For families living in England

The reviews and examinations you could expect if you live in England and you were at least 22 weeks pregnant and your baby died before they were born or died within 28 days of being born

Saving babies' lives.
Supporting bereaved families.



Our vision is for a world where fewer babies die and when a baby does die, anyone affected receives the best possible care and support for as long as it is needed.

This guide is designed to help you to understand the reviews and investigations that may help explain why your baby died.

It explains the investigation processes following pregnancy loss or stillbirth from 22 weeks of pregnancy, as well as the death of a baby within the first 28 days after birth in England

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Placental examination

You may be offered an examination of the placenta (also called placental histology). The placenta connects you to your baby in the womb. Examining the placenta may help explain why your baby died.

Placental exams are optional. Staff at the hospital can answer any questions about a placental exam and how long it should take.

Getting your results

In most cases, you will be given a hospital appointment to discuss the results of your placental exam. During your hospital appointment to discuss your placental examination results, your consultant will help you understand what the results mean and will explain anything in the report that you don't understand. They should also be able to tell you if they have found anything that could possibly impact on future pregnancies.



Hospital Post-mortem

A hospital post-mortem is an examination of your baby's body to help understand why they died.

A senior member of hospital staff who is trained in post-mortems will explain the different types of post-mortems and will ask which type you agree to for your baby. This is called post-mortem consent.

You can ask any questions you want to, to make sure you make the right decision for you. Hospital postmortems are optional. It is entirely your decision whether your baby has one.

Getting your results

It may take several weeks or months to get the postmortem results. The time it takes varies from hospital to hospital. The person speaking with you about postmortem consent can answer any questions about how long it may take.

The post-mortem report is likely to be very technical and contain medical language which you might find distressing, or hard to understand. You should be offered an appointment with a senior member of staff who will go through the report and explain it to you. If you do not receive a copy of the report, you can ask for one. Unfortunately, a post-mortem might not always tell you why your baby died.



Coronial Post-mortem

Any unexpected and unexplained death of a baby after they are born must be referred to the coroner. If the coroner investigates your baby's death, they will order a post-mortem to help them understand why your baby died.

A coroner's post-mortem is mandatory. You cannot say no.

Getting your results

Your baby will be retuned once the post-mortem is finished.

A coronial report often takes 6-12 months finish



Hospital Review

A hospital review is another way to find out why your baby died. This review will look to see if the care you got during pregnancy, labour, and birth was the right care for you. If your baby was born alive, your baby's care will also be reviewed to see if their death could have been prevented. This review might be called a child death review, or it might be called a perinatal mortality review (PMRT). You can choose whether you want to be involved in the review.

Getting your results

You will receive the results in a letter. This letter should answer any questions you have and tell you what the team found. You can also ask to get the results by phone, video call. Your key contact can explain anything you don't understand. This process can take a several months. More information on the hospital review/PMRT is below.

At the Hospital

The hospital should give you a key contact for the PMRT review. This person should explain the review process, the purpose, and the duration. They will also tell you how you can be involved. Your key contact might be a bereavement midwife, your community midwife or someone else from the maternity team.

You can ask them for written information about the review if they haven't already. There should be a feedback form which you can use to . The form was developed by bereaved parents to help you think of any questions you would like the review to answer.

Once you are home, someone from the maternity team should reach out to tell you that a review will happen. They will ask if you have any questions or concerns you would like the review team to answer. Some reviews and investigations can happen at the same time.

If you haven't been told who your key contact it, you can contact the hospital. You have the right to have the review team answer any questions you have about why your baby died.

Hospital information gathering for the review

The hospital will gather your medical records, along with post-mortem and placental examination results if you have consented to having them done. The review team will use all of this information to inform the cause of death. They should also address your questions, concerns or comments you have about your care.

A team of doctors will review your notes and your questions to see if you and your baby received the right care for you. This may take multiple meetings.

You can't attend these meetings, but your bereavement midwife can represent you. Your questions will go 'on record' in the PMRT system.

