



St Peter's  
Hospice

# Coping with a death

A guide to the days

following a bereavement

[stpetershospice.org](http://stpetershospice.org)



**The staff at St Peter's Hospice wish to express their sincere sympathy to you and your family at this time.**

We understand that you may have important personal and cultural requests about the care of your loved one, please let a member of the St Peter's Hospice team know and we will do our best to help in any way we are able.

We know that the information in this booklet can look daunting but please do not worry. Take time to share this information with a trusted family member or friend. This booklet will help you when you have the quiet time and space to read through it.

Bereavement support is available to relatives or very close friends of patients who have died whilst under the care of St Peter's Hospice. Please see page 21 for further information on how to access it.

# Contents

This guide is divided into two parts.

The first part will lead you through the immediate practical matters.

The second part contains information which you may find useful during the coming weeks.

<b>What should I do now?</b>	<b>4</b>
Find support	4
Contacting a funeral director and begin making arrangements	5
Tissue donation	8
Obtaining the Medical Certificate	9
The Medical Examiner's Office	11
Who can Register a death?	12
The Registrar's Office	14
Organisations you need to contact	16
People you might need to inform	18
<b>Grief and other difficult feelings</b>	<b>20</b>
Support offered by St Peter's Hospice	20
Other help and support available	20
<b>Remembering your loved one</b>	<b>24</b>

## What should I do now?

### Find support

In the first few days after a death, it is often the responsibility of the person who is most distressed to make the necessary practical arrangements.

It can be helpful to have a friend or relative to help you with these arrangements.

A funeral director will also be able to offer you support and guidance.

### This booklet

The guidance in this booklet is designed to help you with the practical steps you will need to take.

Each staff member of the hospice team is committed to doing all they can to help you through this time.

Our sincere condolences go out to you.

**Throughout this booklet, the term 'your loved one' is used to refer to the member of the family or friend who has died.**



# Contacting a funeral director and begin making arrangements

Funeral directors can manage funeral arrangements and give advice and support.

Before going ahead with any arrangements, it is advisable to check whether the deceased person left a Will and any instructions for the funeral.

If you are not the Next of Kin (nearest relative) or executor, you should check with the Next of Kin or executor that you have the authority to proceed.

Many people choose to use a professional funeral director, but some people prefer to make their own arrangements as they consider this to be more personal and less expensive.

## **Factors that may affect your choice of funeral director include**

- location of the firm's premises
- whether they belong to a trade association and the range of services provided
- cost
- the way you are treated by the staff ownership - whether they are a large or small firm, a family business or company
- advice or a recommendation from family or friends.

## **Most funeral directors are members of one of 2 trade associations:**

- National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)
- Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF)

**Most people would probably require the funeral director to provide the following services as a minimum:**

- make all necessary arrangements provide appropriate staff
- provide a suitable coffin
- transfer your loved one from the place of death to the funeral director's premises
- care for your loved one prior to the funeral
- provide a hearse to the nearest cemetery or crematorium
- arrange for burial or cremation as appropriate.

Embalming, viewing of your loved one, or providing a limousine for mourners are optional extras. Discuss these fully with your funeral director and make sure you receive an itemised written quotation.

Funeral costs for the same services may vary considerably from one funeral director to another. It is advisable to get more than one quote to compare costs and services. Funeral directors should provide detailed price lists for you to take away.

Funeral directors must provide you with a price list on request and cannot exceed any written estimate they give you without your permission.

Disbursements are fees paid to others, i.e., for doctor's certificates, a minister, newspaper announcements, flowers, and crematorium fees. Ask the funeral director for a written quotation detailing all these fees.

**In addition, it should be remembered:**

- When you arrange a funeral, you are responsible for paying the bill.
- Funeral payments are normally recoverable from the deceased person's estate.

- Check that the price includes what you require and whether there are any additional costs that will be added on.

If you receive certain benefits from the Department of Work and Pensions you may be entitled to some assistance towards the funeral expenses of your loved one. For further information please contact the nearest Job Centre Plus.

A bereavement payment or bereavement allowance may be made in certain circumstances if you are the partner or spouse of someone who died whilst employed. These are dependent upon National Insurance contributions and other conditions. Please contact Jobcentre Plus to find out more.

Hospice staff are unable to make recommendations of funeral directors, but friends, family or clergy may be able to do so. The funding of this booklet, however, is supported by local funeral directors, so their contact numbers are available at the back of this booklet.



## Tissue donation

Many people can be considered for tissue donation after death. Your loved one may have carried an organ donor card, be on the organ donor register or may have discussed donation with you during their lifetime.

To ensure that tissue transplants are as successful as possible, organs can only be donated in certain circumstances:

- eyes for corneal transplantation can be donated up to 24 hours after death
- heart valves can be donated up to 48 hours after death.

Where your loved one has left an advance directive to donate tissues, or should you choose to enable this, please be assured that your loved one will be cared for with dignity and respect and that their appearance will be restored following any procedure. Tissue donation will not delay any funeral plans.

Please remember, tissue donation is entirely voluntary. If you would like further information or if you wish to discuss any issues you may have, please contact:

**organdonation@nhs.uk** or call **0300 123 2323**

If you prefer, you may ask a Doctor, Nurse or your Community Nurse Specialist to contact the appropriate person on your behalf.



