



Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Guideline for taking a baby home following perinatal loss.

N.B. Staff should be discouraged from printing this document. This is to avoid the risk of out-of-date printed versions of the document. The Intranet should be referred to for the current version of the document.

Contents:	
Introduction	4
Policy Statement	4
Aims 4	
Scope.....	4
Roles and Responsibilities	4
Main Body.....	4
Resources.....	5
Training	5
Implementation.....	5
Further Information Clinical Documents.....	5
Standards for Health Services Wales	5
Equality	5
Environmental Impact	6
Audit.....	6
Review.....	6
References	6
Appendices	7

1. Introduction/Overview

This document is a clinical guideline to promote safe and effective practice to clinicians working within maternity services and looking after bereaved families who wish to take their baby home after death.

2. Policy Statement

To provide support for clinical decision making.

3. Aims/Purpose

- Ensure families are aware of all the choices available to them.
- To provide all documentation necessary for discharge to the community.
- Provision of consistent communication to all the relevant health care professionals in the hospital and community.
- Ensure advice is given to parents for transportation of their baby to their home.
- Empower families to care for their baby at home.

4. Objectives

The objective of this document is to ensure consistent high-quality care.

5. Scope

This guideline applies to all members of staff working within the maternity services.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the maternity team to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to when providing care to bereaved families in the postnatal period.

The clinical effectiveness forum will ensure that the guideline is available on the intranet.

7. Main Body

This will be achieved through education, supervision, and regular audit of practice.

8. Resources

Availability of cold cots.

9. Training

Staff are expected to access appropriate bereavement training where provided.

Mandatory annual training will include education for staff relating to bereavement care.

Training needs to be identified through appraisal and clinical supervision. All midwives should be aware of the process involved when supporting families who wish to take their baby home.

10. Implementation

This document will be available on the intranet for all members of the maternity team.

11. Further Information Clinical Documents

- SANDS; Taking the baby home position statement (2015)
- National Care Bereavement Pathway (2018)
- ABUHB Integrated Care Pathway for Intrauterine Deaths over 20 weeks.
- ABUHB Integrated Care Pathway for Termination of Pregnancy for Fetal Abnormality.

12. Health and Care Standards Wales

This guideline contributes to compliance with:

Standard 6: Participating in quality improvement activities.

Standard 7: Safe and clinically effective care.

Standard 10: Dignity and Respect.

Also: this guideline links with:

Standard 18: Communicating effectively.

Standard 26: Workforce training and Organisational development.

13. Equality

An equality impact assessment has been carried out and no adverse impact has been identified.

14. Environmental Impact

An environmental impact assessment has been carried out and no adverse impact has been identified.

15. Audit

This guideline will be audited by the bereavement team looking at these key points:

- Compliance with the documentation on the ICP pathway for intrauterine deaths over 20 weeks' gestation.
- Compliance with the ICP for termination for fetal abnormality.
- Compliance with the Communication checklist within this guideline.

16. Review

This guideline will be reviewed three years after the ratification date.

17. References

Collaborative guidance for the staff to support families who wish to take their baby home after death: children's hospices across Scotland. (January 2019)

Taking a deceased baby home (at any gestation): Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust (September 2019)

SANDS; Taking the baby home position statement (2015)

National Care Bereavement Pathway (2018)

Background

Sometimes a family whose baby has died in the perinatal period may wish to take their baby home. The guideline is to support all staff caring for bereaved families and to provide consistent information and guidance to ensure all care that is given is standardised and of a high quality.

Legally there is no reason why parents cannot take their baby home after death, apart from when a death has been referred to the coroner. In these cases, the coroner will need to be contacted if the parents are requesting to take their baby home. Any discussion must be documented.

If a family wish to have a post-mortem, they should be advised to return the baby after 24 hours as the value of any results may reduce as time passes. There is still opportunity for them to have the baby at home following the post-mortem should they wish.

Taking their baby home will give parents the opportunity to spend more time with their baby and allow other family member to meet the baby.

Care in Hospital

Parental Choices

- All families should be informed of their options following the birth of their baby.
- If a family wish to have a post-mortem, they should be advised to return their baby after 24 hours as the value of any results may reduce as time passes. There is still opportunity for them to have the baby at home following the post-mortem should they wish.
- Respect and support the family's decision. No family should be rushed into making decisions or going home.

Complete Documentation

See Appendices

Respect and dignity

- Give as much support to the family to ensure they feel comfortable and confident taking their baby home after they have died.
- Respect parental choice.

- Parents will need to be sensitively informed of the changes in baby's physical condition over time, such as skin integrity, discolouration, odour, and leakage of fluid. Use factual and clear language and be gentle during the explanation. If they are concerned, they can speak to the community midwife or bereavement midwife.

Communication

- To ensure continuity of care and support is provided, concise information must be cascaded to all health care professionals.
- There is no need to contact the police.

Who should be informed?

- Bereavement Midwife: please inform via email or phone if a family is taking their baby home. They can help you with notifying the correct people. They will also be the point of contact for the family when they go home.
- Mortuary staff: Please contact the mortuary to complete the mortuary register with the details of mother and baby, contact details, date of birth etc.
- Community midwives: the community midwife will visit as normal to provide support and ensure that the parents are coping. Frequency of visits can be decided between the community midwife and the family.
- GP and health visitor.

Transportation of baby home

- Provide appropriate advice to parents to ensure that their baby is transported in a safe and dignified manner.
- Parents can use their own transport and go straight from the hospital.
- Although it is not a legal requirement, the use of safety seats, moses basket and seat belts are advised to ensure that baby is secure during the journey.
- If the parents wish to use transport such as a taxi, they should check with the company first.

