UK-wide network of support groups run by trained befrienders
- ▶ Online forum and message boards enabling bereaved families to connect with others
- ▶ Website and a wide range of booklets, books and other resources.

## **We work in partnership with health professionals to try to ensure that bereaved parents and families receive the best possible care**

We offer resources and a comprehensive programme of training, workshops and talks for health professionals that give practical guidance on how to meet parents' needs and provide good bereavement care.

## **We promote and fund research that could help to reduce the loss of babies' lives**

The UK has one of the highest rates of perinatal death in the developed world. The shocking reality is that, in spite of medical advances, 17 babies are stillborn or die under one month old every day.

We raise vital funds for research and campaign for the government to address this situation as a matter of priority.

We depend on the extraordinary energies of our supporters to raise the vital funds that we need to deliver the wide range of services that we offer.

**If you would like any further information or support please contact us or visit our website.**

### **Support:**

t: 020 7436 5881

e: [helpline@uk-sands.org](mailto:helpline@uk-sands.org)

### **Enquiries:**

t: 020 7436 7940

e: [info@uk-sands.org](mailto:info@uk-sands.org)

### **Write to us:**

3rd Floor, 28 Portland Place,  
London, W1B 1LY

### **Website:**

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