

STILL LIFE:

Exploring Pregnancy Loss
in the Jewish Community



Still Life





DEDICATION

The Still Life project and this booklet are dedicated to all the babies who died too soon.

We thank the women who took part in this project - thank you for sharing your experiences, your views on research, and your hopes for the future.

This booklet was created through a series of creative workshops with Jewish women in Greater Manchester who have had a stillbirth, researchers from The University of Manchester's Maternal and Fetal Health Research Centre, Vocal at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, Jewish Maternity Liaison - Alex Silverstone, and local artist Chava Erlanger.

Booklet Design: Magniv Designs

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The pain of the loss is so great, so intense, and it can take over a person's entire life, like it did to mine.

It was amazing to know that there's something being done about stillbirth. I had no idea that there was any sort of research. It was such an encouragement and a very supportive type of feeling, for my loss and for anyone's future pregnancies, knowing that there could be some discovery into reducing stillbirths. And just if they could save even one life, one baby, it would be worth them doing the research that they're doing now.

INTRODUCTION

The Still Life project ran in Greater Manchester from January 2019 to December 2020 with the aim of engaging Jewish women in discussions about stillbirth and stillbirth research. This booklet showcases the artwork, including drawings, collage, silk painting, and clay sculptures they created whilst taking part in the project. The pieces reflect on their own experiences of their bereavement and also the research that is being conducted to help understand why stillbirth happens so that it can be prevented from happening to others.

They hope that through this booklet their work can be used to raise awareness of stillbirth and the importance of the research taking place to prevent it. They also hope it will help others to understand the impact that the loss of a baby can have on those who have experienced it.

Also included in the booklet are pieces created by midwives, pregnancy researchers and facilitation staff who also took part in the project alongside the women. The midwives and researchers involved were from a research group that works on the topic of stillbirth to understand why it happens, to try to prevent it in future and to improve the care and support of families who face the loss of a baby.

ABOUT THE STILL LIFE PROJECT



Stillbirth and neonatal death (when a baby dies within 28 days of birth) are devastating events affecting up to 1 in every 225 pregnancies in the UK. High pregnancy rates in some parts of the Jewish community mean Jewish families may be particularly affected by these issues. Through a collaboration between Europe's largest pregnancy research centre – The University of Manchester's Maternal and Fetal Health Research Centre (MFHRC), based at Saint Mary's Hospital in Manchester, and Vocal at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, the Still Life project was created to:

- Raise awareness of stillbirth and neonatal death
- Provide a safe space for women affected by the loss of a baby to explore their experiences and help break the taboo around talking about stillbirth'
- Provide an opportunity for women who had experienced the loss of a baby to meet with researchers and research midwives to learn from each other
- Help understand the Greater Manchester Jewish community's opinions and priorities for future pregnancy research

The Still Life project involved twelve women from Greater Manchester's Jewish community who had experienced miscarriage, stillbirth and/or the death of their baby shortly after birth. Along with midwives, researchers from the University of Manchester's MFHRC and the Jewish Maternity Liaison Services, the women took part in a series of creative workshops which explored personal experiences of loss and how research fits within this whole experience. The workshops focused on a different theme each week to help guide the art and the discussion. These themes included 'my womb and I' and 'the placenta', however participants were free to create pieces that were reflective of what they wanted to focus on.

The workshops have provided insight to MFHRC researchers and midwives that will help influence and improve research. In addition, the workshops led to the development and implementation of hospital guidelines aimed at providing better care and support for Jewish parents who have experienced the loss of a baby.



HOW YOU CAN USE THIS BOOKLET

You can use this booklet in any way that is helpful to you. We hope it will help families who have had a loss, but also those who are trying to understand more about the impact losing a baby can have. All of the artwork is anonymous and without an accompanying description allowing for your own interpretation. You can use this booklet to reflect, as a discussion point or as inspiration to try using art and creative techniques in your own life. At the back of the book there is a space for you to reflect on your experiences, and suggestions of things you can do if you want to explore your thoughts and feelings using these techniques. There is also a list of support resources which you may find helpful.

