

13 March 2025

Psychological support for bereaved parents

I am writing to request the attached information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 about psychological support for parents who have experienced pregnancy or baby loss in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Maternity Services within the Belfast Trust recognise the emotional and psychological needs of bereaved parents who have experienced pregnancy-related loss. Whilst not every bereaved parent will wish for or warrant specialist psychological support, the Maternity Psychological Service offers psychological input to bereaved parents with additional vulnerability due to factors such as a history of mental health problems, fertility problems, previous loss or when trauma symptoms impact alongside their grief. The Maternity Psychological Service works closely with our Childbirth and Loss Midwives to enable a stepped care approach to bereavement care for parents. When referrals for bereaved parents are accepted, they are offered individual or couples-based sessions, depending on the clinical need.

The Maternity Psychology Service is integrated within the RJMS and is currently funded for 2.4wte Clinical Psychology provision. There is a longstanding high demand for psychological input into Maternity services, coupled with limited resources within the Maternity Psychological Service, contributes to lengthy waiting times for bereaved parents. The Service is actively exploring opportunities to improve access for psychological interventions and reduce waiting times for bereaved parents.