

Rooms should be well ventilated and kept as cool as possible to help delay changes in the body. Air fresheners, scented gels and spray diffusers may help to keep the air in the room fresh.

During hot weather, or if it is difficult to keep the room cool, it may be best to take your child to the funeral directors after 2-3 days, although this is not always necessary if the cold cot is used (embalming will reduce potential difficulties). Your funeral directors can advise on this.

Some parents may wish to consider embalming. This process helps preserve the conditions of your child's body, especially if your child is to remain at home until the funeral, or there is any potential for delay before the funeral. Although most funeral directors will embalm at home, this could be quite distressing, so is probably best done at the funeral directors.

Cosmetics can be used to give a more natural appearance after embalming, although they are not often used for children. This should not be done without your express permission.

Finally, take care of yourselves; our thoughts are with you. If you need any further support or have questions and need advice or help please talk to us.

## Useful numbers

- Royal Berkshire Hospital switchboard  
Tel: 0118 322 5111
- Royal Berkshire Hospital Bereavement Team  
Tel: 0118 322 7059 / 8066
- Royal Berkshire Maternity Bereavement Team  
Tel: 07500 123912 (Mon-Sun 9-4; please contact 0118 322 7303 if out of hours)
- Child-Death Helpline  
Tel: 0800 282 986
- Child Bereavement Trust  
Tel: 01494 568900

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust  
London Road  
Reading RG1 5AN  
Telephone 0118 322 5111

To find out more about our Trust visit  
[www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Bereavement Service, September 2021  
Reviewed: November 2023  
Review due: November 2025



**Royal Berkshire**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Caring for your child at home

Information for families  
who are considering  
taking their child home  
before the funeral

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**We would like to do all we can at this difficult time, by offering advice and support for you and your family. If you would like to talk through this advice, or have any concerns, please contact the Bereavement Co-ordinator or the Maternity Bereavement Team.**

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This advice has been prepared with the assistance of parents and those with experience of bereavement within the Trust. We hope you find it helpful when considering what feels best for you and your family. In order to support you to consider your options, some of the information in this leaflet needs to be direct, so you may wish to consider reading on with the support of a relative, friend or religious contact (priest, vicar, rabbi etc), or of course the staff here at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Parents and carers have an absolute right to look after their child at home before the funeral if they wish to do so; except in cases involving an infectious disease, or where their child's death has been referred to the coroner.

Where the Coroner is involved, it may still be possible to look after your child at home once official documentation has been issued.

## **Why go home?**

You, your family and friends may find it helps to say goodbye to your child in the natural environment of home rather than at hospital on the ward or in the viewing room. Being able to see and touch your child in privacy and in home surroundings can help overcome some of the fears, apprehension and emotions associated with your loss.

You may find yourselves in the role of comforter to others visiting in the days following the loss of your child. If you feel more at ease with your surroundings, you may feel better able to support others around you and this may help you to grieve in your own way.

Some families are more comfortable deciding to leave their child in the hospital and visiting them in the viewing room or bereavement suites. Much will depend on your own personal needs and circumstances.

## **If you have decided to take your child home...**

Quite apart from the organisational arrangements to be made, the following advice may be helpful for you to continue looking after your child.

You may wish to wash and dress your child. This can be done at the hospital or when you get home.

Alternatively, you may prefer your chosen funeral director to help.

In preparing the room at home, you may want to arrange toys, photographs, candles, flowers or mementos, to make the room familiar, special and more comfortable.

If your child is in the care of the maternity bereavement team, please liaise with the team about the most appropriate way to collect them and take them home.

If your child is in the care of the Mortuary Team, you should contact them directly to arrange a time to collect your child (0118 322 7743). Collection times are 9am-1pm and 2pm-4pm Monday to Friday and must be booked beforehand. If this is not possible, or if you prefer, funeral directors can help with arrangements for the journey home. The team can be contacted 7am - 4pm Monday – Friday, excluding Public Holidays. Outside of these hours please contact the duty mortuary technician via the hospital switchboard (0118 322 5111).

## **What else is important to know?**

It is very important to keep, as far as possible, the right conditions when looking after your child at home, to reduce or avoid any further upset.

A 'cold cot' is available for your use at home. This is a discreet mattress that can go into a Moses basket or cot and is available from the bereavement midwife.