York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Taking your baby home

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

Bereavement Midwives
Email: yhs-tr.bereavement.midwives@nhs.net

Telephone:
York 07776 633807
Scarborough 07823 548628

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Introduction

Following the loss of a baby some parents decide to take their baby home as they may wish to spend time in the home where he or she would have lived and grown up. Some parents may also want to take their baby home from the hospital before the funeral for a short time.

This is not necessarily the right option for all families but for some it brings immense comfort.

Taking your baby home can give you the opportunity to spend time with your baby privately and in familiar surroundings. It can be an opportunity for siblings, relatives and friends to see your baby, create memories and grieve with you.

You may also want to take your baby's body to a place that has special significance to you.

Your baby may have died at another hospital away from where you live, and you may want to bring your baby back home before arranging a local burial or cremation.

There is no legal reason why you should not do this in the UK, apart from when a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) cannot be issued, and the death is being referred to the coroner or Medical Examiner.

You may be able to take your baby straight home with you but if a post-mortem is required or you have opted for this investigation, it is preferred that this takes place before you take your baby home. This ensures that the investigation happens as soon as possible, and that any information gained from the postmortem is accurate. You can arrange to bring your baby home after the post-mortem by contacting the bereavement services officers.

How do I take my baby home?

You can take your baby home with you from the ward or from the Mortuary. If you go home and later decide that you would like to bring your baby home, you can discuss arranging this with your bereavement specialist team or your funeral director depending on where your baby is being cared for at the time.

Before you leave the hospital, you will need to sign a form stating that you are taking your baby home and will accept responsibility for the care of their body either by arranging their burial or cremation or by bringing them back to the hospital. You will also be given a letter to take home with you, which states that your baby has died.

You can take your baby home yourself by car if you wish, or you may want to use a funeral director for this (they may charge for this service). If you take your baby home yourself you can carry him/her in your arms, use a Moses basket or, if you prefer, a casket from a funeral director or one that you have made yourself. You will need to think about how fragile your baby is when deciding this. If you are unsure, the midwives or bereavement service officers will be able to advise you.

If you want to take your baby home by taxi or minicab, you must check first that the driver is willing to transport your baby in these circumstances. Public transport is not advisable.

What happens when you are at home?

When you are at home with your baby there are no rules about what you can and cannot do; you can spend the time as you choose. If you decide to take your baby to a special place, make sure you carry the letter you have been given by the hospital with you to prevent any misunderstanding.

When you are home, the room that your baby is in will need to be kept cool and well ventilated. The use of ice packs placed underneath the baby can assist you with this.

Always keep windows closed whilst baby is at home and refrain from putting any heating on in the room and keep bedclothes to a minimum. The use of fans may be beneficial.

It is important to be aware of other children and consider the presence of pets within the home environment.
We strongly advise you to take general safety precautions and ensure that your baby is not left alone with any other children or animals.

What is a cuddle cot and how do I use one?

The hospital has a special cuddle cold cot that they may be able to loan to you whilst your baby is at home.
A cuddle cot is a small cooling mattress that can be placed in a moses basket or cot to help keep your baby at the best temperature. This will help you keep your baby at home with you for longer. Please contact the bereavement midwife, mortuary or bereavement officer at the hospital to see if this is possible.

For further information and information on videos on how to set up a cuddle cot at home please go to

https://cuddlecot.com/manuals/

or scan the QR code below…

What changes could you expect with the appearance of your baby at home?

During this time, you should be aware that the appearance of your baby's skin colour may change and start to peel as the skin becomes fragile.

Your baby's body may feel cool or firm to touch.

It is also not unusual for small amounts of bodily fluids to seep out, especially from baby's nose, after he/she has died. This is nothing to be alarmed by and fluids can be wiped away using tissue or baby wipes, which can be wrapped and disposed of within normal household waste.

You may also notice marks on your babies that look like bruises. These are marks from where the blood settles when the heart stops beating.

Parents often use scented air fresheners within the room to mask any odours.

The midwife can discuss this further with you, if you wish, before you leave the hospital so that you are aware of what may happen.

How long can I take my baby home for?

The length of time that your baby is at home with you will depend on your own wishes. Some parents have their baby home the day or the night before the burial or cremation, but others need more time. Like grief, the decisions you make are unique to you and your family.

There is no legal limit for this, but it is important to remember that your baby's appearance will change.

If the hospital is arranging your baby's funeral you will need to keep the Bereavement Services officers or bereavement midwives informed of how long you would like to keep baby at home. They will liaise with the funeral director and the mortuary staff at the hospital to help you facilitate this.

