Help for you following bereavement

Information booklet

This booklet aims to provide some help & guidance during the early days of your bereavement
Please accept the sympathy of the hospital staff at this difficult time.

We want to help you as much as we can and we hope that this booklet will provide you with helpful information about the procedures following a death in hospital.

‘This leaflet can be made available in alternative languages / formats on request.’
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The first steps

Contacting a Funeral Director

You can get in touch with a Funeral Director as soon as you like. You do not have to wait until the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death has been issued or until after the weekend if the death occurs then. The Funeral Director will give you the help and advice that you need.

The funeral director will help you to make all the arrangements for the funeral and burial or cremation. You should find out if there is a Will as it may contain the deceased person’s own requests.

You may know a reputable funeral director or your family and friends may suggest one to you. Local firms are usually listed in the Yellow Pages or Thompson Local Directory. Costs vary so you may wish to contact or visit more than one.

Obtaining a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

If the death occurred in the Accident & Emergency Department, please contact Whiston Coroner’s Office on 0151 430 1238.

If the death occurred on the ward, you must telephone the Bereavement Office before coming to collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.

Please do not attend until you have been advised by a bereavement officer to collect your paperwork.

You can contact the bereavement office on: 0151-430-1336 or 0151-430-1412 between 9.15am – 4.45pm, Monday – Friday.
The new Bereavement Centre

This is located on lower ground floor two (LG2) of Nightingale House at Whiston Hospital. It has its own car park which is accessible from Stoney Lane. There is no charge to park in this car park. (Post code L35 5DR). The Hospital Trust also has a large multi-storey car park on Warrington Road.

Whiston Hospital Bereavement Centre

On entering Nightingale House from the Bereavement Centre car park, the office is the first door on the left. Please use the telephone on the wall to let the bereavement centre staff know that you have arrived.

The centre has two private interview rooms where you can receive your paperwork and ask any questions. The bereavement centre staff can advise you on the death registration and the procedures that will follow this.

The Bereavement Office arranges for a hospital doctor to complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. This will usually be the following day unless the death occurred over the weekend or bank holiday when, if possible, it will be issued on the next working day.
You will be advised on the availability of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death, where you will be able to collect it and help with any questions that you may have. You will also be informed of any known delays, for instance, if the relevant doctor who cared for the deceased is not available or delays due to the involvement of the coroner.

However, in some cases it may not be possible for the doctor to issue a medical certificate showing the cause of death (eg if the death is referred to the Coroner). Under these circumstances the Coroners Officer will contact the next of kin and it will be advisable to notify your funeral director and follow his advice.

Sometimes the Certificate of Cause of Death cannot be issued at the hospital (eg if the death is sudden, or if the doctor was not certain of the cause of death). This is when the Coroner will be involved, and in these circumstances the hospital doctor will report the death to the Coroner in order that the cause of death can be established. In some cases the Coroner may authorise a post-mortem to be carried out.

The Coroners Offices are based in the Bereavement Centre on the Whiston Hospital site, and can be contacted on –

**0151 430 1238**

The Bereavement Officer can give you a booklet produced by the Benefits Agency, which will give you more information such as advice about paying for a funeral.
Registering the death

How to register a death

Once you have received the Cause of Death Certificate you must take it to the Register Office for the area in which the death occurred to register the death. If you are unable to attend the correct register office, you can go to a registrar in a more convenient place in England or Wales to do a declaration of death, but they will not be able to register the death at that office. The details will be passed on to the Registrar in the area in which your relative died and the certificates will be sent to you by post a few days later. This may cause delays in organising the funeral.

The death must be registered within 5 working days. Details of the local Registration District Offices are as follows, and are by appointment only –

**Telephone: 0151 443 2900**
Registrars Office
High Street
Prescot L34 3LD

**Telephone: 01744 456789**
Registrars Office
Central Street
St Helens WA10 1UJ
Who can register the death

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

Death certificate(s) – a standard charge is made for these. (You may require more than one copy).

The registrar will require -

- The medical certificate of the cause of death (obtained from the hospital)
- The deceased’s National Health Service medical card (if possible)
- The deceased’s birth certificate (if available)
- Any details of NHS pension, war pension or civil servant pension, and the pension book numbers (if available)
- The deceased’s marriage certificate (if married and if available)
Other information the registrar will need

- Name and address of the person registering the death
- The first names and family name of the deceased
- Any other names by which the deceased has been known
- The date and place of death
- The date and place of birth
- The usual address of the deceased
- If the deceased was male, his occupation
- If the deceased was a married woman, the full name and occupation of her husband
- If married, the date of birth of the surviving widow or widower
- Whether or not the deceased received a pension or other allowances from state funds

The registrar will give you -

- A certificate for the funeral director (green certificate)
- Certificate of Registration/notification of death for the Jobcentre Plus, including a claim form (where appropriate) for funeral expenses from the Social Fund; unless the burial is to take place in another country, or the death is being dealt with by the Coroner
Visiting the deceased

Within a short time of death, the deceased person may be taken from the ward to the hospital mortuary. Should a close member of the family wish to see the deceased there, you will need to telephone the Bereavement Office to make arrangements.

