



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust

Bereavement Booklet



**Information and guidance
after the death of a relative or friend**

When someone dies there are many decisions and arrangements that need to be made. These often have to be completed at a time of great personal distress.

The death of your relative or friend may have happened suddenly or have been long expected, either way it will still be a shock to you.

This booklet will give you help and guidance about what to do, particularly in the first few difficult days of your bereavement. It also contains information about some of the emotional and physical responses you may experience and contact details of support organisations are included.



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Issue of Medical Certificate of cause of death

Following a death you may expect to be given a certificate stating the cause of death.

This is required to enable you to register the death.

The certificate has to be completed by a doctor who treated the patient before their death*.

If the death has to be reported to the coroner you will not be issued with a certificate until the coroner's investigations are complete.

- Cremation or burial? Make sure the ward staff (hospital) or GP (community) know whether the funeral is to be a burial or cremation. They will ensure the correct forms are completed.

In hospital

It may not be possible to give you this certificate before you leave the hospital immediately following the death. The nursing staff on the ward will tell you when and from where the certificate may be collected.

At home / care home

If the doctor who attends the house / care home to confirm the death is able to, they will issue the medical certificate of cause of death.

If the doctor is unable to issue the certificate they will advise you when and where to collect the certificate.

* On occasion the death can be verified by an appropriately trained nurse. This will occur prior to certification by the duty doctor. It is possible that the date of verification / death will differ from that on your relative's Death Certificate if certification by that doctor occurs after midnight and into the next day. Please note also that the Medical Certificate of the cause of death must be completed by a doctor who treated the patient prior to death.



Organ and tissue donation

Some people choose to join the donor register or carry an organ / tissue donor card. In the absence of this, the next of kin can consent to organs / tissues being donated when someone dies. If you know your loved one wished to donate their organs or tissues, or this is something you wish to consider on their behalf, please inform the ward staff, GP or district nurse and you will be contacted by a specialist nurse in organ / tissue donation. Sometimes a medical condition or cause / place of death will mean a person cannot be a donor.

Registering the death

The doctor or nurse in the hospital or your GP practice may give you a green form (GR073). This gives you information about registering the death. We have included the information here in case this form is not available to you.

Legally all deaths occurring in Northern Ireland must be registered in Northern Ireland. A death should be registered as soon as possible to allow funeral arrangements to be made. The death must be registered within 5 days except when the coroner is involved. The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages completes this.

If you have been given a medical certificate of cause of death you should register the death within 5 days at any Registrars office in Northern Ireland.

The details of local offices of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages with their telephone numbers and opening times are listed at the back of this booklet.

There is no cost for registering a death. The only cost will be for copies of the death certificate, if required. It can be helpful to purchase some extra copies of the certificate at the time you register the death as these can be used to deal with insurance, business matters etc, or they can be purchased up to 3 years after registration.



Who can register a death?

- Any relative of the deceased who knows the details required
- A person present at the death
- A person taking care of funeral arrangements
- The executor or administrator of the deceased's estate
- A person living in and responsible for a house, lodgings or apartments where the death occurred
- A person finding the body or a person taking charge of the body.

The information you will need to give to the registrar:-

- The full name, surname and address of the deceased
- Date and place of death
- Marital status (single, married, widowed or divorced)
- Date and place of birth
- Occupation of the deceased - if the deceased was a wife or a widow, the full name and occupation of her husband (or deceased husband) will be required. If the deceased was a child, the full name and occupation of the father will be required or where the parents are not married the full name and occupation of the mother will be required
- Maiden surname (if the deceased was a woman who had married)
- The medical certificate of cause of death and the deceased's medical card (National Health Number is helpful but not essential)
- Details of any pension apart from a state pension that the deceased may have held.

The registrar will then give you 2 forms:-

GRO 21 - which permits the burial or cremation to take place.

Form 36 - for production to the Social Security Offices regarding benefits.



The Coroner

The coroner is a doctor or lawyer responsible for investigating the cause of some deaths. A death may be reported to the coroner either by the doctor or the registrar of deaths. There are a number of reasons why a death may be reported to the coroner:-

- The cause of death is unknown or uncertain
- The death was sudden or unexpected
- The death was caused by an industrial disease, an accident or unusual circumstances.

In this event the coroner's office or their representative will contact you directly. (The representative may be a policeman / woman, even if the reason for the coroner's involvement is related to an industrial disease). They will explain the reason for their involvement and the registration procedures that will be required.

For information about the Coroner

Coroner's Service for Northern Ireland
Mays Chambers
73 May Street
Belfast
BT1 3JL

Tel: 0300 200 7811

Email: coronersoffice@courtsni.gov.uk



Post mortem

There are two reasons why a post mortem may be carried out.

