

## The Miscarriage Association

### Notes on creating certificates for pre-24 week loss

#### **Background**

There is no legal requirement to provide any form of certification for pregnancies lost before 24 weeks gestation: the legally recognised age of viability. But many parents who have a miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy – and some parents who have a termination of pregnancy – may welcome some form of certification. It is a marker of their loss and can bring some comfort at a difficult time.

We suggest that it is good practice to **offer** the opportunity for such a marker, while recognising that some parents will not want to take it. Some might feel that it is inappropriate, or adding to their distress or inducing feelings of guilt.

#### **Creating a certificate**

There are several things to consider when designing a certificate – or indeed certificates: you may need more than one.

#### **Consultation**

In all cases, we'd recommend that you involve patients or patient groups to get a cross-section of opinion from people for whom this might be significant. It might be very useful to share ideas with colleagues in your place of work and/or elsewhere. Use the ideas and feedback to guide the design process – and be aware that you are likely to get differing opinions and will need to find a compromise.

#### **Wording**

Language is important, especially at a time of heightened sensitivity. Expressions or phrases that some people find comforting, such as *Born Sleeping*, may jar with others. Take a look at the M.A.'s examples.

It might be wise to avoid references to specific religions or beliefs. Parents can always request something more specific from a minister of their own faith and/or the hospital chaplain.

You might want to consider having different wording for different circumstances, such as gestational age or perhaps the cause of the loss (miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, termination).

#### **Design**

We recommend that any document be produced on good quality notepaper or card, or in the form of a notelet. If it bears the hospital, Trust or surgery name, address and logo, that can add a sense of formality.

You might want to think about the use of images. As with wording, something that seems absolutely right for one person can be anathema to another. It may be best to use a flower image – perhaps bluebells or forget-me-nots.

Do feel free to consult with us at the Miscarriage Association if you would like external feedback.

***In memory of***

***Baby's name, if given by parents, or Baby Smith***

***who was born sleeping to***

***Name of mother and father (if appropriate/wanted)***

***on Date***

***at ... weeks of gestation***

***Signed .....***

***Name .....***

***Job title .....***

***Date .....***

***In memory of***

***Baby's name, if given by parents, or Baby Smith***

***who was miscarried***

***on Date***

***at ... weeks of gestation***

***Signed .....***

***Name .....***

***Job title .....***

***Date .....***

***This is to certify that***

***Baby's name, if given by parents, or Baby Smith***

***was born to***

***Name of mother and father (if appropriate/wanted)***

***on Date***

***at ... weeks of gestation***

***Signed .....***

***Name .....***

***Job title .....***

***Date .....***