

Postnatal Bereavement Notes

to Standardise and Enhance Care Following Perinatal Loss

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BACKGROUND

Confidential case reviews of stillbirths and neonatal deaths have shown repeatedly that there is a wide variation in the care that women and their partners receive following a perinatal bereavement.

Often, the bereaved mother is given inadequate and insufficient information about the events leading to the loss, about her choices, and about the results of subsequent investigations.

METHOD

We set out to design the Postnatal Bereavement notes as a stand-alone, hand held booklet following a similar format of the Perinatal Institute's Pregnancy (antenatal) and Mother and Baby (postnatal) record carried by the mother, with bespoke information relevant to care after a bereavement.

The notes were developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders including bereaved mothers, members of SANDS and other support groups. The aim was to promote sensitive individualised care and ensuring appropriate support for the mother and her family.

RESULTS

The Postnatal Bereavement notes represent a specialist document which:-

- Supports comprehensive risk assessment after delivery and early identification of complications.
- Represents an effective means for recording essential information regarding post-mortems, other investigations as well as the creation of memories.
- Provides prompts for health professionals to engage mothers/families in their care.
- Prompts the service to provide open and honest information about causes and circumstances to be given to mother and family.

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FEEDBACK from clinicians and bereaved parents

"Finally a standardised approach!"

"Lots of information for bereaved parents in a care document"

"Great idea for discharge letter to primary care from community midwifery care"

"I would like to see this adopted nationally so all families are offered the same information" (bereaved mother)

"The notes are user friendly and comprehensive"

"Definitely better using a custom-made set of notes at such a sensitive time"

"I support a new standardised approach to bereavement"

National roll-out began in 2013 and has since resulted in uptake by 46 NHS Trusts with a total of >150k deliveries year, with over 4000 notes used to date for postnatal care following bereavement.

The notes are regularly revised in response to feedback and guidelines to reflect current best practice.

CONCLUSION

The postnatal Bereavement notes enhance care during a difficult time by helping bereaved mothers to make informed choices, record essential information and facilitate a standardised approach to effective postnatal care following a stillbirth or neonatal death.

For further information , please visit www.preg.info/PostnatalBereavementNotes/ or contact the Specialist Midwifery team - Tel 0121-607 0101 , Email notes@perinatal.org.uk

Free training is provided for Trusts wishing to implement the Postnatal Bereavement Notes

