

Sands position statement

Transferring babies to the mortuary or another hospital for a post mortem examination

Many babies who have died are taken to the mortuary, either for a post mortem or to await collection by the appointed funeral director.

Babies should always be transferred with sensitivity, dignity and respect. Babies (including very pre-term babies) should be transferred in a discreet coffin or container of a suitable size. A member of staff or family member may also carry the baby in a moses basket, baby carrier or in their arms. Babies should also be dressed or wrapped according to parents' wishes.

Before the transfer, the baby or container should be clearly labelled with the mother's and baby's details. There must be a system for tracking the location of every baby, including while they are in transit or in the care of another hospital.

If a baby needs to be transferred to another hospital for a post mortem, the hospital should ensure that the baby is in a suitable container such as a small cardboard coffin. An appropriate method of transport should also be used. Some Trusts and Health Boards use a funeral director or another dedicated vehicle.

For more information see Sands' Guidelines for professionals: *Pregnancy loss and the death of a baby*.

Reassuring Parents

Staff should have good working relationships with mortuary staff and know the name of at least one member of the staff. This enables staff to tell parents who will be looking after their baby in the mortuary. Staff on units should also know:

- how babies are cared for in the mortuary and how they are transported to another hospital for the post mortem (if relevant)
- about security arrangements
- who to ask for more information if parents have specific concerns. For example, some parents may want a light to be kept on at night so their baby won't be 'alone and in the dark'.

This enables staff to reassure parents with confidence that their babies will be cared for with sensitivity, respect and dignity at all times.

Mortuary Facilities for Parents Visiting their Baby

Parents should not have to visit the mortuary to see their baby and should be able to have their baby brought to them. Some parents may wish to take their baby to the mortuary or visit their baby there, sometimes before and/ or after a post mortem examination. There should be a specially-designed room at the mortuary where parents and families can see their baby. Ideally, this should be a comfortable, private room that is not clinical. The baby should be dressed and/or wrapped and placed in a suitably-sized moses basket. There should be comfortable seating and parents should be given all the time they need to say goodbye to their baby.

If there are religious symbols, they should be removable and stowed out of sight if the family prefers.