Receiving the results

When the review meeting is finished, you will be offered a meeting to discuss the results. You can get the results in a face-to-face meeting at the hospital, or you can have an online meeting or phone call if you prefer. You can have people with you at this meeting to help support you if you wish.

You aren't required to ask questions or be part of the review if you don't want to. Even if you aren't involved in the review, you can still get the results sent to you.

What the results mean

After the PMRT meeting, a senior clinician will write a letter explaining their findings. This letter should be clear and should answer your questions. It should also give you a 'grade' of the quality of the care the hospital provided to you and your baby.

There are 4 grades, A, B, C & D.

These are explained in more detail in the chart below.

You can ask for a copy of the PMRT report. It is in technical language which may be hard to understand.

Getting to this point can take several months.

Hospital reviews: What the gradings of care mean

Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
If your care is graded an A or B , the PMRT review team believe the care you received did not impact the outcome for your baby.		If your care is graded a C or D this means that the PMRT Review team believe the care you received might have impacted on the outcome for your baby.	

Care rated a **B**, **C**, or **D** should mean that the service will create SMART actions to learn from any mistakes and prevent them from happening again. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound).



PMRT review care that is **graded C** may trigger a new review.

PMRT reviews where care is **graded D** will always trigger a new review.

These reviews are carried out by hospital staff and are called a **Patient Safety Incident Investigation (PSII)**

There is more information on PSIIs below



A Patient Safety Incident Investigation

Depending on the circumstances of your baby's death or the PMRT review findings, the hospital may conduct a Patient Safety Incident Investigation (PSII).

Getting your results

Someone senior within the hospital will write the report. The report will include how the hospital will fix any failures in their care. The community midwife will deliver a latter summarising the findings. It can also be emailed or posted to you. This process can take some months to finish. More information is below

Starting a PSI

If your baby's death has triggered an PSII, this might have been because:

- of the circumstances of your baby's death, or
- a PMRT report has graded your care as C or D.

A senior member of staff will lead this review. Ideally this should be someone who wasn't involved in your care, but this is not always the case

The initial contact

If a PSII is initiated, a member of the hospital team will explain the process and how you can be involved. Your key contact for the PSII should

- The support services available to you
- How the investigation will be carried out
 - How long the investigation will take
- When you will receive the report(s) & responses

You have the right to ask questions and have the PSII answer them. But you don't have to be involved if you don't want to.

The PSII investigation may run alongside other processes, such as the Hospital Review (PMRT), and-if you have consented-post-mortem and placental examinations. If you have questions or wish to share information about your or your baby's care, you can speak with your key contact or bereavement midwife, who can pass this on to the review team.

The investigation/review process

The review team will develop the Terms of Reference (ToR), which outline what the review will cover and the key questions it aims to answer. You should be given the opportunity to view and comment on the ToR.

To understand what happened, the hospital will review your and your baby's medical records, relevant hospital policies, and any available results from post-mortems, placental examinations, and other reviews. They may also speak with staff involved in your care.

If you provided feedback as part of the Perinatal Mortality Review Tool (PMRT) process, this will be included to help the team understand what happened from your perspective.

Receiving the results

The review Lead will write a draft report that they will share with you. You can respond to the draft report to correct anything you feel is wrong. You can tell them any other questions or concerns that you have.

Any points you raise about the draft report should be addressed in the final report. This may involve the team asking you for further clarification.

The final report will outline safety actions to stop future incidents.

Concluding the PSII Review

The team should ask you how you would like to receive the final report: in person at the hospital, online, or over the phone

You can discuss the final report, any safety actions, and ask any questions you have with your key contact. The final report will be sent to the Trust and the PSII will be done.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the review, you may find it helpful to refer to Sands' guide on what to do if you are dissatisfied with a review outcome. How to raise concerns give <u>feedback or make a complaint</u>



Sands is here for anyone affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby.

If you need support, Sands offers confidential trauma-informed support for anyone affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby in the UK

Free helpline 0808 164 3332





Sands support chat via our website sands.org.uk