



Children's
Hospice
Association
Scotland

South East and Tayside Regional Planning Group



NHS Scotland and Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS)

Collaborative guidance for staff to support families who wish to take their baby home after death

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Families who wish to take their baby home after death

Introduction – Rationale for guidance

It is important for both parents and staff to be aware that in Scotland, unless a Procurator Fiscal post-mortem examination is required, there is no legal reason why a baby cannot be taken home after they have died. This choice allows parents an opportunity to spend more time with their baby with the support of family and friends and to say goodbye in their own environment. This document is designed to provide guidance to staff to support families who wish to take their baby home.

Aims

1. To make parents aware of the choices available to them, following their baby's death, and to support their decision making
2. To ensure that the baby and their family are treated with dignity and respect
3. To make certain that all relevant medical and nursing documentation is complete prior to discharge home
4. To establish good communication between hospital and community services when parents decide to take their baby home
5. To ensure appropriate advice is given to parents regarding the transportation of their baby
6. To empower parents to care for their baby at home
7. To inform parents of their legal responsibilities regarding registration



Care in Hospital

1. To make parents aware of the choices available to them, following their baby's death, and support them with their decision making

Parental Choices following a neonatal death:

- It is important that we understand that taking a baby home following death, is not the right choice for every family. **This should be respected.**
- In the case of parental authorised post-mortem families are able to take their baby home following the procedure or depending on timings prior to the procedure by making arrangements with staff to return their baby to the hospital before leaving the Neonatal Unit (NNU).
- When a Procurator Fiscal post-mortem examination is required parents cannot take their baby home prior to the procedure but they may still be able to take their baby home **following** the examination.

2. To ensure that the baby and their family are treated with dignity and respect

Parents need to feel as comfortable as possible with the way they take their baby home after death:

- The use of the baby's name acknowledges their baby as a person and affirms them as parents.
- It is important to recognise the role of the parents in caring for their baby and to respect their choices at this difficult time.
- Parents should be sensitively informed of the expected physical changes to their baby following death (i.e. colour changes, skin integrity and leakage of body fluids, odour). They should be reassured that these changes are expected and may be minimised by the correct use of the Flexmort Cuddle Cot. If they are concerned they can contact the funeral director or NNU directly for advice.
- If parents have chosen to take their baby home following a post-mortem it is important to inform them of the additional changes that can be expected (i.e. the site of suture lines and guidance on what to do if there is leakage from the site).

3. To make certain that all relevant medical and nursing documentation is complete prior to discharge home

- When the family are ready to leave the NNU it is important that the parental details, transport arrangements, post-mortem details (if applicable) and health professional communications are recorded. This can be achieved by



completing the 'Taking a Baby Home – Communication Checklist' (see Appendix 1).

- A letter should be given to parents prior to discharge in case they need to explain that their baby has died and they are transporting them home. See Taking our baby home: Parent letter (Appendix 2).

Documentation required prior to discharge:

- Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)
- Taking a baby home – Communication Checklist ()
- Taking our baby home: Parent letter
- NNU contact details

4. To establish good communication between hospital and community services if parents decide to take their baby home

Clear communication between all professionals involved is invaluable.

Communications should inform the relevant professionals regarding the details of the baby's death and the arrangements that have been made in order to ensure continuity of care and appropriate support.

The following teams should be informed prior to discharge from the NNU, all communication should be documented clearly on the 'Taking a baby home – Communication Checklist' and filed in the baby's case notes.

Neonatal Unit

- Inform Nursing Team Lead on shift
- Inform Senior Medical staff
- Inform Consultant Neonatologist

Mortuary Staff

Contact Details - Tel:

Email:

Details to be communicated:

- Date of birth
- Date and time of death
- CHI number
- Ward
- Details of parents taking infant home
- Arrangement made if returning for post-mortem
- Location of medical notes and post-mortem authorisation form

Community Staff

- Within working hours (9am-5pm)
 - Community Midwife if < 10 days post-partum



- Health Visitor
- General Practitioner

- Out of hours
 - CHAS telephone support by individual arrangement prior to discharge.

Police Scotland

Call 101 at earliest opportunity to inform the Police that this is happening.

Essential information to be shared:

- A brief summary of what happened to the baby including date of birth and date of death
- Baby's name
- Parents names
- Home address
- Car registration
- Time of expected travel from the NNU (Identifying to the Police which Hospital the family are travelling from)
- Identify a contact person in the Neonatal Unit for Police to call if required

The Police will then log this information and an incident number will be created. This incident number should then be recorded on the parent letter and communication checklist.

Care during Transport

5. To ensure appropriate advice is given to parents regarding the transportation of their baby

- Transport can be undertaken by the family, or via a chosen representative or their funeral director.
- It is important that a baby is transported in a safe and dignified manner, this can be achieved by:
 - Use of an appropriate infant car seat, pram or Moses basket (It is recommended that an insect net is used to provide privacy to the baby during transportation from the hospital to the vehicle)



Care at Home

6. To empower parents to care for their baby at home

- Advise the parents to keep their baby cool at home (however not to have windows open, especially in summer, to minimise the risk of flies also highlight the risk of fresh flowers in the room)
- The use of the Flexmort Cuddle Cot will quietly cool the baby's Moses basket, crib or cot to allow parents to spend time with their baby.
- Parents should be advised that they can care and handle their baby as they wish at home including bathing and dressing, however over handling may increase the rate of deterioration.
- Arrange for NNU community staff, midwife or Health Visitor to support the family when their baby is at home.
- Parents can make arrangements to have their baby collected from home, by contacting their chosen funeral directors at any time.

7. To inform parents of their legal responsibilities regarding registration

- Parents should be reminded that it is their responsibility to register the death of their baby within 8 days, taking their baby home should not delay this process. N.B Parents may also have to register the birth at this point (check that they have been given a registration card).
- Find out if the family wishes to have their baby buried quickly for religious or cultural reasons, if so it may be appropriate to contact the Registrar's office regarding the current process of Advance Registration.



Appendix 1:

Taking a Baby Home: Communication Checklist (To be filed in medical notes upon discharge)

Name of Hospital: _____

Baby's name:

DOB/CHI:

Parents names:

Address taken home to:

Agreed contact telephone number:

Time leaving unit:

Post mortem: Yes No

Authorisation: Yes No

Date:

Time:

If yes state arrangements for returning (eg parents / funeral director):

Documentation given to family:

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death: Yes No

Taking baby home letter: Yes No

Given Flexmort Cuddle Cot: Yes No

Information leaflet given: Yes No

Returning of equipment contact number given: Yes No

Name of contact:

Have the following people been informed:

Community midwife: Yes No

Health visitor: Yes No

GP: Yes No

Any other professionals involved in family's care:

Police Scotland informed: Yes No

Incident number:



**Appendix 2:
Taking our baby home: Parent letter**

Name:
Address:

Have taken their deceased baby home from:
Hospital:
Address:

Telephone Number:
On (date):

Police Scotland informed: Yes No
Incident number:

I/we the parents take full responsibility for our baby at home, we will:
 Register our baby's death
Parent(s) signatures:

Post mortem: Yes No
Date: Time:
If yes state arrangements for returning (eg parents / funeral director):

Staff member:
Position:
Signature:
In case of concern, please contact
Name:
Contact Number: