

Meeting the Religious Needs of a Child



It is important that the wishes of the parents/guardian in providing for the religious and spiritual care of their child be respected as far as possible. If they are practising members of a Christian denomination or of another faith they may have their own minister/priest/spiritual leader. If so, they may appreciate help in contacting him/her. If they are not in touch with a particular religious representative they may feel that they would like the ministry of one of the Hospital Chaplains, or they may wish to be put in touch with someone from their own faith. A selection of local contact numbers is provided in this folder. The Hospital Chaplains are always willing to help, and would be glad to spend time with the child and/or his/her family **whether or not they belong to a particular denomination or faith.**

Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child	Some parents may appreciate the opportunity to give thanks for the birth of a healthy baby. Usually those for whom it is appropriate will feel able to request this ministry, and may invite their own minister/priest/religious leader to come into the Hospital. Others may appreciate the ministry of one of the Hospital Chaplains, or of a religious leader of another faith and, if this is requested he/she should be contacted as soon as possible. Privacy can be provided simply by drawing the curtains around the bed.
Baptism	If a child is very sick, parents/guardians may request that he/she be baptised. Some families will be in touch with their own minister or priest, and they may wish to invite him/her to come into the Hospital. Others may appreciate the ministry of one of the Hospital Chaplains. The parents should be asked to which denomination they belong, and the appropriate Chaplain should be contacted immediately. The Chaplain can normally get to the Hospital within 30 minutes of receiving the call. But, if the child is very sick, and the Chaplain unlikely to arrive in time, a member of staff, or of the child's family, with the family's permission, can perform an emergency Baptism, using the child's name, and the words "I baptise you in the name of the God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit" . A baptism set, with baptism cards, is kept on the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit at St Peter's. Details of emergency baptisms (except Roman Catholic Baptisms which are kept in Church records) should be entered in the Baptism Register, also kept on N.I.C.U. Some families may find it difficult to request the baptism of their child and it may sometimes be appropriate for a member of staff sensitively to offer this choice. Members of other faiths may also appreciate the offer of appropriate ministry.
The Blessing of a Child who has Died	Parents/Guardians (including the parents of babies who have died before or immediately after birth) should be offered the opportunity of a blessing for their child. Some may wish the ministry of their own priest/religious leader and they may appreciate help in arranging this. Others may prefer to see one of the Hospital Chaplains. The appropriate Chaplain/religious representative should be called immediately. The on-call hospital Chaplain should always be informed of the death of a child. He/she may not be needed to give immediate help to the family, but may be able to offer support to staff, or to contact the family later.

Funeral Arrangements For Children

Funeral arrangements for babies who die before 24 weeks gestation	Parents whose baby is delivered on the Labour Ward should be informed about the Cremation service for pre-24 week babies which is held monthly (usually the first Wednesday in each month) at Woking Crematorium. All babies will be included in this service (unless parents wish to make other arrangements). Parents are invited to attend the service for their baby. Up to 4 babies will be included in each service, each baby has his/her own coffin, and is prayed for individually. The hospital Chaplains (or the Bereavement Officer , ext. 2319 during office hours) can advise further.
Funeral services for stillborn babies	Parents will be required to register the stillbirth of their baby, and to do this they will first need an appointment with the Bereavement Officer (ext. 2319), who can help them with funeral arrangements. Some parents will prefer to leave the arrangements to the Hospital, and they will be offered the choice of a cremation or burial service. Others can be given help to make their own arrangements.
Funeral arrangements for neo-natal babies and children	The hospitals Chaplains, or the Bereavement Officer (ext. 2319) can always offer guidance to parents in making funeral arrangements for their child, or to staff who are more closely involved with the family.