



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

A practical guide for the recently bereaved

Issued by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

We are sorry that you have experienced the loss of someone close to you and we would like to express our sincere sympathy to you and your family at this time.

This booklet aims to provide some practical advice to help you during the early days of your bereavement.

Please ask us if you are unsure about anything. We are always pleased to help you.

We know that people often have questions and concerns after someone has died. We want to answer these and look into any concerns. Please talk to the staff on the ward or department. If you aren't sure who to talk to, or would prefer to talk to someone separate to those who have been providing care, please contact a bereavement officer or PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) via telephone: 0800 0320202 or email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk.

When a death occurs in hospital

You will be supported by the ward team in the initial period following the death of the person close to you.

If you wish you can spend some time with the person who has died, call family/friends and have a faith leader or hospital chaplain visit. Please let the ward team know if there are any specific religious, cultural or spiritual requirements and they will ensure these are met as much as possible.

If the person has died on a ward you may be asked if you would like to take part in their washing and personal care.

You may also be asked:

- if you want to remove personal items such as jewellery, but this is not essential and if wished can be done at a later time.

- if the person who has died is being cremated and what their most recent occupation was; this is for the paperwork that the medical team who was caring for the person who has died needs to complete.

If the medical team caring for the person who has died are certain of the cause of death, and this does not require liaison with the coroner's office, you will be asked to return to the hospital to collect the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) within the following 24-48 hours.

If the cause of death is uncertain or due to a cause which requires liaison with the Coroner's office the ward team caring for the person who has died will inform you of this.

When a death occurs at home

When someone dies at home, and their death is anticipated, your first contact will be the district nursing service, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, they will be able to verify the death.

If you wish you can spend some time with the person who has died, call family/friends and have a faith leader visit.

The nursing team may ask you if you would like to take part in the washing/personal care of the person who has died.

You may be asked:

- if you want to remove personal items such as jewellery, but this is not essential and if wished can be done at a later time.
- if the person who has died is to be cremated and what their most recent occupation was; this is for the paperwork that the medical team who was caring for the person who has died needs to complete.

If the GP team caring for the person who has died is able to they will issue the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) within the following 24-72 hours.

If the cause of death is uncertain or due to a cause which requires liaison with the coroner's office the GP team caring for the person who has died will inform you of this.

Please be aware that when a death occurs out of hours the police act on behalf of the coroner and may attend the property at the time of death.

Paying your last respects - hospital mortuary viewing room

If your relative has been transferred to a hospital mortuary and you wish to visit them you need to make an appointment.

Please contact us on 0344 811 8111 and ask to speak to the ward or department who can arrange this on your behalf, alternatively you can speak directly with the mortuary reception to book your appointment.

Appointments can usually be arranged Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 4.00pm and each appointment is for 30 minutes, you can request a longer appointment if you wish.

We understand that occasionally exceptional circumstances will arise when people need to view outside of these hours and we will try to make arrangements for you. The viewings will be at the discretion of the on-call mortuary technician and depending where they are located at the time. There may be a delay due to travelling time between hospital sites.

From the time of death to the funeral – death in hospital

A member of staff will give you guidance on what you should do next.

They may ask you to return to the hospital to collect any personal effects and a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) in the following 48 hours.

If the person who has died is going to have a coroner's review the coroner's officer will be in touch to discuss what happens next. The coroner will issue the appropriate paperwork for the death to be registered.

Bereavement officers, based at The Northumbria, Hexham, North Tyneside and Wansbeck general hospitals, are able to offer you some assistance if you require.

You can contact them directly via telephone:

The Northumbria, Cramlington	0191 60272271
Hexham	01434 655307
North Tyneside	0191 2932744
Wansbeck	01670 529399

From the time of death to the funeral – death at home

The district nursing team and GP involved in the care of the person who has died will give you guidance on what you should do next.

Any equipment that has been used by the person who has died will be collected; this can be arranged by the district nurses.

The GP may ask you to attend the surgery to collect the death certificate in the following 72 hours.

If the person who has died is going to have a coroner's review the coroner's officer will be in touch to discuss what happens next.

When might a death be referred to the coroner?

Occasionally deaths in hospital or at home are referred to the coroner.

This may be because:

- The cause of death is unknown.
- The person's death was violent or unnatural.
- The person's death was sudden and unexplained.
- The person who died was not visited by a medical practitioner during their final illness.
- The medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) is not available.
- The person was admitted to hospital and dies within 24 hours.
- The person who died was not seen by the doctor who signed the MCCD within the 14 days before death or after they died.
- The person's death occurred during an operation or before the person came out of anaesthetic.
- The MCCD suggests the death may have been caused by an industrial disease or industrial poisoning.

The coroner may decide that the cause of death is clear. In this case:

- The doctor signs a medical certificate.
- You take the MCCD to the registrar.

A doctor or other member of staff will inform you if a referral has been made to the coroner.

Not all deaths reported to the coroner will require an investigation.

If a post mortem examination is required by the coroner, the coroner will liaise with the next of kin and inform you of the results, if any, as soon as possible.