FIND OUT MORE



If you would like to find out more about this project please visit

<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/maternal-and-fetal-health/still-life-gallery/>

To find out about the ways in which you can get involved in helping to shape pregnancy research please visit

<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/maternal-and-fetal-health/get-involved/>





Silence

Trauma

Isolated

Lonely

Lost

Brave

I'm growing strong

Ray of light

Touched by all the kind words

Hope and yearning







Why?



Why?

Maybe if I had done...

Maybe if I hadn't...

If Only had...

Why?

WHY?

What if?

Why?

Was it because?

WHY?

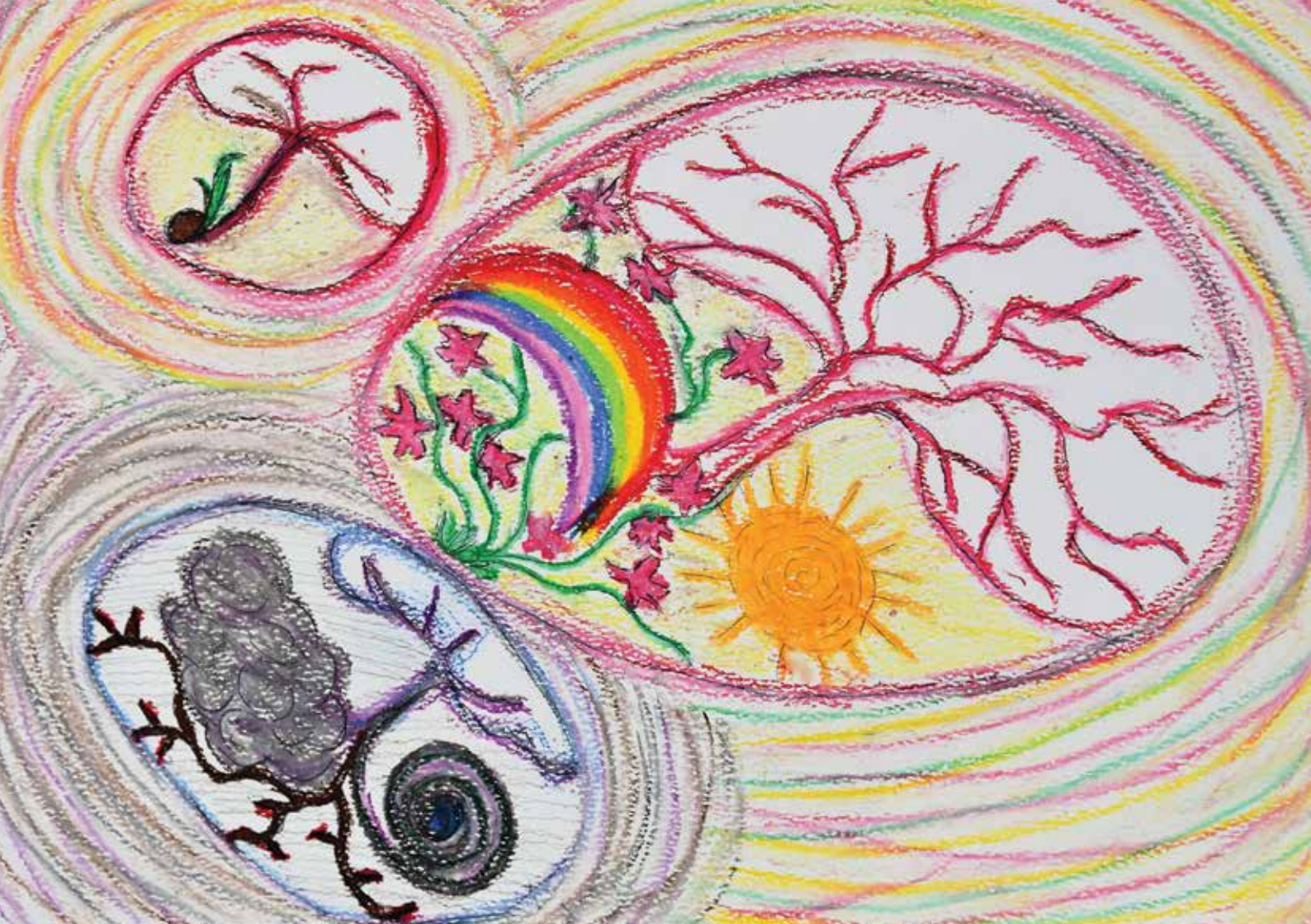
Why?

