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Help for you following bereavement

Information booklet



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Document Number: STHK1733
Version: 002
Review Date: 01 / 09 / 2024

Introduction

We understand that this will be a very anxious time for you and the Trust would like to offer you our support at this time.

The news that someone close to you is poorly enough to die or has died can often be overwhelming. You will find there are many things that you will have to organise and you may feel a mixture of emotions which may at first be unfamiliar and out of character.

The Trust has had to make some changes in order to reduce the risk and spread of infection due to the coronavirus pandemic. While we want to maintain family contact and support for our patients and those important to them we have had to restrict the number of people visiting our hospitals.

All visits must be agreed in advance. To arrange a visit please contact the nurse in charge of your relative / friends care. It is important that you follow the instructions and guidance from our staff to keep you and others safe.

Please do not visit if you are showing symptoms of Coronavirus or if you are living in a household with someone showing symptoms.

We are extremely sorry about this and understand this is an incredibly difficult time for you. We hope the information provided in this booklet will help guide and support you.

Within the booklet you will see a Quick Response code (QR code) on certain pages.

If you have a smart phone scanning the QR code will take you straight to the support organisations website.

If you do not use a smart phone the website details have also been provided.

Space for your personal notes

You may find these organisations helpful

Bereavement Advice Centre

Offer practical advice and signposting on issues facing people after the death of someone close.

Visit: www.bereavementadvice.org

Cruse Bereavement Care

Promotes the well-being of bereaved adults and young people; offering support, advice and information.

Visit: www.cruse.org.uk Call: 0808 808 1677

Samaritans

Provide emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope or at risk of suicide.

Visit: www.samaritans.org Call: 116 123

Please visit the Trust website bereavement pages for further advice and support at www.sthk.nhs.uk

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Produced by Bereavement Group

Published by Bereavement Publications Limited
01253 714446

First Steps

Registering a Death

To register the death of your relative/friend please telephone the Bereavement Office on the following working day on:

0151 430 1336 or 0151 430 1412 (excluding bank holidays and weekends) between the hours of 9:00am and 5:00pm.

You will need to obtain a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and the bereavement officer will guide you through the processes.

If the death has occurred at Newton Hospital a nurse on the ward will contact Medical Services and they will process the MCCD by contacting the nominated next of kin at the earliest opportunity.

Please note all deaths in England and Wales must be registered within five days including weekends and public holidays.

Once you have confirmation that the MCCD is completed it will be sent along with the nominated next of kin details to the Registry Office via secure email. The Registry Office will contact the next of kin at the earliest opportunity to register the death by telephone.

If your relative/friends religious/faith practices requires burial to take place within 24 hours following their death, please contact the Bereavement Office or ward for advice or if it is out of hours contact the site manager through the switchboard: 0151 426 1600.

If this happens try to find a way to be sensitive to each other's needs, whilst coping with your own feelings in your own way.

Important dates, such as birthdays and special anniversaries can be particularly hard. Thinking ahead and planning what you want to do and what will help you get through the day can be helpful. Some people like to create new memories or a tradition, such as visiting the person's grave or the place where their ashes are scattered.

There is no right or wrong thing to do on these different occasions. You only need to do the things that are important and feel right to you.

How can I cope?

Nobody knows you better than you know yourself and you will find your own way of coping.

Looking after your physical health is an essential part of getting through difficult times. Getting enough sleep and eating properly can help you deal with the different emotions that you are feeling.

For some people:

- Keeping busy doing different activities can help. If that helps you, try to do things even if sometimes you do not feel up to it.
- Taking things more slowly and taking time out of your day to day life and activities may be what is needed.
- Walking can be helpful as it gets you out of the house, provides some physical exercise and can help you to think differently. Please follow guidelines.
- Getting out and about and seeing other people can help, even if you are not ready to engage with them, especially if you are feeling lonely.
- Most people find it helps to talk through their feelings and about the person who has died. It may be to family or close friends, or you may find talking to someone new either one to one or in a group helpful.
- If you feel that you do not want to talk, that is ok but it is important to find other ways to manage your feelings.

Other people may have different ways of grieving and coping which can create tensions and strains within a family or with friends.

Contacting a Funeral Director

You will be able to make provisional plans with your funeral director. However, final arrangements cannot be made until the death of your relative / friend has been registered.

If you are in receipt of certain benefits you may be entitled to financial assistance with the funeral.

The Bereavement Office can provide you with a booklet produced by the Benefits Agency, which will help advise you about paying for a funeral.

Your relative / friend might have paid for their funeral already.

This is called a funeral plan. If you do not know if there is a funeral plan, you can:

- check the will.
- ask the person's relatives and close friends.
- ask local funeral directors.
- search for funeral plans on the Funeral Planning Authority's website.

Costs for a funeral can vary so you may wish to contact more than one funeral director prior to making a final decision.

Coroner's Referrals

Sometimes the MCCD cannot be issued at the hospital for example, if your relative/friend's death was sudden or the doctor was not certain of the cause of death.

The hospital doctor will have to refer the death to the Coroner and this may cause a delay.

The Bereavement Office or Medical Services will inform you if the case has been referred to the Coroner.

If a death has been referred to the Coroner they will take responsibility for issuing the MCCD or necessary paperwork.

The Coroner's Office will contact the nominated next of kin or appropriate person to advise them regarding the procedures.