1. Coroner's post mortem (un-consented)

A coroner may ask for a post mortem examination to be carried out to help determine the cause of death. **A coroner does not need the family's consent to undertake a post mortem.** However, you should receive written information - *Coroner's Post Mortem Examination Information for Relatives booklet* - that will explain the process.

2. Hospital post mortem (consented)

You may be asked by the doctor for permission to carry out a post mortem examination. This can help determine the cause of death, the nature and extent of disease and increase medical knowledge. **It is your decision whether you grant permission for this.** A hospital post mortem is not compulsory and you can refuse. If you do decide to grant permission the doctors will discuss what is entailed, give you some written information and ask you to sign a consent form.

In this case you will receive the death certificate on completion of the post mortem.



Arranging the funeral

Many people decide to use a funeral director to organise the funeral. Most funeral directors are available 7 days a week and provide an on call service 365 days of the year. As soon as you wish, you can contact a funeral director and start to make arrangements. (The only exception to this is if the death has to be reported to the coroner, as this may delay the funeral).

With the assistance of the funeral director and/or your spiritual advisor, you can decide how best you would like things to be carried out.

Some things to bear in mind:-

- A person may have left instructions about their funeral, for example, music, hymns, style etc. This may be in their will or written separately. Their solicitor may hold this information
- Remember it may also be helpful to ask children / young people in the family if they would like to be involved in the planning of or participation in the funeral
- Think about who will pay for the funeral. Some people contribute to a plan to pay for their funeral. If you are on certain benefits you can apply for financial help. Ask the funeral director or you can obtain the leaflet 'Help when someone dies' from your local DHSSPS office
- Helpful information is also available on the DHSSPS website www.dhsspsni.gov.uk.



Chaplaincy services

Hospital chaplains work to bring counsel, comfort and prayerful support to relatives as well as patients.

It may be beneficial for you to contact a minister of your choice. They will be able to advise you about the funeral service and may also be a source of support during and after the funeral. In the hospital there are chaplains from the following denominations:-

- Church of Ireland
- Presbyterian
- Methodist
- Roman Catholic.

These chaplains can also make contact with ministers of other denominations or spiritual advisors from other religions if required.

Ulster Hospital, Lagan Valley Hospital and Downe Hospital

The chaplains are on call 24 hours a day. Please ask the Nurse in Charge who will contact a Chaplain on your behalf.



Cultural Centres

Belfast Hebrew Congregation

The Wolfson Centre
49 Somerton Road
Belfast, BT15 3LH
Tel: (028) 9077 5013

Belfast Islamic Centre

38 Wellington Park
Belfast, BT9 6DN
Tel: (028) 9066 4465

Chinese Welfare Association

1 Stranmillis Embankment
Belfast, BT7 1GB
Tel: (028) 9028 8277

Indian Community Centre

86 Clifton Street
Belfast, BT13 1AB
Tel: (028) 9024 9746

Bryson Intercultural (formerly the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre)

28 Bedford Street
Belfast, BT2 7FE
Tel: (028) 9024 4639

NICEM

(Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities)
1st Floor, Ascot House
24-31 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast, BT2 7DB
Tel: (028) 9023 8645
www.nicem.org.uk



Return of patient's / resident's property

Collecting property after someone dies in a hospital / care home can be a difficult experience. Some families like to take the belongings home immediately. If this does not happen, the staff will gather everything together for someone to collect later. Do tell the staff which you would prefer.

The following information tells you how the next of kin can request the return of property / cash held by the Trust.

- Ward / care home staff will give you details of any property / cash, held by the Trust that belonged to the deceased
- Administration services staff will tell you what to do to allow the Trust to release this property / cash. (NB. money is always returned as a cheque) contact Administration Services on (028) 9055 0428, Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm
- Each case is different and delays may happen because of legal requirements (for example - where a will requires Grant of Probate
- The Trust will act as quickly as possible and your patience would be appreciated.



People to tell

A large number of people and organisations need to be informed when someone has died. The checklist below may help you with this and whilst it may look daunting not all will be relevant to your situation.

This can help avoid the distress of letters and phone calls continuing in the weeks and months ahead, a trusted family member or friend could help you with this.

- To report a death to Social Security office to cancel payments eg. pensions, contact the Bereavement Service, freephone: 0800 085 2463
- Home help organiser, district nurse, day care centre etc.
- Solicitor
- Bank / post office
- Building society / Credit Union
- Housing Executive - contact district office and / or landlord
- Credit card company
- Insurance and / or pension company and / or financial advisor
- Inland Revenue
- Mortgage company
- Schools
- Employer and trade union
- Car insurance company - if you are insured to drive the car under the deceased's name - you will cease to be insured
- Any hospital the person was attending
- Gas supplier
- Electricity company
- Telephone company, landline and mobile
- To stop direct mail go to The Bereavement Register www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk.