IT

WASN'T

You









Flowers

every CHILD is a

flower



WHY?



Food



Smoking

Environment



Placenta

Mental Health



Medications



Diabetes



Blood Pressure

BROKEN HEART



ENZYMES



Food



Blood clotting



happiness mood



Stress



?

?

?

But you've
got other
children

There's no
HEART BEAT! -
Cold, clinical or
cruel!

Is this
your
youngest?

The new
baby will
replace your
stillborn!

Are you
over it
yet?

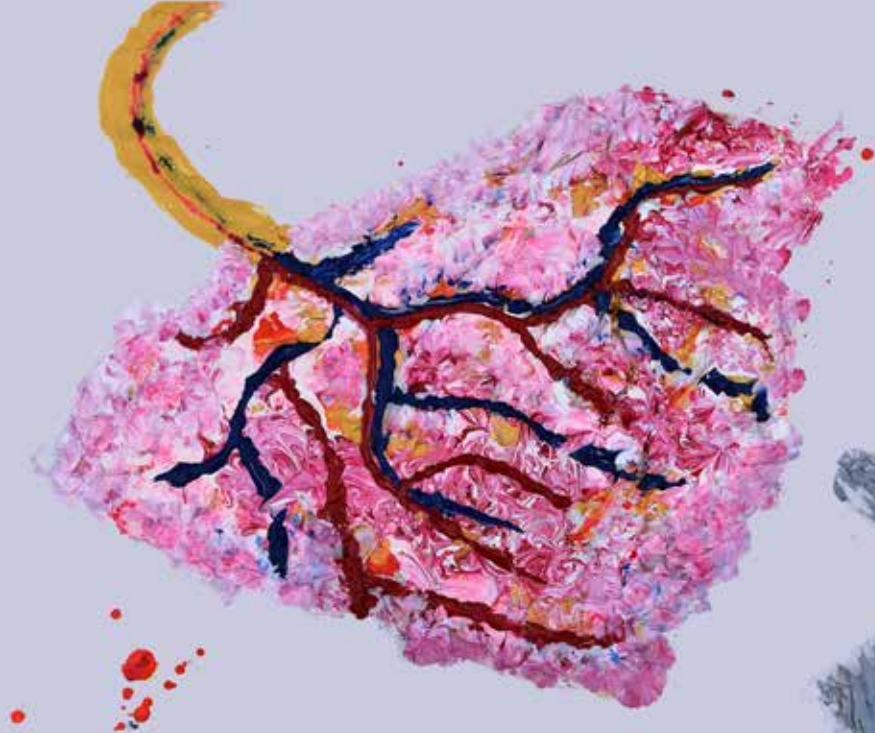
It will
pass?

Why have
you got
such a big
gap?

?

?

?





URGENT CARE

DISCOVER

Why?

Awake??
MATERNAL SLEEP ISSUES LINKED TO PREMATURE BIRTH
sleep even more important
ought
ye

Frustrated about being limited by doctors?

THREATENED

Reacting to Hashem's Kindness

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE
A Story of a Visionary Tale

A CLOSER LOOK
ANALYZING THE HISTORY THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

LIVING

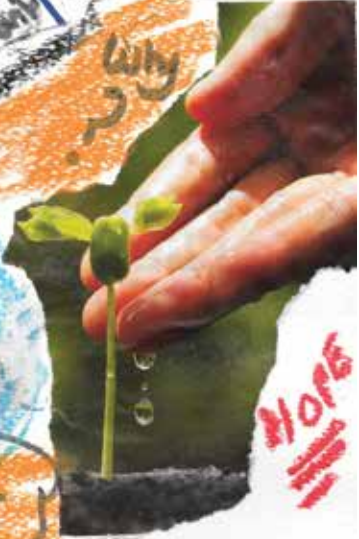
The Tragic Event
You were on the list... but you never showed up. When you returned to the hospital, you were told you were on the list... but you never showed up.