Once cause of death has been determined by the coroner, they will send a MCCD to the registrar of deaths, so that the death can be registered.

Funeral arrangements

You can contact a funeral director of your choice at any time. They will contact the hospital to make the necessary arrangements in accordance with your wishes.

It may be helpful to think about preferences regarding the funeral service, for example hymns, flowers, religious/non-religious ceremony prior to meeting with the funeral director.

Book of remembrance

At The Northumbria, North Tyneside, Hexham and Wansbeck general hospitals there are books of remembrance. These books are permanently open.

The pages are turned regularly so that you are able to remember your relative each year on the anniversary of their death. If you would like to have a name entered in the book, there is no charge for this, please contact the chaplaincy department: chaplaincy@nhct.nhs.uk or via the hospital switchboard 0344 811 8111.

Registration of death

All deaths must be registered with the registrar usually within five days of the death. You can register the death at the most convenient registrar for you in England and Wales.

We advise registering the death closest to where the person died, this is because if you register in the area where the death took place you will be given the documents you need on the day.

If you register elsewhere they will note the information needed for the registration and will liaise with the registrar in the area where your relative died. This may take some time.

You will need to make an appointment to register the death.

Northumberland Office: 0345 600 6400 press option: 7.

More information is available on the website:

www.northumberland.gov.uk

North Tyneside Office: 0191 643 6164. More information is

available on the website: my.northynteside.gov.uk

It is very difficult to let everyone know about the death of someone close to you. Friends and family will be your priority, but there are other people, companies and other parties who may need to be informed of the death in due course. The registrar can also provide you with details of the 'Tell Us Once' service which informs central government and local authorities of a death.

There will be a charge for each certificate issued. We advise you request at least two copies of the death certificate. This will enable you to keep a copy and have a copy to provide for insurances, pension claims or other financial matters.

Who should register a death?

- A relative should register the death.
- If a relative cannot register the death, you can do it if you were there at the time of death, are an administrator from the hospital (if the person died in hospital), or you are in charge of making funeral arrangements.

What you need to do:

- Take the medical certificate showing the cause of death, signed by a doctor, with you.

If available, but don't worry if not, also take the person's:

- birth certificate
- Council tax bill
- driving licence
- marriage or civil partnership certificate
- NHS medical card
- passport
- proof of address, eg utility bill

You'll need to tell the registrar:

- the person's full name at the time of death
- any names previously used, eg maiden name
- the person's date and place of birth
- their last address
- their occupation
- the full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving or late spouse or civil partner
- whether they were getting a State Pension or any other benefits

You should also take supporting documents that show your name and address, eg a utility bill, but you can still register a death without them.

When you register a death the registrar will give you:

- a Certificate for Burial or Cremation, the 'green form', which gives permission for burial or an application for cremation
- a Certificate of Registration of Death (form BD8) - you may need to fill this out and return it if the person was getting a State Pension or benefits. The form will come with a pre-paid envelope so you know where to send it

You can buy extra death certificates - these will be needed for sorting out the person's affairs.

Contact details for further information and support:

Bereavement offices

Hexham 01434 655307

North Tyneside 0191 2932744

Wansbeck 01670 529399

The Northumbria, Cramlington 0191 6072271

Cashier (property)

Hexham 01434 655681

North Tyneside 0191 2932742

Wansbeck 01670 529940

The Northumbria, Cramlington 0191 6072078

Chaplains

Hexham 01434 655075

North Tyneside 0191 2934268

Wansbeck 01670 529690

The Northumbria, Cramlington 0191 6072270

Coroners' offices

North Northumberland 01661 861239 or
01661 861243

South and West Northumberland 01661 861654

North Tyneside 01661 861636 or 01661 861663 or 01661614

Other organisations which offer support include:

The Macmillan Support Services provides emotional and social support to adults following any bereavement. To find out more information please contact the office on: North Tyneside 0191 2934377 or Northumberland 01670 855533.

Citizens Advice Bureau Advice line: 03444 111 444

Samaritans

Offer a confidential 24 hour emotional support service **Whatever you're going through, call free any time, from any phone on 116 123.**

Cruse Bereavement Care National Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Offers support after the death of someone close. The helpline is open Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, until 8pm.

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

GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death>

GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/death-spouse-benefits-tax-pension>

Age UK

Information and advice for older people.

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

National information line: 0800 055 6112

SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide) Helpline – open 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday, 0300 111 5065

<http://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

Dying Matters

<https://www.dyingmatters.org/page/dealing-sudden-or-violent-death>

Dying Matters

<https://www.dyingmatters.org/overview/need-support>

Support for Young People:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/children>

Marie Curie <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/bereaved-family-friends/supporting-grieving-child/grief-affect-child>

Support and advice for people caring for child who has experienced a bereavement.

Child Bereavement UK

Offers support and resources for families where a child or young person has died.

Support team tel: 08000288840 open 9.00 to 5.00 Monday to Friday. email: support@childbereavementuk.org

Natural Death Centre Charity: <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/>

Help, support, advice and guidance for planning a funeral

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: **01670 511098**

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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