



Briefing from Sands on the Always There campaign for women who are pregnant following loss to be able to access Continuity of Carer in maternity services in Northern Ireland

Action needed

All women who are pregnant again following the death of a baby should have immediate access to a well-resourced and properly implemented model of “Continuity of Carer” in their local maternity service.

About Continuity of Carer

Care from the same midwife or small team of midwives throughout pregnancy and birth, and in the days afterwards is known as “Continuity of Carer”. When a single midwife or team of midwives cares for a woman and her family there is more opportunity to develop a vital relationship of trust and to hear and understand individual needs and concerns. Women who are pregnant following the death of a baby are not currently prioritised for this model of care.

Research shows that women who receive continuity of care are; 16 per cent less likely to lose their baby, 19 per cent less likely to lose their baby before 24 weeks and 24 per cent less likely to experience pre-term birth¹. Women receiving continuity of care report higher ratings of maternal satisfaction with the care they received.

Why is this important for women who are pregnant following a previous loss?

This model of care has been shown to save lives and creates emotional and psychological safety for parents. This is particularly important when a baby dies, or for those pregnant following loss.

Sands estimate that that if every woman who had lost a baby post 24 weeks and up to 28 days old went on to have another pregnancy in the following 12 months, that would equate to 1 in every 135 pregnancies. This is an achievable target, that would protect this vulnerable group.

What is the current situation and what are we calling for?

The Northern Irish Government recognised the importance of Continuity of Carer in the *Transforming your care strategy* in 2011 and it has been successfully piloted in one maternity unit, but it needs to be implemented across Northern Ireland with priority given to women who will benefit most, including those who are pregnant again after the death of a baby.

We are calling on the Government to set out a timetable for the urgent implementation of Continuity of Carer across Northern Ireland, and for women who are pregnant again after the death of a baby to be prioritised for this model of care.

About Sands

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, works across the UK to support anyone affected by the death of a baby, improve the care that parents receive from the NHS, and reduce the number of babies dying.

For more information

Contact campaigns@sands.org.uk

¹ <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD004667.pub5/full>