

Supporting parents with the Stillbirth registration process

Stillbirth registration can have a profound importance for many bereaved families. Some parents see it as an official recognition of their baby's life. The legal requirement to register a stillbirth soon after bereavement means that parents will often feel in a very vulnerable emotional position, so it is the responsibility of all professionals working with bereaved parents to ensure they are provided with the support and information they need to navigate the process.

Register offices and hospitals working together is a great way to make sure bereaved families receive the information and support they need at each step of the registration process.

Guidance for Health Care Professionals



Prepare families for the registration process

- Familiarise yourself with local registration procedures, such as how parents register and what they need to do to register.
- Find out if the local Register office has an out of hours service if families need to register their stillbirth more quickly.



Understand the legal framework

The following people can register a stillbirth on their own:

- The mother
- The father (if married or in a civil partnership with the mother) or second female parent (if married to or in a civil partnership with the mother at the time of fertility treatment)
- The occupier of the house in which to the knowledge of that occupier the stillbirth occurred
- Any person present at the stillbirth
- Any person in charge of the stillborn child
- In the case of a stillborn child found exposed, the person who found that child



Consider your language and communication

- Explain language and terminology – the wording of the medical certificate of stillbirth is determined by law, but the language is very clinical and can be upsetting for some families.
- When completing the medical certificate of stillbirth use clear handwriting, avoid acronyms and make sure the cause of death is stated clearly.
- It is important that parents are informed about what to expect from the stillbirth registration process and that information is communicated in a clear and sensitive way so that they are appropriately prepared.