The Coroner's Offices are based at Southport Police Station and can be contacted on 0151 777 3480 between 8:00am and 4:00pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Support When Experiencing Grief

Time

No one can tell you how long or when the intensity of grief will lessen. There is no timetable and the length of time is different for each person. Grief is often described as a journey. There are no short cuts, it will ebb and flow and it will be hard at times.

You may feel as if you are coping well and moving towards acceptance and then experience the strong and often unwelcome emotions again. This will lessen and there should come a time when you are able to adapt, adjust and cope with life without the person who has died.

Living with grief

When someone close to you dies you have to cope and adjust to living in a world which has forever changed.

Learning to adapt and develop a new normal and finding new meaning in your activities and roles is part of the process of learning to live with grief.

Some of the hardest things can be simple everyday activities that can remind you that the person you were close too is not there now. You may find that you have to rebuild your own identity.

Rebuilding your life in this way can be a slow process but over time your life will regain shape and meaning.

Finding a new normal does not mean that there is no place in your life for the person who has died. The bond that you had with them will continue.

Social Media and Online Accounts

Over the last 10 years the internet has changed the way we interact and communicate with each other from social media, email, online banking and shopping.

The digital information that your relative/friend leaves online is often referred to as their digital legacy. This may include their social media profiles, photos, videos, gaming profiles and other interactions they have had on line.

Each online service will have its own privacy or end of life policy. The Digital Legacy Association provides information, advice and guidance about the most popular digital devices and online services. For more information visit:
www.digitallegacyassociation.org.

Organ and Tissue Donation

On the 20th May 2020 organ donation law in England changed to help save and improve more lives.

You may hear this system referred to as the opt-out system, deemed consent, presumed consent or Max and Keira's Law.

The opt-out system works on the understanding that all adults agree to become organ donors when they die, unless they have made it known that their decision is not to donate.

For more information or to register your own decision, please visit the NHS organ donation website:

<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk>

Who can register the death:

- The next of kin or family member.
- A person present at the death.
- The deceased's solicitor or executor of the estate.
- The occupier/owner of premises where the death took place.
- The person responsible for funeral arrangements (not a funeral director).
- Hospital administrator.

The registrar would like you to have the following information if available:

- The deceased's National Health Service medical card.
- The deceased's birth certificate.
- Any details of NHS pension, war pension or civil servant pension.
- The deceased's marriage certificate (if appropriate).
- At the time of registration you will be required to pay by card, over the telephone for any death certificates you wish to purchase. At the present time they are £11 each and these will be posted to you.

You may need more than one copy to provide to companies who will be dealing with insurance policies, pensions etc. Some companies will not accept photocopies.

The registrar will ask you:

- The date and place of death.
- The first names, surname and maiden name (if appropriate) of the deceased.
- Any other names by which the deceased has been known.
- The deceased's date and place of birth.
- The deceased's usual address.
- The deceased's occupation.
- If married or in a civil partnership the name of their spouse.
- Spouse's occupation.
- Name and address of the person registering the death.

Direct.gov provides a wide range of advice and services available from the government including:

- Claims - Bereavement Payment, Bereavement Allowance or Widowed Parent's Allowance (form BB1) Widowed Parent's Allowance. You may be able to get a one-off payment or regular payments if you have been bereaved.
- Funeral payments – if you are on certain benefits and need help to pay for a funeral you are arranging you may be able to get a Funeral Payment from the Social Fund. You may have to repay some or all of it from the estate of the person who has died.

For more information visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/bereavement>.

Social Care Support



The Bereavement Register is a free service that helps to stop direct mail being sent to people who have died. We all receive direct mail which can be an irritation but when a person has died it can be deeply upsetting for the family we leave behind – a reminder of their loss.

For more information visit:

<https://www.thebereavementregister.org.uk/>.



The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policies and can provide benefits and services for a wide range of people.

For more information visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>.

The registrar will then provide:

- A Certification of Burial or Cremation. This certificate is green in colour and they will scan it directly to the burial or cremation site of the funeral director you have chosen.
- A Certificate of Registration/Notification of Death (Form DB8): This is a white form; they will post this out to you. This can be returned to the address on the back of the form - Department of Work and Pensions.
- Death Certificate(s) – they will post these out to you.
- Tell us once leaflet, this is a service available in certain localities and an online/telephone service which lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go – they will email this to you or if you prefer they will post it to you. For more information: visit www.gov.uk/tell-us-once.

Who you may need to contact

You will probably want to let the family, friends and neighbours know of your relative/friend's death right away. There are several other people who may also need to know.

These include:

- Minister of religion or specific to the needs of the individual.
- Family doctor.
- Executors of the estate (Will).
- Solicitor.
- Insurance companies.
- Jobcentre Plus (benefits).
- Department of Work & Pensions (pensions).
- Social Services (home helps, home care).
- Place of work (occupational pension).
- Residential or nursing home.
- Inland Revenue (tax office).
- Landlord, Housing Department, mortgage provider.
- Bank, credit card or loan companies.
- Any other financial contractual commitments.
- Council Tax Offices.
- Electricity, gas, telephone, water companies.
- The Post Office (redirect mail).
- DVLA Swansea.

- Careline.
- Cancel any appointments.

If your relative/friend lived alone you may need to make sure that their home is secure and remove all signs that their home is empty.

You may wish to collect spare keys from anyone who has them.

After the funeral

Items that may need returning:

- Passport
- Driving License
- Membership cards
- National Insurance papers
- NHS equipment - please contact the team that supplied this equipment to arrange for its collection.