

Information about bereavement support for women and families

**Information on bereavement support
available in the wider community.**

This information has been written to answer your queries and reduce any worries you may have. We have asked women who have had late miscarriages or stillbirths for their advice when writing this leaflet. After the loss of a baby, people grieve in different ways. Quite often couples and families reach different stages at different times. This is normal. There are organisations which can provide advice and support if bereaved parents ask for it.

Introduction

This hospital does not refer families to organisations for bereavement counselling because everyone has differing needs and lives on different timescales, so we ensure you have the information to make contact when or if you need to. It is important to know that:

- Everyone is sad.
- Some people like to talk.
- Some others feel the need to 'do'.
- Some just like to reflect quietly.
- Many are angry, at themselves, at their partners, at healthcare professionals.

Organisations who may be able to help

SANDS are a stillbirth and neonatal death charity. They operate throughout the UK, supporting anyone affected by the death of a baby, working to improve the care bereaved parents receive, and promoting research to reduce the loss of babies' lives. They have;

- A helpline.
- Local groups – there are ones for Berkshire, West Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon.
- An online community.

- A family support pack, which has booklets for fathers; for when your baby dies before labour; saying goodbye; supporting other children you may already have; for grandparents; for other family and friends; and coping at Christmas. All of these can be downloaded free of charge.

Reading Lifeline is a local charity. Their website is www.mustardtree.org. They provide counselling but advise that the waiting time can be up to eight weeks, although you can then have 10 free sessions.

The Willows Support Group at www.willowsupportgroup.co.uk

The Willows was formed in 2008 by a group of parents who wanted to share their experiences with others who would understand. These parents with the support of the Royal Berkshire Hospital set up an informal group of 3-4 parents who could share their stories with other parents who understood. The Willows meets regularly and has provided vital support for parents who have been through and continue to suffer the loss of a baby. The group also has a Facebook page. Willows are also supporting the new Rainbow Pregnancy Group for couples expecting a baby after loss, which has specialist staff providing support and advice for expectant parents away from hospital settings.

For those parents who prefer to read, rather than talk, there are increasing numbers of bloggers online who talk about life after the loss of a baby, from both a woman's and a man's perspective. All of these sites listed can be accessed without asking to join.

Instagram:

@dear-oria a page from Michelle Cottle, an NHS clinical psychologist, whose first baby girl was stillborn, and who, after her second baby, developed postnatal depression as she found parenting very much harder than she had thought. She is now well, and back at work. Michelle has launched a new page from [_the_other_chair](#)

@feathering_the_empty_nest from Elle Wright whose baby boy became very ill within a few hours of birth and died three days later.

@navigatingthewilderness is good for advice and stories on mental health support after baby loss.

@therearenowords2017.

@ben_and_breaking_the_silence has added a list of blogs discussing life after loss at their site.

Blogs: www.hannahpontillo.com for 'Dads Grieve Too', a series of short pieces from bereaved dads about their experience of loss.

Podcasts: 13 March 2018 Fisher Price and the author Giovanna Fletcher presented a podcast called 'Happy Mum Happy Baby' with Elle Wright ([feathering_the_empty_nest](https://www.instagram.com/feathering_the_empty_nest)) and Michelle Cottle ([dear_orla](https://www.instagram.com/dear_orla)). This is available at the Apple Store.

A search engine tool at www.thepictame.com, using the search term **#neonataldeathawareness** takes you to a webpage where you might find other bloggers, Instagrammers and links that may strike a chord for you.

For those who want to do something for other families, while some find joining in sponsored events in memory of their baby to raise funds for the Willow Group or SANDS healing, others might be interested in the non-profit organization Upon Butterfly Wings (UK) are delighted to receive handmade clothing or keepsakes such as knitted teddies to give to parents, or bereavement services looking after families, who have lost babies from as early as eight weeks onwards.

www.uponbutterflywings.org.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Author: Jane Siddall, Consultant Obstetrician - July 2018
Approved: Maternity Info Group & Patient Information Manager, May 2020
Review date: May 2022