

FOI_1017_2022-23 – FOI Request Concerning – Administration of a Direct Fetal Painkiller or Anaesthetic

Is the administration of a direct foetal painkiller or anaesthetic, such as fentanyl or lidocaine, prior to a feticide included in the surgery protocols/standard operating procedures for a feticide in your NHS Trust?

Solent NHS Trust contracts the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) to provide termination of pregnancy services

The BPAS policy for induction of fetal demise includes the option to offer the client either local anaesthetic or conscious sedation if required. Clients are encouraged to take 800mg of ibuprofen at least 30 mins prior to the procedure as a first line, 1g of paracetamol should be contraindicated. There is consideration within the policy for 5mg of oral diazepam to be offered to the client if indicated, likewise a paracervical block could be considered. We do not provide a direct painkiller or anaesthetic to the fetus. This is in line with RCOG guidance on Fetal Awareness which has just had an evidence review and concludes: “At present, there is no basis for considering the administration of analgesia or anaesthesia to a fetus before termination of pregnancy in the first or second trimester to prevent fetal perception of pain.” Link here: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/media/gdtncdk/rcog-fetal-awareness-evidence-review-dec-2022.pdf>