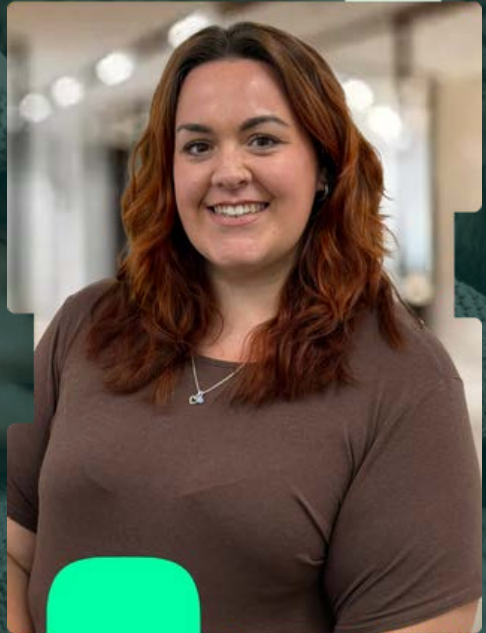


The Words That Stay With Us: Compassionate Communication in Baby Loss Claims

Drawn directly from Katie Monk's webinar on baby loss, this eBook distills her lived experience and expert insight into how language - both spoken and written - can transform a client's experience after baby loss.

It's practical, heartfelt guidance for solicitors handling clinical negligence and birth-injury cases involving grief and trauma.



This eBook was produced by INNEG based on key clinical insights shared during our Compassionate Communication in Baby Loss Claims.

Why Words Matter

When a parent experiences the loss of a baby, every conversation that follows carries immense emotional weight. For them, language doesn't just describe what happened - it shapes how that experience is remembered, processed, and healed.

As Katie Monk shared during the webinar, bereaved parents remember the words spoken to them long after the moment has passed. Words have the power to comfort, or to wound. They can validate a parent's grief, or make them feel unseen and dismissed.

“From an early age, we’re all taught that our words have a lasting effect. Why should that change when we’re discussing baby loss?”

Katie explained that what many people consider “just words” can leave a mark that time alone cannot erase.

Compassionate communication, she said, is not about finding the perfect phrase - it's about speaking with care, intention, and respect.

She reminded us that bereaved parents do not need to be protected from their reality - they need to be acknowledged within it. Talking openly, gently, and without avoidance helps remove the stigma that still surrounds baby loss.

“Talking about our children won't remind us that they died,” Katie said, “It reminds us that they lived.”

In legal practice, where language is often clinical by necessity, that distinction matters more than ever. For solicitors supporting clients through baby loss claims, words become part of the care. Each sentence, each question, each pause can either ease trauma or reopen it.

When Language Hurts

During the session, Katie shared an encounter that revealed how a single sentence can change everything.

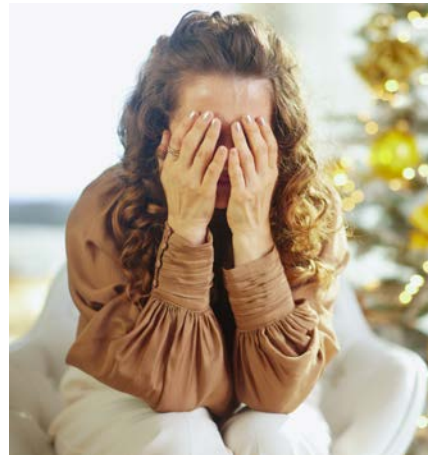
She recalled experiencing a miscarriage at sixteen weeks and being told she would need to be induced and go through labour - a process that, while different from a full-term birth, was still labour and still birth.

“When discussing this with a non-professional they said, “Why do you need to go through that? Do they not just cut it out of you?”

That moment, Katie said, opened up “a whole world” she hadn’t realised existed - one where people could speak about loss with such detachment. The conversation instantly became uncomfortable for both sides.

She explained that while bereaved parents sometimes need honesty, what they always need is compassion. Honesty without empathy can sound cold; truth without care can sound cruel.

Katie’s experience reminds us that tone, phrasing, and sensitivity are not small details. They define how a grieving parent experiences our words - and whether they will remember them as support, or as pain.



The Difference It Makes

Katie spoke about how the words we choose can either build trust or deepen hurt. For parents who have lost a baby, terms like miscarriage, stillbirth, loss, or even baby carry intensely personal meanings - and no two families will feel the same way.

She encouraged professionals to begin every conversation with one simple act: ask.

