



## MEMORY MILK GIFT INITIATIVE

The Memory Milk Gift Initiative (MMGI) was officially launched in October 2021, following feedback from bereaved donors who had donated to the Milk Bank at Chester (MBAC).

**‘Here at the Memory Milk Gift we believe that every bereaved family across the UK should be given the opportunity to donate milk in memory of their baby’**

There are three ways in which families can choose to donate milk in memory of their baby.

- Donating milk that has already been expressed ( for example when baby was receiving milk on a NICU)
- Continuing to express following the loss of their baby
- Initiation of lactation following a still birth or early neonatal death.

The Memory Milk Gift is a collaborative initiative, in which we hope we can work together with milk banks, neonatal units, bereavement teams and hospices to ensure that milk donation after loss is offered as routine.

If a donor or referrer contacted the Memory Milk Gift and a more local milk bank had capacity to accept the donation, we would always refer to the most local milk bank. If for any reason that wasn't possible e.g. if the donation was a research donation, then we would support the family to donate to Chester or another milk bank signed up to the Initiative.

So far the following UK NHS milk banks have signed up to the MMGI and so we are confident that teams across the UK can refer families to a milk bank that will be able to accept the donation.

- Milk Bank at Chester
- Milk Bank Scotland
- Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital Milk Bank
- Calderdale and Huddersfield Donor Breast Milk Bank

- St George's Hospital Milk Bank
- Southampton Human Milk Bank
- Oxford Human Milk Bank – John Radcliffe Hospital

Working with the volunteer Blood Bikes service across the UK we are able to offer support with collections of milk across the UK, within an already well established cross network transport infrastructure. We can offer collections from home addresses, hospitals and hospices, and can usually arrange an unmarked vehicle if this is requested by the family.

MBAC has seen a huge increase in donation after loss following the launch of MMGI. We have been fortunate to be invited onto the Neonatal Network Palliative Care Training calls for the North West, South West and Yorkshire and Humber networks, and have had information packs requested from Units all over England and Wales.

Previously MBAC has supported an average one bereaved family a month to donate (over a three year period). Since July 2021 when we first started to raise awareness of donation after loss to date (Feb 2022) MBAC has received 25 referrals and supported 23 families to donate milk in memory of their baby or babies.

Our dedicated bereavement team are here to guide you through the screening process and are working closely with milk banks, neonatal units and bereavement teams across the country in hospitals and hospices to ensure that the process is as simple as possible. The first step is to contact us and we will talk you through the donor recruitment process and answer any questions you may have. Depending on where the donor lives in the country, and their circumstances, we may signpost you to another NHS milk bank that is located more closely to your unit. Sometimes milk cannot be donated to be issued to neonatal units due to contraindicated medications or lifestyle factors. In these circumstances some milk banks can offer the option to donate milk for research purposes or in house quality improvement initiatives

Telephone: 01244 36 2226

Email: [memory.milkgift@nhs.net](mailto:memory.milkgift@nhs.net)

### **How donated milk will help**

Donor milk is recommended for premature and vulnerable babies when their own mother's milk is not available due to illness or while establishing their milk supply. Milk donated to Chester will be issued to one of 70 different hospitals supplied by the Milk Bank @ Chester. Milk donated to other milk banks will be issued to a hospital in their network.

Research donations are equally as valuable as clinical donations. These donations are used for in house service improvements, helping to shape the future of milk banking. We are also able to use research donations to complete detailed nutritional composition analysis, which will help determine the nutritional changes in DEBM. Research projects will also help to provide evidence for the use of DEBM in the future.

### **Memory Making Opportunities**

The Memory Milk Tree is located in the Milk Bank at Chester office and stands at an impressive 6ft 6 inches tall. Hand painted by our milk process operator Kate, the Memory Milk Tree was designed as a lasting memorial for the families who have donated milk in memory of their baby or babies.

The tree was designed around the milk drop shape. Purple butterflies have been added to the tree as the universal symbol of baby loss and the butterflies echo the beautiful words of 'A Butterfly Lights Beside Us'

*'A butterfly lights beside us, like a sunbeam and for a brief moment it's glory and beauty belong to our world... but then it flies on again, and although we wish it could have stayed, we are so thankful to have seen it at all'*

*Author Unknown*

Purple butterflies also represent the loss of a baby in a multiple pregnancy, as part of the Neonatal Butterfly Project.

Every family who donates is offered the opportunity to have their baby or babies names hand painted into the tree. We do require a consent form in order to be able to add a name to the tree, and families should be made aware that only first names are able to be added to the tree.

Families are of course able to come and see the Memory Milk Tree if they wish to do so, and photographs will be sent via email to the families.

Families are also sent a hand painted, personalised memory pebble and a certificate for their donation made out to both mum and baby.



We have dedicated social media channels for bereaved families, and offer families the opportunity to share their baby's story on one of our Instagram dedication squares.  
[www.twitter.com/memorymilkgift](https://www.twitter.com/memorymilkgift) and [www.instagram.com/memorymilkgift](https://www.instagram.com/memorymilkgift)

On the Milk Bank at Chester's You Tube channel you can access a video from one of our donors, Holly, who shares her and her son's Bodhi's story of Donation After Loss, alongside an introductory video to the MMGI.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atlbj1W4tdY>



[29 October 2021 - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atlbj1W4tdY)  
Donation After Loss  
[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

<https://youtu.be/moJ7EwKnoeM>



### [The Memory Milk Gift Initiative](#)

A short introduction to the Memory Milk Gift Initiative from our Bereavement Lead Laura including Holly and Bodhi's donation journey  
[youtu.be](#)