

## NHS Education for Scotland

### Transcript of Communication around Unsuccessful Neonatal Resuscitation Video Script

The intensity of love parents feel for their baby is not measurable in weeks or months of pregnancy, but at term, no parent is prepared for the possibility that they won't get to take their baby home. Sometimes, unexpected difficulties may be encountered during labour and delivery, and a term baby may require resuscitation immediately after birth. This is one of the most challenging situations for the whole team.

Even when there is uncertainty, don't delay in telling parents that there's a problem. It's likely that they will have already sensed that something is wrong. Don't call them mum and dad; find out their names. Sit down and introduce yourself. Make eye contact, talk slowly, and explain to them what is happening. Find out if they have chosen a name for their baby.

You might say: "**Jack is very sick**". *(Pause)* "**When he was born he wasn't breathing for himself and his heart rate was very slow**". Explain that your team is working hard to do everything they can for their baby, but don't provide false assurance. When you leave, provide a plan of what will happen next. You might say: "**I have to get back to Jack just now but I will come and update you in a few minutes**".

Offer parents the opportunity to be with their baby, while everything possible is being done. If they choose to be there, prepare parents for what they will see during a resuscitation. Ensure that someone is identified to provide them with information and support.

The death of a baby causes a deep sadness which can be overwhelming. When you have to tell parents that their baby has not survived, take a moment to gather your thoughts and think about what you want to say. Take someone with you for parental support. Avoid euphemisms like gone, lost or passed. Instead, you could say: "**I'm so sorry. Jack hasn't responded to our efforts**" *(pause)* "**We tried absolutely everything to save him but your baby has died**".

Don't fill the silence. Allow time. Express sympathy and sadness

It'll be difficult for parents to think clearly. They will have lots of questions about how and why this happened. Reassure them that you'll be back to talk through everything in more detail very soon.

Don't delay in allowing parents to see and hold their baby. Introduce memory making. Parents may wish to bathe, dress and take their baby home.

Neonatal resuscitation is stressful for all healthcare staff. Most resuscitation efforts will be successful but sometimes babies die even when everyone on the team does everything right and tries very hard. When you're involved, don't be afraid to ask for help.

After resuscitation, it's important to make time for a team debrief. If you're leading the debrief, ensure that no one focuses on feelings of blame. Encourage the team to share their thoughts and feelings, and do everything you can to support each other.

## Summary

- Do not delay telling parents there is a problem
- Prepare parents for what they will see
- Take someone to offer support to the parents
- Avoid euphemisms
- Talk about memory making
- Look after yourself and your team

Even when the team can't control the outcome, you can still positively influence how the parents, and all those involved, will remember what happened that day.

The film was produced in March 2016 and can be found at [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or <https://vimeo.com/167887527>

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact [supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk)