Each ward or unit where perinatal post mortems may be requested should have a Perinatal post mortem file containing all the key information that staff will need, including the information sheets below with the answers to the questions filled in. A designated person should compile the answers, in consultation with the relevant pathologist(s), mortuary staff and others.

The information in the Perinatal post mortem file should be reviewed and updated as necessary, and at least every 6 months. Out-of-date information is as bad as no information at all.

Everyone who might discuss consent/authorisation for a post mortem with parents should know where this file is and should have read the contents before they begin.

The Perinatal post mortem file should contain:

1. Information for consent takers: Local practices and arrangements (see below) with all the information filled in.


3. A sample copy of the post mortem consent/authorisation form used in this hospital, and any supplementary forms.


5. The consent/authorisation policy or policies of the hospital/trust/health board and any other relevant local policies and guidelines.

6. Any written information about post mortems for parents produced by the hospital/trust/health board.

7. Copies of the HTA’s Codes of Practice 1, 3 and 5 (see address above).
Information for consent takers: Local practices and arrangements

The following information should be compiled in conjunction with the relevant pathologist(s) and mortuary staff and filed so that it can be accessed easily by all potential consent takers. It should be regularly reviewed and updated.

- Where are the information booklets/sheets for parents about post mortems kept? In the Post Mortem packs on the bereavement trolley
- Where are perinatal post mortems done? In the Perinatal Pathology Suite at the St George’s hospital Mortuary in Tooting South West London SW17 0QT
- Name and contact details of the mortuary and of key members of staff:
  - Pathologist(s) Dr Iona Jeffrey, Dr Ruth Nash, Dr Samantha Levine
  - Perinatal Pathology Secretary: Ms Mary-Ann Harmer is the contact for all of the above: Telephone 020 8725 3447. If she is absent, the mortuary staff can be contacted on 020 8725 5240.
  - Mortuary manager Mr Robin Dobinson
  - Deputy mortuary manager: Mr Matthew Haswell
  - Lead Perinatal mortuary technician: Ms Barbara Peters
  - Bereavement midwife/wives or nurse(s): Sr Lynn Parker, 01932 722667 or voicemail 01932 723889
  - Chaplain(s): Judith Allford 01932 872000 bleep 5143 or page 8387
  - Other relevant contacts: Alison Allan, Bereavement Office, 01932 722319

- How long do parents usually have to wait until their baby’s body is released? Up to 5-7 working days after the baby’s body arrives at St George’s Hospital Mortuary (if this is too long because of cultural religious or other special circumstances, please request an urgent post mortem – see below)

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Perinatal post mortems are done at St George’s Hospital in Tooting, London SW17 0QT:

- When would the baby be taken to St George’s? As soon as possible the next working day after baby is in the mortuary
- When would the baby be returned? The next working day after completion of the post mortem
- How would the baby be transported? Hospital transport
- How is the transport arranged and who arranges it? Alison Allan, Bereavement Office, 01932 722319

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1 This list of questions is taken from Sections 2 and 7 of the Sands Guide for consent takers on the HTA website
If an urgent post mortem (the baby’s body released within 24 or 48 hours) is a religious or cultural requirement for parents:

- **What are the arrangements for this?** Please telephone the Perinatal Pathology Secretary on 020 8725 3447 between 9am-3pm Monday to Friday. In the event you get an answerphone message and have not received a return call within an hour, please ring the Mortuary Manager, Deputy Manager or the Lead Perinatal Mortuary Technician on 020 8725 5240. Due to service arrangements, perinatal post mortem examinations cannot be carried out after hours or at weekends.

- **What are the arrangements for collecting bodies from St George’s Hospital out of hours?** In exceptional circumstances babies may be collected from St George’s Hospital Mortuary out of hours provided prior arrangements are made with the mortuary staff. Please phone 020 8725 5240 between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday to arrange an out of hours collection. An appropriate release form will be required.

- **What are the arrangements for collecting bodies from St Peters Hospital out of hours?** Follow Policy and Procedure for the Early Release of the Deceased Patient Out of Normal Working Hours

- If parents don’t want tissue blocks and slides to be kept as part of the medical record:
  - **What are the arrangements for hospital disposal?** Blocks and slides will be incinerated.
  - **How long are blocks and slides usually kept before disposal?** One year unless parents specifically request this is sooner, in which case lawful disposition will be arranged once the post mortem report has been issued.
  - **If parents want the blocks and slides returned to them, when and how will this be arranged?** The blocks and slides will be returned from the St George’s Hospital Cellular Pathology Department to the hospital staff who arranged the post mortem examination, who will check with the parents how they wish this to be arranged.

