



## **Bereavement Care Services**

### **Caring for your child's body at home**

#### **Information for parents, carers and relatives**

We at Alder Hey wish to do all we can at this difficult time, by making available advice and support for you and your family. If you would like to talk through this advice further, or have any concerns, please contact:

Bereavement Care Services Telephone 0151 252 5117

The following advice has been prepared with the assistance of parents and those with experience of bereavement within the Trust. We hope you find it of help in thinking of what is best for you and your family. Some of what we say has to be direct; you may wish to consider reading on with the support of a relative, friend or religious contact (priest, vicar, rabbi etc) or of course with staff at Alder Hey.

Parents and carers have an absolute right to care for their child's body at home, if they wish to do so; except in cases involving an infectious disease or where referred to a Coroner.

Where the Coroner is involved, it may still be possible to care for your child at home, once released by the Coroner.

#### **Why go home?**

You, your family and friends may find it helps to say goodbye in the natural environment of home, rather than at hospital or a Chapel of Rest. 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 comfortable with your surroundings and the events around your loss, you may feel better able to support the others around you, and this may help you to grieve in your own way.

Many families are more comfortable deciding on a Chapel of Rest or the hospital for their child. Much will depend on your own personal needs and circumstances. We strongly advise that you take advice from a reputable Funeral Director before making any decision.

#### **Caring for your child's body at home**

You've decided to take your child home. Quite apart from the arrangements to be made, the following advice is given to help you continue caring for your child.

We strongly advise you to contact a reputable Funeral Director as soon as possible for help and advice with the care of 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.

When going home, our advice to you is to discuss your wishes with Bereavement Care Services and ward staff. They will help you to work out the most appropriate way to transport your child. For babies and younger children it may be possible to place your child

in a Moses basket or wrap them in a blanket in order to carry them to a car for the journey home. Your Funeral Director can help with arrangements if you would prefer to take your child to a Chapel of Rest.

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

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

It is very important to keep, as far as possible, the right conditions when caring for your child's body at home, to reduce or avoid any further upset.

Embalming helps preserve the condition 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. This is best carried out at the Funeral Directors. Although most Funeral Directors will embalm at home, this could be quite distressing.

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.

Leakage of body fluids may occur; advice and help from your Funeral Director should be sought.

Whether you decide on embalming or not, some other points of care are also important.

In preparing a bed, you may find it can help to place a waterproof material over the mattress.

Rooms should be well ventilated and kept as cool as possible to help delay changes in the body. Scented candles, aromatherapy burners etc. may help to keep the air in the room fresh. With much to think about at this difficult time, it is important to take extra care in the use of candles and burners.

During hot weather, or if it is difficult to keep the room cool, it may be best to take your child to a funeral directors chapel of rest after two - three days.

If you have pets, it may be advisable to ensure that the room is kept closed to prevent them going in without you being there.

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.

### **Contact Details:**

Bereavement Care Services:	Telephone	0151 252 5117
Alder Centre:	Telephone	0151 252 5391
Child Death Helpline:	Telephone	0808 800 6019 / 0800 282 986
Other:		

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This information can be made available in other languages and formats.

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust, Eaton Road, Liverpool. L12 2AP  
Tel: 0151 228 4811      Web: [www.alderhey.nhs.uk](http://www.alderhey.nhs.uk)

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