For help with probate and inheritance tax

Probate and inheritance tax helpline: 0300 123 1072

Northern Ireland Probate Registry

Royal Courts of Justice

Tel: (028) 9072 4678

Email: probate@courtsni.gov.uk

Things to return

- Contact district nurses for return of home nursing equipment, patient records, drugs etc.
- Contact occupational therapy department for return of wheelchairs and daily living equipment
(028) 9262 2111

Return the following with a note of explanation and the date of death. Keep a note of reference numbers of anything you send back.

- Registration documents of car - if a change of ownership has to be recorded*
- Passport to the passport office*
- Driving licence to the DVLNI office, Coleraine*
- Season tickets, membership cards - you may be able to claim a refund
- Library books and ticket

*Contact details can be found in the directory at the back of this booklet.



Grieving

Most people will experience bereavement at some time in their lives. Everyone reacts to loss and bereavement in different ways. You may also be surprised at the sorts of feelings and symptoms you experience.

People expect to feel sad and weepy after a death. Sometimes you may feel nothing or feel guilty and angry, which can be more difficult to cope with, especially if this is directed towards the person who has died.

It can be hard to accept loss. You may find yourself denying that the death has occurred and it is not unusual to think you have seen or heard the person. Many bereaved people feel strained and physically run down, finding it difficult to eat or sleep. You may experience despair and depression and find that you have lost all interest in living. You may feel there is no point in going on or that no one else could possibly experience what you are going through.

All these are natural reactions to bereavement and not a sign that you are 'going mad' or letting your friends and family down. Talking to a supportive, understanding listener can help. People can be embarrassed and unsure how to help; you may have to take the first step.

Grief is a very individual process and depends also on your personality, life experience and the relationship you had with the person who has died.



There are some simple and possibly obvious suggestions that people have found helpful:-

- Cry if you want to, don't bottle up feelings
- Try and talk about your thoughts and experiences to someone you know and trust
- Allow yourself time to grieve
- Accept help from others and don't be afraid to ask
- Don't let people persuade you to do things that you don't feel are right or before you are ready.

It is sometimes tempting to feel that life would be more bearable if you moved house or quickly disposed of possessions or refused to see people. This is part of a natural urge to avoid painful things.

Making changes after bereavement should generally not be rushed into but be part of a process of facing emotions and working through them to rebuild your life.

When you are ready, there will be a time to start taking up life afresh and perhaps doing new things. This is not being disloyal to the person who had died, as they will always be part of you.

Everyone is different in how they react to loss and your experience may not appear to follow this pattern. There is no right length of time for working through grief.

However, if you feel you need some more help, you could contact your GP, minister / priest / other spiritual adviser or one of the organisations listed at the back of this booklet.



Helping children after someone dies

Each child will respond differently when someone dies. It is important to talk honestly to them about the death, so they know what has happened. They can then understand why everyone is upset, otherwise they may feel confused or excluded.

The language you use is important. Give the facts in simple everyday language because expressions such as 'granny has gone away' or 'fallen asleep' can confuse a child. Let them grieve in their own way. Don't force anything but spend time with them, when they can ask questions or talk about what has happened.

Don't be afraid to involve children in what happens. Seeing the body and attending the funeral can help children understand that the person they knew and loved is gone. Asking them beforehand what they want to do and what they think will happen can help correct their misconceptions. Sometimes it is helpful to encourage a child to write a letter or draw a picture to place with the person who has died. This involves the young person and can also prove to be a positive way of saying goodbye.

Children also need ways to remember the person who has died:-

- Sharing stories together
- Looking at photos
- Keeping and displaying mementos.

These can all be ways to keep children's memories alive and help them work through their grief.

When children are grieving they may be moody, have difficulty concentrating, have a disturbed sleep pattern, become quiet and withdrawn or start behaving like a younger child. It may be helpful to speak to their teacher and youth leader and tell them what has happened. For most children these behaviours will pass in time. But if you are worried or they still seem to be struggling for more than a few months, do ask your GP for help or contact one of the organisations listed at the back of this booklet.