Letting Go
PAIN

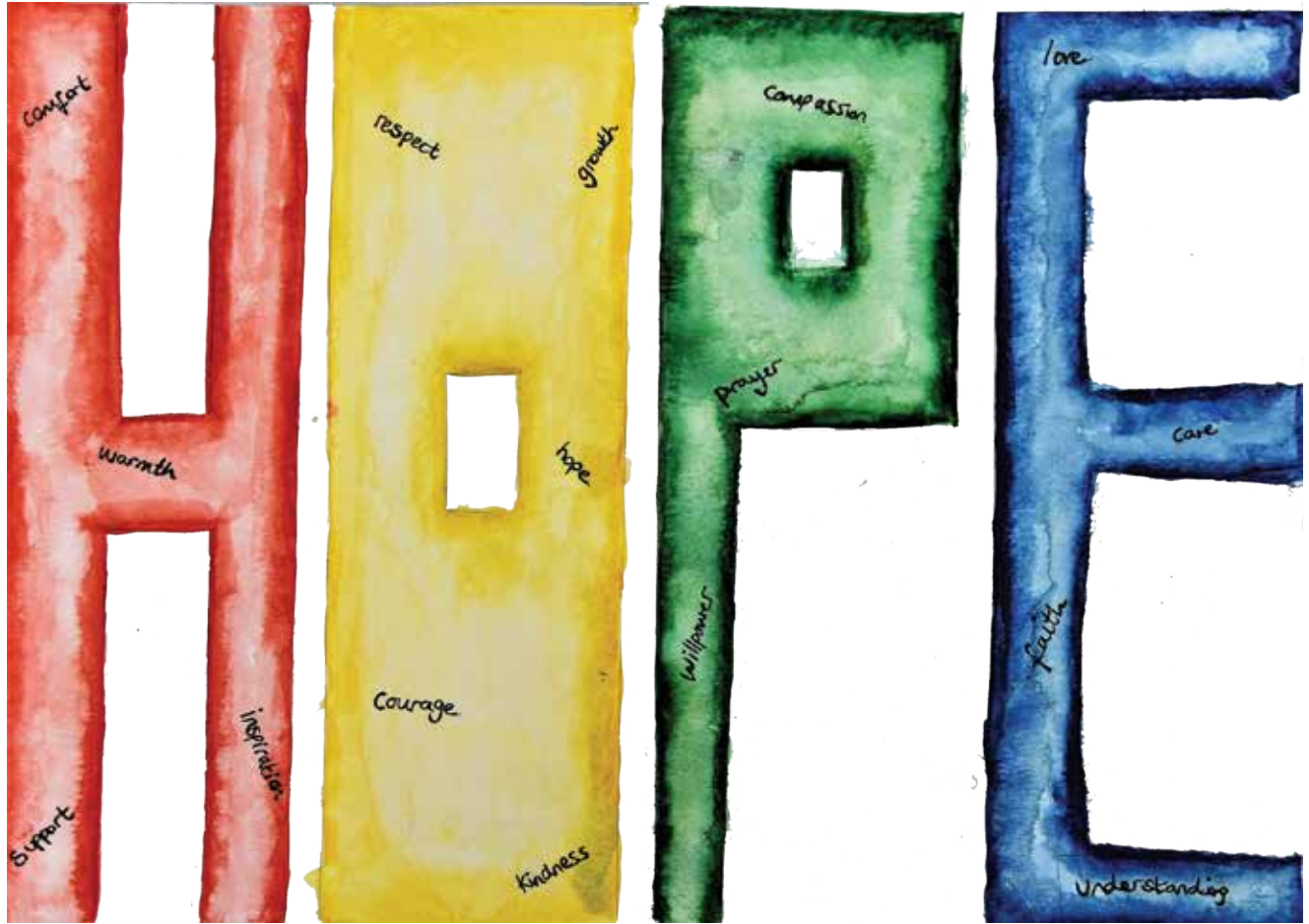


BREAKING! **Amish**

ASK RABBI
No one to talk to



HOPE



Comfort

Respect

Growth

Compassion

Love