- Public transport is not advised.
- A member of staff will accompany the parents and their baby to their car on discharge.

Care of the baby at Home

- Advise the parents to keep the baby cool at home utilising the cold cot as much as possible.
- Advise them not to have all windows opened, especially in the summer.
- Advise the parents they can care for and hold their baby as they wish, including bathing and dressing, however over handling may increase the rate of deterioration.
- Ensure the community midwife is aware of the arrangements in place so she can provide extra support if required and arrange for the return of the cuddle cot back to the hospital when it is no longer required.
- When ready to say goodbye, or if they decide having their baby at home is no longer the right thing for them, the parents are to be advised to contact their chosen funeral director to arrange for them to collect the baby. The baby should not be returned to the hospital mortuary (unless a PM is being undertaken and prior arrangements have been made with the bereavement midwife).
- Parents need to be aware that they can continue to visit their baby at the funeral home until the day of the funeral.

Appendix 1



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

The loss of a baby is one of the most traumatic and emotionally distressing times of your lives. It is natural to be experiencing a mixture of feelings from shock to disbelief making it hard to concentrate on all the information you are being given by the midwives and staff on the labour ward. This leaflet has been developed to clarify some of the practical advice you may need, if you have decided you wish to take your baby home. It is important that you feel supported at this time and know who to contact should you require any additional support. The guidance will also provide you with advice on caring for your baby. It will include information about who to contact if you have any concerns at home and details of what to do when you decide you are ready to say goodbye.

Transporting your baby home.

1. It would be advisable to ask someone to drive you all home as you may find it difficult to concentrate on driving while experiencing such raw emotions. Ask them to meet you as close to the main entrance as possible.
2. You can carry your baby to the car in your arms or a Moses basket (we can provide one if necessary) and a member of staff will accompany you to the car.
3. The baby should ideally be secured in a car seat or approved baby transport device.
4. You will be given a copy of the parent transport letter to take with you. This can be presented if you should be stopped on your way home from the hospital or if you are involved in an accident.

What to expect when you get home.

The condition of your baby will change over time. These expected physical changes may be:

1. Changing colour or peeling of the skin
2. Slight oozing of bodily fluids or odour
3. Temporary stiffness
4. Coolness of the skin

There are some things you can do at home to slow down these changes. These include:

1. Keeping your baby cool by using the cold cot as much as possible.
2. Keeping windows closed especially in hot weather.
3. Keep pets out of the room.
4. Using a cuddle cot (which we can provide for you if available) or you can place your baby on covered ice packs.

You may bathe, dress, and hold your baby as you wish. Ideally, the baby should be kept cool as much as possible. You should contact your preferred funeral director once at home and make arrangements for them to collect your baby when you feel the time is right.

You will need to register the baby's birth/death (if over 24 weeks) and Torfaen Registry office will contact you directly to arrange this.

Changing your mind

We recognise that sometimes circumstances and feelings change, and you may decide that having your baby at home is no longer the right thing for you. If this happens it is important to contact your funeral directors and ask them to come and collect your baby. You will still be able to visit your baby at the funeral home until the funeral. If you have decided to have a post-mortem, then he/she should be returned to the hospital. A time and a place for this must be arranged between you and the bereavement midwife. If you have any concerns or questions, please use the contact numbers on the parent transport letter.

Appendix 2



Setting up the cuddle cot at home: Parent Guidance

The cuddle cot is a cooling system which will keep your baby at the correct temperature allowing you to spend more time together at home.

We will fill the cooling unit ready for you to use but there are the instructions in case your baby is at home for a longer time.

Contents:

Cuddle cot storage box

Cuddle cot unit

Hose with connector

Cooling mat

Insulating silver foil sheet

Bottle of biocide

Bottle of sterile water

Key to empty water

How to set up the cuddle cot

1. Place the silver insulation foil on top of the surface being used for e.g., cot, mattress, or pram with the **shiny side upwards**.



2. Place the cooling mat onto the silver insulation foil and cover with a sheet. Ensure the tubing hangs over the side of your Moses basket or cot and is kink free.



3. Plug the cooling unit on and attach the hose to the cooling unit (you will hear a click)



4. Plug the cooling pad connectors into the end of the hose. You should hear a click.



5. Open the filler cap and fill the unit with water until 2/3rds full of STERILE water. Add two drops of biocide. The water tank will need to be topped up periodically so it does not run out (an alarm will sound if the water level drops).



7. Switch the cooling unit on by pressing the on/off button. Press the down arrow until it shows 8 degrees and then press enter. (The unit takes about 45mins to become cool)



8. The cuddle cot is now working.

The community midwife can liaise with the bereavement midwife at the hospital to arrange for the cold cot to be returned.

Appendix 5



Parent transport letter.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

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

.....

Of (home address)

.....

whose baby was stillborn/died on (date).....

are taking their deceased baby home from

Grange University Hospital,

Llanfrechfa,

Cwmbran.

NP44 8YN

On (date).....

They will be (delete as appropriate)

- contacting their funeral director to arrange collection of the baby and make their own funeral arrangements.

Or

- bringing their baby back to the hospital on:

Name of authorising member of staff

Job title.....

Signature.....

Date.....

If further confirmation is needed, please contact the Labour Ward Coordinator at

The Grange University Hospital 01633493181 (24 hours)

Or the Bereavement Midwife during office hours on 075810224