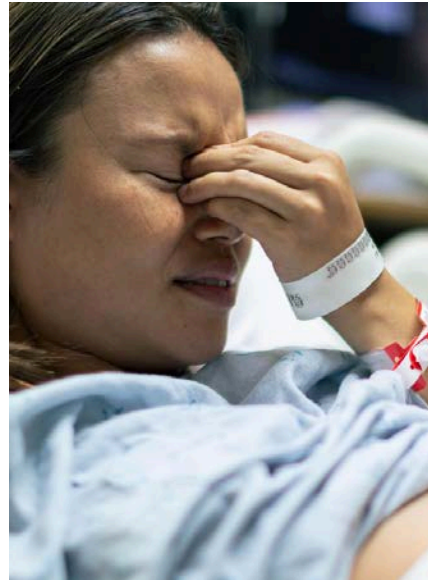
“Does your baby have a name that you’d like me to use?”

“Is there a term you’d prefer me to use when we talk about your experience?”

These questions, she said, may feel uncomfortable at first, but they change everything. They show care, respect, and genuine willingness to listen.

Katie shared that she personally dislikes the word miscarriage when describing the birth of her twins, Poppy and Dottie.

“I went through hours of labour, a traumatic birth, and postnatal recovery. Legally and medically, it’s called a miscarriage, but to me, it was a birth.”



She reminded the audience that when a solicitor or professional takes the time to ask what language feels right, they're already helping that parent feel seen and understood.

“By asking that at the start, you’re already making progress - because you’ve shown you care enough to ask.”

Using a baby’s name or gender, she explained, validates their existence. It reminds the family that their child was - and still is - part of their story.

Katie also highlighted the harm caused by overly clinical terms often found in medical records.

“A living child would never be referred to as a foetus or a product of conception. So why are those words used for children who are no longer with us?”

Her advice was simple: mirror the parent’s language. If they say daughter, say daughter. If they use stillbirth instead of miscarriage, follow their lead.

Instead Of:	Try Saying:
“the foetus”	“your baby”
“product of conception”	“your daughter/son”
“death”	“passing”
“miscarriage” (if unwanted)	“birth” or “stillbirth” - confirm preference

Clinical vs Compassionate Terminology

Katie spoke candidly about the language often used in medical settings - terms that, though technically correct, can feel deeply dehumanising to grieving parents.

She explained that words like foetus or product of conception are sometimes used in official documentation to describe a baby who has died before 24 weeks. Yet when those same words are spoken to a bereaved parent, they can sound unbearably detached.

“A living child would never be referred to as a foetus, and a living child would never be referred to as a product of conception. So why are those terms still used for children who are no longer with us?”

Katie and other bereaved parents call these expressions the three C's - *clinical, cold, and cruel*. They strip away the humanity that families are trying so hard to hold onto.

She described how softer, person-centred language - baby, daughter, son, or passing instead of death - can make all the difference. These words acknowledge not just what happened, but who was lost.

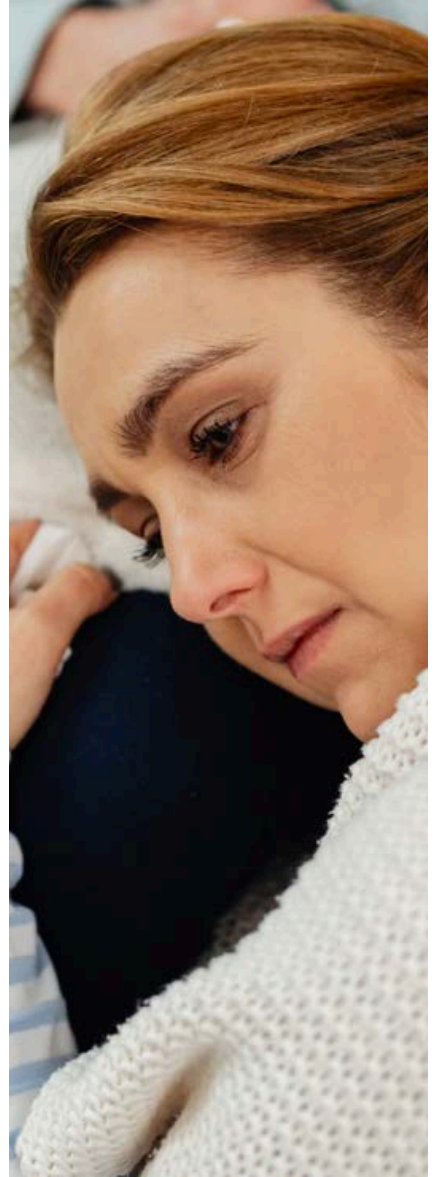
For solicitors, this distinction is especially important. Legal and medical terminology must sometimes appear in reports and evidence, but in conversation, tone and empathy must take precedence. The key is to translate formality into compassion without changing meaning.