Warmth

Hope

Prayer

Care

Support

Inspiration

Courage

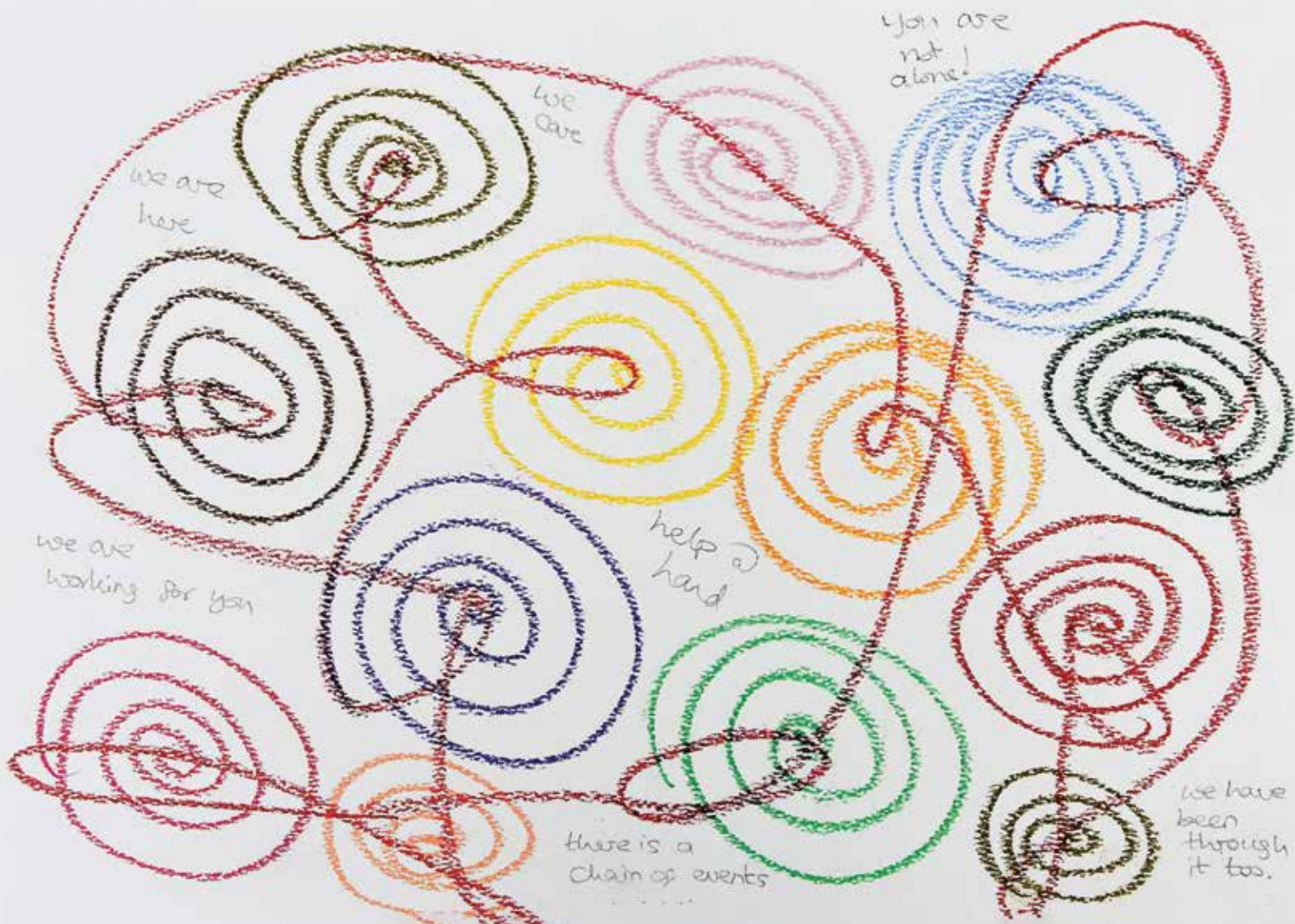
Kindness

Willpower

Faith

Understanding





You are not alone!

