

Remembering
your baby

When a baby dies, there are few happy memories to help process the grief that parents and other family members experience. This section discusses various ways in which you can make memories of the time that you have together and honour the memory of your baby.

Memory boxes

Memory boxes can help you capture the time that you had with your baby. The box is a special place for keepsakes to remember your baby by. It could include photos, a special baby-grow, a blanket your baby was wrapped in, cards that you might receive, a lock of hair, or a hand or foot print. There is space in Sands memory boxes for you to place items of your own in the box, both immediately and over the years, on anniversaries and other significant occasions.

In addition to the opportunity to add your own items to the box, Sands memory boxes already contain a handmade blanket, two teddy bears, and other items that you might like to read or use. Parents often give their baby one of the teddy bears and take the other home as a keepsake.

Hospital staff often offer parents opportunities to create memories of their baby by collecting keepsakes. Although you may feel unsure about doing this, many parents have told us how precious and important this can be, especially in the years to come. Having items to show and share with family members and friends may also help them to understand how much your baby means to you and help you start conversations about your baby.

Sands memory boxes are created specifically for those whose babies are stillborn or have died soon after birth. For babies born very early

it may not always be possible to take hand and foot prints or to have a lock of hair, but you may still like to have a box for other memories.

Memory boxes can help you acknowledge your grief and talk about your baby with other people. If you are not given a memory box in hospital, please ask staff for one, or contact us and we can send you one. Some hospitals also stock memory boxes from other charities.

“The memory box that the hospital provided, with support from Sands, was the only thing that kept us grounded during the long sleepless nights and dark days.”

Amanda and Dan

Taking photographs

The midwife or nurse caring for you will usually offer to take photos of your baby. You can also take your own photos. If you are not sure, the midwife or nurse might ask if they can take some to keep with the mother's hospital notes. You will be able to access these at a later time. You could also have photos taken and ask that these are put in a sealed envelope for you to take home to open if and when you feel ready.

Although it may feel uncomfortable, you may like to take photographs of just your baby or of all of you as a family. Some parents like to have photographs of their baby's hands or feet. If your baby was a twin or a multiple and their siblings are alive, you might like to take pictures of them together. It is important that what you choose to do feels right for you. We have included some ideas of photos you might like to take on the next page.

These photo suggestions were made by Esther, a bereaved mum, who felt that at the time her baby died, she couldn't think about the kind of photos to take, how to take them or who to ask, because everything was such a blur. These are examples of the photos she wishes she had taken.



Memorial books

All crematoria and many cemeteries and hospitals have a memorial book; often called a Book of Remembrance. You could have your baby's name entered into one of these books. Some crematoria and cemeteries ask for a small charge to arrange this. We have many ideas and opportunities to remember your baby via Sands events and also virtual online spaces, such as our tribute pages www.sands.org.uk/always-loved-tributes.



Ongoing keepsakes

In addition to the keepsakes you collect soon after your baby has died, there may be other items that could form valuable keepsakes in the future. Among other things, these could include poems, letters, emails, cards and jewellery. If you had an order of service for the funeral, you could include that as well.

Attending events

Attending remembrance events can be a meaningful way of honouring your baby's memory alongside other bereaved families and a helpful part of your grief journey. Sharing this time with other families might help you feel less isolated in your grief.

Sands holds two types of remembrance events every year. The Sands Family Day and Service of Remembrance and Hope is held in June at the Sands Garden in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. Lights of Love is normally held on the first Friday of December in London. There are also various regional and local remembrance and Lights of Love events held across the UK. You can find out more about these events on our website. You may also want to create your own event, such as a family picnic or a walk, in memory of your baby each year.



Baby Loss Awareness Week is held every year between 9-15 October and ends with the international Wave of Light at 7pm on 15 October for parents to remember their baby at the same time as others across the world. More information is available at www.babyloss-awareness.org.

More permanent memorials

Some parents decide to plant trees in a woodland in memory of their baby. You can dedicate a single tree or larger area of woodland in your baby's name in Woodland Trust (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) sites across the UK. This will give you somewhere special to visit for years to come. The Woodland Trust also offers benches and marker posts in some locations, which can be inscribed with your own message.

The Sands Garden is one of over 350 gardens within the National Memorial Arboretum and is dedicated to the memory of all babies who have died. At the heart of the garden is a beautiful Portland stone sculpture of a baby, created by the respected sculptor John Roberts. The Sands Garden is a place where you can spend quiet reflective time during our annual event, or on your own, at other times in the year. You can dedicate a small stone in memory of your baby. There are also other Sands gardens around the UK and you can contact the Sands Helpline to find out if there is one near you.



You may also be able to have a commemorative plaque at a cemetery or crematorium. There will usually be a charge for this and there may be restrictions about where the plaque can be placed. Many crematoria and cemeteries have a special section set aside for memorials to babies and very young children.