The Bereavement Office hours are:
Monday to Friday: 9.15 am to 4.45 pm
0151 430 1336 or 0151 430 1412

Outside office hours

Such visits normally take place between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm from Monday to Friday. However, if visiting during these hours is not possible please contact the Operational Site Managers through the main hospital switch board:

0151 426 1600

The Bereavement Centre has a multi faith viewing room however; it is recommended that viewings should ideally be arranged at the Chapel of Rest of the Funeral Director appointed by the next of kin.

Normally the Funeral Director will take the person who has died to their Chapel of Rest within a few of days of the death, where further extended visits can be arranged at your convenience.
Tissue donation

St Helens & Knowsley Teaching Hospitals participates in the National Blood Service Tissue Donation programme. Details of the death of the deceased will be forwarded to the National Referral Centre, and you may or may not receive a call from them. **For further information please refer to the leaflet included at the back of this booklet.**

**Tissue donation** is the gift of tissue such as corneas, skin, bone, tendons, cartilage and heart valves to help others. Most people can donate tissue. Unlike organs it may be possible to donate tissue up to 48 hours after a person has died. If this is possible the family will be offered this as an option.

**Organ donation** is the gift of an organ to help someone who needs a transplant. Kidneys, heart, liver, lungs, pancreas and small bowel can be transplanted. If Organ Donation is possible this will be offered as a choice to the family when it is clear their relative is dying or has died. It needs to be arranged by a Specialist Nurse – Organ Donation and must take place immediately after a person has died.
Who needs to be told about the death

You will probably want to let the family, friends and neighbours know of your loved one’s death right away. There are several people who may also need to know.

These include –

• Minister of religion
• 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

The deceased may have been living alone so you will need to make sure that their home is secure and remove all signs that indicate that no-one is there. You may wish to collect spare keys from neighbours.
After the funeral

Items that may need returning

• Passport
• Driving Licence
• Membership cards
• National insurance papers
• NHS equipment - Home Loans Department - 0151 244 4380

It can be difficult enough dealing with bereavement without having to deal with the deceased’s property, possessions and personal matters. For this reason it could be advisable to contact a solicitor to help with such matters.

In touch with your feelings

By its very nature a death is distressing to everyone. The emotional and physical reactions that follow are usually intense; they usually confuse, frighten and shock. You may also be surprised by reactions that are unfamiliar and seemingly out of character.

As individuals, grieving occurs in different ways. Coping with this grief varies, and listed below are some helpful hints which may help you to cope.
Things to avoid

Try not to:

• Rush into having the funeral right away unless it is the practice of your culture
• Be persuaded to have an expensive funeral unless you really want it
• Enter into any financial or legal arrangements unless you fully understand them
• Make any major changes to your life too soon. Give yourself lots of time to think about changes you may wish to make, and discuss these plans with others
• Let others rush you into anything before you are ready, but remember you may not know that you are ready for something unless you give it a try
• Turn to drugs, smoking or alcohol to stop yourself feeling the pain of grief

Things to do

• Express your feelings as much as possible. Try to bring out into the open whatever you are feeling, as this is important in working through your grief
• Give yourself time to overcome your grief. There is no fixed time to get over bereavement
• Talk through what has happened with someone you trust
• Take good care of yourself, get lots of rest, eat well and give yourself lots of time to grieve
• Contact your doctor if you feel unwell
• Keep in touch with friends and family. Remember, sometimes people feel awkward and embarrassed about offering their help, so it may be up to you should you require any help, even though this may be difficult for you
Advice and support

- Contact the hospital Chaplaincy Services (Spiritual Care Department) for help and support (including those with no faith) on –

  0151 430 1657

There are times when an answer phone may be in use (if so please leave a clear message and number and you will be contacted as soon as possible)

- Bereavement Counselling at the Cancer Counselling and Day Care Unit – St Helens Hospital 01744 646173/4
- Liverpool Bereavement Service 0151 236 3932
- St Helens Bereavement Service 01744 451793
- Compassionate Friends (for bereaved parents) 08451 232304
- The Alder Centre (for bereaved parents) 0151 252 5117
- Samaritans Liverpool 0151 708 8888
- CRUSE Bereavement Care 0844 477 9400
- Age UK Mid-Mersey (St. Helens, Halton, Warrington, Widnes & Runcorn) 01744 752644
- Other support may be available from your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) office.
- Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) 0151 430 1144