We care

we are here

we are working for you

help a hand

there is a chain of events

we have been through it too.



Hope

Still
Life


ALONE

Pride.

LOVE

PAIN

LOSS



I learnt from my mistakes,
I know how very different,
From what I thought
and felt and saw,
Oh, how thankful do I feel.

So I thank you for being part,
of my life, for so very short,
You helped me grow into the new me,
My thoughts it helped me sort.

Forever will I remember you,
No way can I forget,
Those memories will last forever,
So thank you dear child
For what I did get.





Maternal and Fetal Health Research Centre

Experiencing the loss of a baby is something no-one should have to go through, however, we know that in the UK, nine babies are stillborn every day.

In Manchester the Maternal and Fetal Health Research Centre (MFHRC), a team of around 80 doctors, midwives, researchers and research students are working on understanding the reasons why stillbirth and neonatal death happens and how they can be prevented. A lot of the work they do focuses on the placenta, the organ that is formed in the womb when a baby grows that is shared between a Mum and her baby.

Are you interested in helping improve research?

When researchers design and run research projects they often need to work alongside members of the public with experience of what they are researching to ensure what they are doing is being done in the best way for current and future patients. Getting involved with research in this way is known as Patient and Public Involvement (PPI).

The MFHRC has a Patient and Public Involvement group which you can join. When you have joined this group you will be invited to take part in activities about different research studies. This may include coming along to meetings face-to-face or doing activities over the phone or by email. Once joined you are under no obligation to take part in any activity you do not wish to. The kind of activities you may be asked to take part in are:

- Helping researchers understand what topics are most important to research next
- Helping researchers understand whether patients/parents would take part in the research they are proposing
- Looking at information that will be given to patients to explain a research study to make sure it makes sense

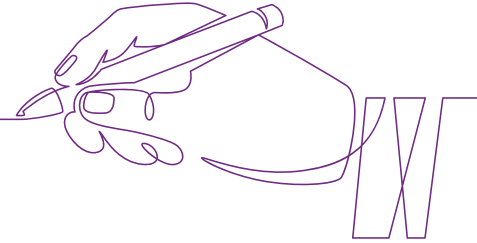
If you would like to join the MFHRC PPI group, or would like some more information, please contact Vocal, a specialist patient and public involvement team who support the MFHRC: vocal@mft.nhs.uk or visit: wearevocal.org

TRY IT YOURSELF:

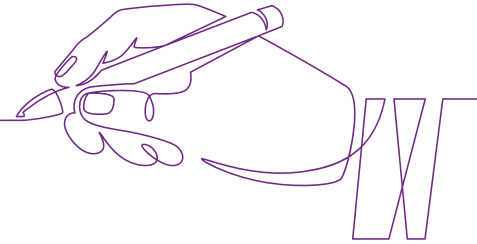
- Why not try creating some of your own pieces at home. You do not need to be an artist or creative in order to benefit from this activity.
- You just need some paper or a sketchbook and a pen or pencil to start. Start by just drawing or creating whatever feels natural, it can help to focus on a topic to start such as how you feel about your body, how you feel about your baby.
- You could also try experimenting with water colours, oil pastels, charcoal, (which you can often buy at pound/bargain shops) or making pictures from old magazines and materials
- It is not about the quality of work, it is about using art and writing as a non-verbal expression of what you are feeling and what you have experienced.
- All you need is 5 minutes a day (you may end up spending an hour) to put on paper what you are feeling.
- There is no right or wrong, it is yours, your partner's and your baby's story.
- You don't need to show it to anyone, but it may be helpful to take along to your counselling session, or to share with loved ones and at support groups etc.
- Putting your thoughts and feelings on paper is a great way to 'see' your emotions and feelings, and might help you to start to understand your grief.
- Understanding and accepting your loss and grief is one of the first steps to healing and acceptance.