Your baby can be returned to the mortuary at the hospital or the funeral directors chapel of rest, at a convenient time, prior to the funeral. If you would like baby to be collected from your home this can also be arranged by the Bereavement Services officers.

Once a baby has left the care of the hospital, it is not always possible for them to be returned to their care. If you are arranging a private funeral (without hospital involvement), we would recommend choosing a funeral director as soon as you are home, if not before, and informing them that your baby is at home with you.

They will give you contact details, including out of hours emergency contact numbers to arrange for collection of your baby as and when you are ready. Again, it is helpful to keep an open line of communication with them during the time your baby is at home so they can offer you support.

Your GP, community midwife, bereavement support midwife and the Bereavement Services officers at the hospital will be notified that you have been discharged home with your baby.

Your bereavement team may be able to arrange for either themselves or your community midwife to visit whilst your baby is at home. This is to provide general support as well as to answer any questions or discuss any concerns you may have. You will also be provided with a 24-hour telephone number to call in the event you needed immediate support or advice.

What are your options regarding burial or cremation once you have taken your baby home?

If your baby was born over 24 week's gestation you have a legal responsibility to have a funeral and organise either a burial or cremation for your baby.

If your baby was born under 24 weeks gestation, although there is no legal requirement, you still have the option of organising a burial or cremation for your baby.

Some parents may also choose to delegate responsibility for the burial or cremation to the hospital.

A baby's body cannot be taken out of the country without following the appropriate legal procedures. A funeral director can offer professional advice.

Where can you bury your baby?

If you do not want to bury your baby in a cemetery or churchyard you may wish to bury them in a place that holds a special meaning for you, such as in a garden, farmland or woodland. If you want to do this you do not need the help of a funeral director but will need to follow these guidelines:

- Get permission from the owner of the land for burial. If you do not know who owns the land you can contact HM Land Registry to check.
- Record the date and place of burial in a formal letter which should be attached to the title deeds of the property or land.
- If you have a loan or mortgage against the property you will need to notify any company or individual who has an interest in the property. You should also be aware that the burial may deter future buyers or occupiers and affect the value of the property.
- Bury your baby in environmentally biodegradable material; plastic boxes should not be used.
- Make sure there is no danger to any water courses or supplies and no danger of any bodily products leaking into adjoining land. The burial site should not be within 10 metres of any standing or running water, or 50 metres of a well, borehole or spring that supplies water for human consumption.

- You do not have to inform the Environment Agency but might want to check with them that the burial site meets their safety standards.

- Babies born before 24 weeks of pregnancy should be buried at a depth of at least 45 centimetres. Babies who are stillborn or die shortly after birth should be buried at a depth of 1.25 metres.

- When a burial is on private land there is no guarantee that the site will not be disturbed later so you may want to seek advice from a solicitor or the coroner's office.

- If your baby was born alive but died after birth (not after a stillbirth) the Certificate for Burial must be completed by the landowner and must be received by the registrar within 96 hours of burial. The registrar will give you this certificate to complete when you register your baby's death.

There are also privately owned woodland burial sites which you may prefer to use. You can find out more about these from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

It is important to think carefully about burying your baby on private land in case you move house and that the land maybe used for new purposes in the future.

York Hospital Contacts

Women's unit	01904 726869
Bereavement Services Monday-Friday 08:30-16:30 (excluding bank holidays).	01904 725445
Labour Ward	01904 726869 (option 3)
Midwife Support Email: yhs-tr.bereavement.midwives@nhs.net Mobile	07776633807
Chaplaincy (Office hours/ voicemail)	01904 725579
Mortuary	01904 726803

Scarborough Hospital Contacts

Switch board	01723 368111
Labour Ward	01723 236869 (option 3)
Bereavement Services Monday-Friday 08:30-16:30 (excluding bank holidays).	01723 385178
Midwife Support Email: yhs-tr.bereavement.midwives@nhs.net Mobile	07823 548628
Chaplaincy	01723 342500
Mortuary	01723 342213

Other useful contacts

SANDS
www.uk-sands.org
0808 164 3332

Miscarriage Association
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
01924 200 799

Cuddle cot
info@cuddlecot.com Tel: 08455 333561

Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management
www.iccm-uk.com
020 8989 4661

HM Land Registry
www.landreg.gov.uk
0844 892 1111

The Natural Death Centre
www.naturaldeath.org.uk
01962 712 690

Bereavement Advice centre
www.bereavementadvice.org
0800 634 9494

The Good Funeral Guide
www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk
01527 595 358 or 07557 684 515

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:
Bereavement midwife, Bereavement services.
York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725445.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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