A helpful way to bridge the two, as Katie suggested, is to explain your intent clearly:

“Legally I might have to write ‘miscarriage’, but when I speak with you, I’ll refer to it as your baby’s birth if that feels right to you.”

That single sentence demonstrates both professionalism and care - recognising the parent’s loss while meeting legal requirements with sensitivity.

Katie’s message was clear: accuracy matters, but empathy matters more. The words we choose can uphold procedure, but they can also uphold dignity.



Everyday Compassion in Practice

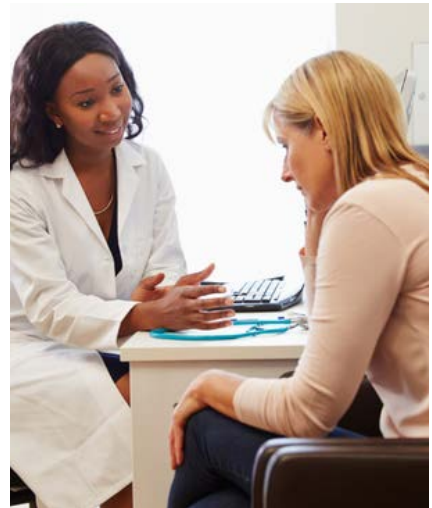
When asked how solicitors can show empathy while maintaining professional boundaries, Katie's answer was simple: *be human first.*

She encouraged professionals to move beyond structured checklists and instead focus on how they speak and listen. Open-ended questions - not ones that end with a "yes" or "no" - help clients share what truly matters.

"Ask questions that require a full answer - that's how you'll get further. It might take time, but if you keep trying to build trust by being warm and human, you'll get there."

Katie reminded listeners that emotion is not unprofessional; it's real. Showing understanding, or even becoming moved by what a parent shares, communicates that you've heard them.

"If you show emotion, it means you've understood us. It means you've really listened."



She also spoke about the importance of small, physical gestures of care - having tissues nearby, offering a glass of water or a cup of tea, and allowing silence when it's needed.

“A cup of tea fixes everything, doesn't it? Offer them a drink, tell them to take their time. Being rushed adds to trauma. Take it slow; that's how you make space for healing.”

Katie explained that bereaved parents are often far more resilient than they appear - they just need time and space to process emotion before continuing. Creating that pause can make the difference between a conversation that feels procedural and one that feels safe.

For solicitors, these moments of compassion are not outside the scope of their role - they are part of the role. They build the trust

required to navigate sensitive details, and they ensure that clients feel seen as people, not cases.



Reflection

Katie ended the session with a message of hope - a reminder that while language cannot undo loss, it can change how that loss is carried.

She spoke about the continued silence around baby loss and how every conversation, every act of awareness, helps to break it.

“Baby loss is still a difficult subject. It’s still not talked about enough,” she said. “But by spreading the word wherever we can, we can make such a difference.”

She encouraged professionals to use their voices in conversations, in social media, and in daily practice to bring visibility to the families who too often feel unseen.

By choosing compassionate language and making space for honest dialogue, solicitors can do more than support a claim; they can support healing.

Katie’s closing thought captured the heart of her message: awareness and empathy don’t just comfort the grieving - they create change.

Conclusion

Birth injury claims are not won or lost on isolated errors. They turn on how clinicians made decisions as labour evolved, how risk was contextualised, and whether escalation occurred at the right time.

Understanding these seven decision points allows solicitors to assess cases more effectively, identify where breach and causation are strongest, and instruct experts with greater precision.

How INNEG Supports Solicitors

INNEG helps solicitors simplify expert evidence in complex clinical negligence claims.

Our national database includes 13,000+ vetted experts across 112 clinical disciplines, with records of each expert's sub-specialisms and interests. This allows us to source and nominate experts whose experience aligns precisely with the issues in dispute.

Every enquiry is supported by a dedicated Analyst, providing a single point of contact and continuity from initial discussion through to expert nomination. By managing the expert sourcing process, we help firms save time and reduce unrecoverable costs.

Whether you are dealing with complex birth injury, disputed causation, or high-value clinical negligence claims, INNEG supports you with focused, expert-led solutions.

Search our expert panel [here](#).

