

Sands Project

Supporting bereaved parents is one of the most challenging, and potentially rewarding, parts of a midwife's work. In recognition of the fact that midwifery students were often 'protected' from this aspect of clinical care, the belief being that they would gain these skills post qualification, Sands approached Middlesex University with a view to working together to produce learning materials.

The aim of the project was to produce a package of teaching resources for midwife teachers to use in preparing student midwives to care for women and families where pregnancy may lead to, or has resulted in pregnancy loss or the death of a baby. Materials were produced around six learning outcomes, each of which is supported by a teaching plan and PowerPoint presentation. These guide the user through the sessions, providing content to underpin the learning outcome, ideas for interactive exercises, case studies and mini lectures.

The learning outcomes are designed to be generic, and conform to the principles of the current Nursing and Midwifery Council Proficiency Standards for student midwives. There is facility within the slides and presentations for teachers to insert additional information which is specific to their own institution and partner Trusts. The pack takes account of the main points students identified in an initial trial of the learning materials at Middlesex University, and which were key to their learning:

- Being 'protected' from perinatal loss leading to lack of contact with bereaved parents
- Input on practical issues, such as bathing and dressing the baby
- Information on the paperwork associated with perinatal loss
- Guidance on what to say, or not to say to parents, especially in situations of uncertainty
- Benefits of meeting bereaved parents in the safety of the University setting, hearing their stories and being able to talk to them.

The package draws on students' experiences in the practice area, and links these throughout with the theoretical underpinnings around bereavement and grief, and with the practice knowledge necessary to provide safe and sensitive midwifery care.

The materials, which are accredited by the Royal College of Midwives, were launched in September 2016 and are available via the Sands website to any midwifery teacher who wishes to use them. The only commitment is an undertaking not to change the materials and to return both student and staff evaluations which feed into project evaluation.

To date 30 Universities across the UK, and 1 University in Ireland have requested access to the materials. In addition, 1 University in New Zealand and 1 in Australia have requested access. Some evaluations have been received and it is anticipated that more will be received once the materials are embedded into curricula in the forthcoming year. Feedback received from students who have been taught using the materials include:

"Very thorough in providing information about bereavement"

"Good information to build on and a good starting point to bereavement knowledge"

"Very useful, interesting and informative"

"Very useful, feel more confident in bereavement care"

The teaching materials are available from the Sands website: <https://www.uk-sands.org/professionals/training-and-information/midwifery-teacher-materials>