- If parents have any remaining concerns about the post mortem:
  - **Can they talk to the pathologist (or to an anatomical pathology technologist) about the post mortem, either face-to-face or on the phone?** If parents have any remaining concerns about the post mortem, the consent taker should telephone the St George’s Hospital mortuary staff on 020 8725 5240 or the Perinatal Pathology Secretary on 020 8725 3447. Parents are not to phone directly unless, or until, this has been arranged by the person taking consent or other appropriate staff at the referring hospital.
  - **How can this be arranged?** See above.

- If parents change their minds about what they have agreed to:
  - **What is the time frame for changing their minds?** Approximately 24 hours on a work day. The time frame will be discussed with the parents and recorded on the front of the consent form.

Whom should they contact, in and out of hours? SGH Mortuary staff, 0208 725 5240/3447 or Alison Allan, SPH Bereavement Office, 01932 722319 (Out of hours there is a facility to leave a message on this number). It is important during working hours to speak to someone and not leave a message.
• If parents initially refuse a post mortem but later change their minds, whom should they contact? Alison Allan, Bereavement Office on 01932 722319 or NICU 01932 722667

• When is the appointment to discuss the final report likely to be? Approximately 6-8 weeks from the date the post mortem was carried out at St George’s Hospital.

• How will the parents be informed? Face to face appointment with Neonatal Consultant

• Whom will they see? Neonatal Consultant involved with care

• Where will the meeting take place? Quiet room in Children’s Outpatients

• Can you reassure them that they will wait in a separate area from other parents and babies? If possible

• Will they be given a summary of the findings or the complete report? The complete report

• If parents want to see their baby after the post mortem:

  • Where would this take place? This would generally take place at the mortuary that the baby came from. For St Peters see: Mortuary Viewing Policy and Procedures. However, arrangements can be made for parents and extended family to view at St George’s Hospital during working hours, but an appointment must be arranged with the St George’s Hospital mortuary in advance of any visit.

  • How do they arrange it? For viewing at St George’s phone the mortuary on 8725 5240 between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday. For viewing at St Peter’s see Mortuary Viewing Policy and Procedures

Funerals (for likely options see Section 6.6 of the Sands Guide for consent takers). If parents ask about funeral arrangements, you will need the following information:

• Does the hospital offer to arrange and pay for funerals following:

  • A late miscarriage? Yes

  • A stillbirth? No

  • A neonatal death? No

• If burial is an option, are shared graves used? There is a shared burial plot in an unmarked grave in Addlestone for babies stillborn or less than 24 weeks

• Who is responsible for organising hospital funerals? Alison Allan, Bereavement Office, 01932 722319

What are the arrangements for sensitive disposal of the remains of babies who were miscarried early? Taken to Woking Crematorium for cremation approximately every 6 weeks

Retaining organs for further detailed examination or a second opinion

At St George’s Hospital, following post mortem examinations of babies organs are very rarely retained, and never without the specific permission of the parents. Hence you will probably not need the answers to these questions.

However, you will need the answers if in exceptional circumstances the parents are asked if they would consent to organ retention. The additional consent form used for consent for organ retention will include questions about what should be done with the organs afterwards.
• How long is it likely to be until the further examination of the organ(s) is complete? On the very rare occasions when a St George’s pathologist considers it advantageous to send an organ for a second opinion that cannot be given in the usual time frame for a perinatal post mortem (5-7 working days), the parents will be contacted for permission and the likely timescale will be discussed at that time.

• If the parents want to delay the funeral until the organ(s) have been replaced in the body:
  • How and where will the baby be kept during this time? Throughout their stay in the St George’s Hospital mortuary, babies’ bodies are kept securely in controlled refrigerated conditions.
  • Will it be appropriate for the parents to see their baby again before the funeral? Parents may see their baby again if appropriate arrangements are in place either with the referring hospital or the undertakers but please note that the appearance of all babies may deteriorate with time, even if no post mortem is performed.

• If the parents want the hospital to dispose of the organ(s), what are the local arrangements and options for this? On the very rare occasions when, with the consent of the parents, organs are kept for education, research or audit the hospital will arrange respectful disposal.

• If the parents want to donate the organ(s) for research or for professional training, what are the local arrangements and options for this? Parents should indicate their wishes on a separate form that will be discussed with them either in person or over the telephone, in the rare event that one of the St George’s Hospital Perinatal Pathologists deems it would be beneficial to keep an organ,..

### Seeking specific consent

The Human Tissue Authority (HTA) has confirmed that additional specific consent is not required to keep an organ outside the body for examination to establish the cause of death if the organ will be returned to the baby’s body before it is repaired and released from the mortuary. This is because it is part of the post mortem examination, for which consent has already been given. Parents only need to be asked specifically for consent to keep an organ if it is recommended that the organ is kept for further examination or a specialist opinion beyond the time when the body will be released.

The HTA’s statement on when it is necessary to seek consent to retain an organ covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It does not cover Scotland. At the time when this document was finalised, no decision had yet been made in Scotland about when it is necessary to seek authorisation to retain an organ.

For more about organ retention, see the Sands Guide for consent takers Section 7.