

## **Sands position statement**

### **Shared graves and lockable grave covers**

When a baby dies at any stage of pregnancy, during or shortly after birth, many Trusts and Health Boards offer to arrange and pay for a funeral service, burial or cremation.

Sands strongly believes that burial must continue to be an option for all parents. Some Trusts and Health Boards are able to offer individual or shared graves for parents who choose to bury their baby. For financial reasons, some Trusts and Health Boards may only be able to offer parents the option of a shared burial. Parents should always be told in advance whether an individual or shared grave is being offered. Some parents find the idea of a shared grave upsetting. Others find it comforting to know that their baby will not be alone. If parents choose to have their baby buried in a shared grave, they should be told how many babies will be in the grave and given an estimate of how long it is likely to be before the grave is closed and the ground properly re-constituted.

In all instances, parents should also be given full information about hospital arranged and private options for burial and cremation. Parents should receive clear and sensitive explanations of all their options. They should also be given written information about their available choices. Parents should also be informed in advance of any restrictions regarding any memorials that can be placed on individual or shared graves. If they are considering having their baby buried in a shared grave, they should also be told that they will not be able to open the grave later if they wish to move their baby's body to another location. All relevant information should be included in written information that is given to parents. Parents can then decide if they would like the hospital to make arrangements or if they would prefer to do this themselves.

Shared graves should always be backfilled immediately or protected by lockable grave covers to ensure that the grave cannot be disturbed until it is full and the ground can be re-constituted. A lockable grave cover consists of a metal frame bolted into the ground with a strong polypropylene cover that is padlocked to the frame.

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