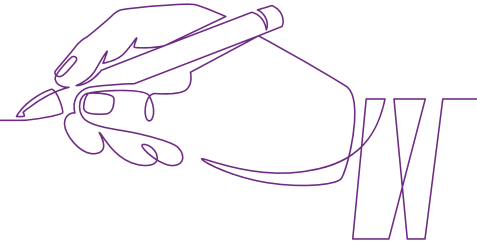
This page is a space for you to draw or write something for yourself



This page is a space for you to draw or write something for yourself



This page is a space for you to draw or write something for yourself



SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED A PREGNANCY LOSS

Misaskim Manchester

Bereavement support organisation for Jewish families

☎ 0161 660 4446

🌐 www.misaskim.co.uk

Ezra Care

Manchester-based charity providing a range of targeted services for Jewish patients and their families

☎ 0161 708 8000

🌐 www.ezracare.co.uk

Alex Silverstone

Greater Manchester Jewish Maternity Liaison Services

☎ 07984 187216

Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service

London-based organisation, offering phone and skype counselling.

☎ 020 8951 3881

🌐 www.jbcs.org.uk

Chana

London-based organisation that offers support over the phone via their helpline and by Skype for Jewish families who experience infertility, miscarriage or stillbirth.

☎ 020 8201 5774

☎ 020 8800 0018

🌐 www.chana.org.uk

JAMHS

Jewish Action for Mental Health

Provides mental health support and resources, including free counselling in Greater Manchester.

Their website also includes a directory of Jewish Mental Health Professionals

☎ 07510 204 844

✉ hello@jamh.org.uk

🌐 www.jamh.org.uk



Rainbow Clinic *Manchester*

Specialist clinics providing clinical support and services to women and families who are pregnant following a previous stillbirth

Saint Mary's Hospital: ☎ 0161 701 0866

Wythenshawe Hospital: ☎ 0161 291 2559

North Manchester General Hospital: ☎ 0161 604 5119

Bereavement Midwives *Manchester*

Saint Mary's Hospital: ☎ 0161 701 5022

Wythenshawe Hospital: ☎ 0161 291 2930

Bereavement Support Team

Newborn Intensive Care Unit

Saint Mary's Hospital, Manchester:

☎ 0161 276 6551

SANDS

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity – SANDS is a national charity that provides advice and support to anyone affected by the death of a baby

🌐 www.sands.org.uk/

Manchester Sands:

☎ 07756 466841

✉ manchester@sands.org.uk

Tommy's

Tommy's is a national charity dedicated to finding causes and treatments to save babies' lives. Tommy's have an advice line run by midwives experienced in talking about pregnancy loss and with bereavement training.

☎ 0800 0147 800

The line is open Monday to Friday, 9-5pm

🌐 www.tommys.org/our-organisation/help-and-support

Child Bereavement UK

A national charity helping children and young people (up to age 25), parents, and families, to rebuild their lives when a child grieves or when a child dies.

☎ 0800 02 888 40

✉ helpline@childbereavementuk.org

🌐 www.childbereavementuk.org

The Still Born project's Each Egg a World

A participatory project which aims to share the stories of over 40,000 people worldwide who have been affected by stillbirth. The online project is based on a painting of the same name by artist Adinda van't Klooster, which contains dots that together create patterns of human egg cells inside a larger egg shape. Each dot represents a stillbirth and its story.

If you would like to find out more or participate and claim a dot for your child, please visit: 🌐 www.stillbornproject.org.uk/eacheggaworld/info

The Still Life project ran in Greater Manchester from January 2019 to December 2020.

The project involved a series of workshops which aimed to engage Jewish women in discussions about stillbirth and stillbirth research.

Here are a selection of quotes from participants:

“
I feel like the project is really vital for our community because it enabled those who are suffering to be able to be helped in a structured, protected, and a dignified manner.
”

“
It's good for me to explore my stillbirth again, and again, each time it just helps heal a little bit, helps you come to terms with it. The workshops were also good, like time out for myself and just to help me with processing it.
”

“
I had very little idea of the people around me who had been through losses because it's kept very quiet in our community.
”

“
I'm not going to build a park for the baby. I'm not going to do a tombstone. I'm not gonna make a big gathering for it because it's a private loss.
”

“
It was amazing to know that there's something being done about stillbirth. I had no idea that there was any sort of research or that it's complex and there could be thousands of reasons why women have stillbirth.
”



Funded by

