

## Alexa Warden

Alexa Warden lives in Sheffield with her husband and children. She worked as a Speech and Language therapist until late 1997, stopping a short time after the death of her fourth child, Benedict.

Benedict was diagnosed as having a rare condition known as "Body Stalk Defect". Early in his pregnancy Alexa and John faced the fact that Benedict had problems that would cause his death during pregnancy or at birth. With great sadness Alexa had a "termination for abnormality".

### **What Benedict meant to me**

Benedict was very young when he died, 21 weeks gestation. However, my feelings for him were no different to my feelings for my three daughters. I regarded him as my child and I loved him.

### **Recognising Benedict as a person**

It was crucial that people recognised Benedict as a person, not only because it validated my loss but also because recognition brings with it a need for respect. John told me that when Benedict was delivered he was put on a metal dish. Would that have happened if he had been a stillbirth? Parents notice the way their child is handled and whether that person demonstrates in their actions the preciousness and value of a new child.

### **A need for information**

Providing accurate and timely information was essential for us. Where it was given and by whom was also an important consideration. In our distress we found it difficult to absorb information and understand ambiguous statements like "His difficulties are inoperable". This did not translate to us as "He will die". We placed a high value on professionals' openness and honesty. Information helped us understand Benedict's difficulties and why he would die. Helping us to recognise the value of procedures such as his post-mortem enabled us to make choices that would inform both us and professionals involved.

### **We needed time**

We had very little time with our son but we wanted to know him and his problems as well as we could. We also recognised that understanding the nature of Benedict's problems would inform any future pregnancy.

[Benedict - A Child Of Mine](#) is a beautiful book of poems written by Alexa which is available from the Child Bereavement Charity