Directory of useful information

Local Registrar's Offices

Ards Registration Office

2 Church Street

Newtownards, BT23 4AO

Tel: (028) 9182 4003

Office hours: 9.00am - 12noon & 2.00pm - 4.00pm

North Down Registration Office

Town Hall

Bangor, BT20 4BT

Tel: (028) 9127 8003

Office hours: 9.00am - 12noon & 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Belfast Registration Office

City Hall

Belfast, BT1 5GS

Tel: (028) 9027 0274

Office hours: 9.30am - 4.30pm (Friday 4.00pm) not closed for lunch

Lisburn Registration Office

Island Civic Centre

The Island

Lisburn, BT27 4RL

Tel: (028) 9250 9263

Office hours: 9.00am - 12.45pm & 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Castlereagh Registration Office

Bradford Court

Upper Galwally

Belfast, BT8 6RB

Tel: (028) 9049 4520

Office hours: 9.30am - 12.30pm & 2.00pm - 4.30pm (Friday 4.00pm)

Banbridge Registration Office

Civic Building

Downshire Road

Banbridge, BT32 3JY

Tel: (028) 4066 0614

By appointment only

Down Registration Office

Downshire Civic Centre

Ardglass Road

Downpatrick, BT30 6GQ

Tel: (028) 4461 0800

Office hours: 9.30am - 12.30pm & 2.00pm - 4.00pm



Funeral Directors

Details of local Funeral Directors can be found in the yellow pages or alternatively you can visit the following websites:-

National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF)
www.saif.org.uk

or

National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)
www.nafd.org.uk

Most people use a funeral director but you do not have to. Should you want help with arranging a funeral yourself, the Natural Death Centre have published advice.

Contact: The Natural Death Centre
 In The Hill House
 Watley Lane
 Twyford
 Winchester
 SO21 1QX

 Tel: 01962 712 690

 www.naturaldeath.org.uk



Bereavement organisations

CRUSE Bereavement Care

NI Regional Office
Prince Regent Commercial Centre
6 Prince Regent Road
Belfast, BT5 6QR
Tel: (028) 9079 2419
Email: northern.ireland@cruse.org.uk

Remember Our Child at
CRUSE Bereavement Care
Tel: (028) 9079 2419

The Compassionate Friends

Self support group after loss of a child
Helpline: (028) 9265 2550
www.tcf.org.uk

WAVE Trauma Centre Bereavement from Violence

Rathvarna
5 Chichester Park South
Belfast, BT15 5DU
Tel: (028) 9077 9922

Samaritans

Tel: 08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org

Victim Support Northern Ireland

Tel: (028) 9024 3133
www.victimsupportni.co.uk

Family Trauma Centre

1 Wellington Park
Belfast, BT9 6DJ
Tel: (028) 9504 2828

Bereavement services are provided for families who have had contact with:-

NI Hospice

74 Somerton Road
Belfast, BT15 3LH
Tel: (028) 9078 1836

Marie Curie Hospice

Kensington Road
Belfast, BT5 6NF
Tel: (028) 9088 2000



Bereavement organisations supporting children

Barnardo's Child Bereavement Service

23 Windsor Avenue
Belfast, BT9 6EE
Tel: (028) 9066 8333

CRUSE, Child Bereavement Service

NI Regional Office
Prince Regent Commercial Centre
6 Prince Regent Road
Belfast, BT5 6QR
Tel: (028) 9079 2419
Interactive website for young people (12 - 18 years):-
www.rd4u.org.uk

Other useful websites:-

Childhood Bereavement Network
www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Winston's Wish
www.winstonswish.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK
www.childbereavementuk.org

Bereavement services are provided for children whose family have been patients of:-

NI Hospice

74 Somerton Road
Belfast, BT15 3LH
Tel: (028) 9078 1836

Marie Curie Hospice

Kensington Road
Belfast, BT5 6NF
Tel: (028) 9088 2000



Other useful contacts

Bereavement Service

Freephone: 0800 085 2463

To report a death to Social Security Agency and obtain benefit eligibility check.

Inland Revenue

For information Bereavement helpline: 0300 200 3300

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland

County Hall

Coleraine, BT51 3TB

Tel: 0845 402 4000

Belfast Passport Office

Law Society House

90 - 106 Victoria House

Belfast, BT1 3GN

Tel: 0300 222 0000

Citizens Advice Bureau

(can give advice on bereavement benefits)

Tel: 0300 1233 233

Age NI

Tel: 0808 808 7575



Within the South Eastern HSC Trust we are keen to gain a better understanding of patients and relatives experiences. If you wish to make a comment regarding any aspect of the care provided by the Trust, please forward your comments to:-

Trust Bereavement Co-ordinator

Home 3

Ulster Hospital

Dundonald

Belfast

BT16 1RH

Tel: (028) 9055 3282

If you are unhappy about any aspects of the care provided and wish to make a complaint, please contact:-

Complaints/Patients Liaison Manager

Lough House

Ards Hospital

Church Street

Newtownards

BT23 4AS

Tel: (028) 9056 1427

Email: complaints@setrust.hscni.net





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