# Obtaining the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)

## About the certificate

The Medical Certificate is an important legal document, showing the cause of death, which must be signed by the Doctor who was caring for your loved one when they died. The medical certificate is sometimes referred to as MCCD (Medical Certificate of Cause of Death).

## Obtaining the medical certificate for deaths within the Inpatient Unit (IPU)

For a death that has taken place in St Peter's Hospice, the current process is that the medical certificate and cremation form (if required) should be completed by the medical team within two working days following the death and is sent electronically to the registrar office by St Peter's Hospice.

As we embrace the Medical Examiner Service, from April 2024, the process will change, and the medical certificate will be sent electronically to the registrar's office by Medical Examiner Officers who will contact you to advise when you can book an appointment with the registrar office to register the death of your loved one and collect documentation. If you have any questions regarding the cause of death, you will be able to discuss this with the Medical Examiner Officers.

On the Inpatient unit (IPU), notification of the death should be made by the medical team to the Medical Examiner Service as soon as possible. If there is a particular need for paperwork to be completed sooner, please do not hesitate to make the IPU team aware.

## **Obtaining the medical certificate for deaths within the community**

For a death that has taken place in the community, the current process is the medical certificate and cremation form (if required) will be sent electronically to the registrar office by either the deceased person's GP (or a Doctor who has seen your loved one within 28 days prior to death). You will receive communications via telephone advising you when the paperwork has been completed and where you can collect it from.

As we embrace the Medical Examiner Service, from April 2024, the process will change and the medical certificate will be sent electronically to the registrar's office by Medical Examiner Officers who will contact you to advise when you can book an appointment with the registrar office to register the death of your loved one and collect documentation. Please note, Cremation forms will become obsolete with the introduction of the Medical Examiner Service as a new MCCD will take its place.

If you have any questions regarding the cause of death, you will be able to discuss this with the Medical Examiner Officers.

If you have any questions regarding the cause of death, please speak to your loved ones GP or the Medical Examiner Officers when they make contact with you.

In some cases, there may be a delay in issuing the certificate should the death need to be referred to the coroner, or if the Doctor caring for your loved one is not immediately available. Any delay in receiving the certificate will not prevent you from making provisional funeral arrangements with a funeral director. If the death is referred to the coroner, please notify your funeral director and follow their advice.

# The Medical Examiner's Office

## About the Medical Examiners

The implementation of the statutory national Medical Examiner (ME) system will be coming to all local practices and community bedded units from 2024. The ME system has been operating in our acute trusts since the end of 2020, with 100% scrutiny of adult hospital deaths since 2021.

## Who are Medical Examiners?

Medical Examiners (MEs) are senior Doctors from primary and secondary care who provide independent scrutiny of all non-coronial deaths. They are trained via the Royal College of Pathologists in the legal and clinical elements of the death certification process. MEs are supported by a team of Medical Examiner's Officers (MEOs).

Prior to the introduction of Medical Examiners, the death certification process in England and Wales had remained largely unchanged for over 50 years. The need for reforms whereby all deaths would be subject to either an ME's scrutiny or a Coroner's investigation has been highlighted in several reports and inquiries including the Shipman Inquiry, Report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust Public Inquiry and the Morecambe Bay Investigation Report.

## What do Medical Examiners do?

- Undertake a proportionate review of the medical records
- Agree on the proposed cause of death with the Doctor completing the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD)
- Review the care offered to the deceased person prior to their death
- Provide an opportunity to the bereaved to ask any questions/ highlight any concerns regarding the deceased person's care
- Contribute to local clinical governance procedures by identifying potential learning.

# Who can register a death?

## People legally allowed to register the death:

- a relative
- a person present at the death
- an official from the Hospice or care home
- the person making the arrangements with the funeral director.

## Registering the Death

Unless a post-mortem is required, the death should be registered within five days at the registrar's office in the area where the death occurred.

Once the Medical certificate of Death has been issued and sent electronically to the registrar, you will need to make an appointment to register the death with the registrars.

The entire process will be completed in person at the Registrar's office at a registrar's office for the area where the death happened.

## Documents and information you will need

### You will need to tell the registrar:

- the date and place of death
- the person's full name at time of death
- any names previously used, including maiden surname the person's date and place of birth (town and county if born in the UK and country if born abroad)
- their usual address their occupation
- the full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving spouse or civil partner
- whether they were receiving a state pension or any other state benefit.

## **When registering a death, you will need to take (if available):**

- birth certificate or passport
- marriage/civil partnership certificates
- NHS medical card

## **Documents you will receive**

### **When you register the death, you will receive the following:**

- a Certificate for Burial or Cremation (called the 'green form'), giving permission for the body of your loved one to be buried or for an application for cremation to be made
- A Certificate for the Department of Work and Pensions Benefit (form BD8) – you may need to fill this out and return it if your loved one was receiving a state pension or benefits
- There is an opportunity to purchase death certificates – these will be needed for sorting out your loved one's affairs with the bank, insurance companies, private pensions etc
- A unique reference number for Tell us Once (please see the Tell Us Once section of this booklet).

Where a post-mortem is required, the coroner will issue any necessary documents as quickly as possible afterwards.

If there are any errors in a death record, details can be changed or added. Ideally the person who registered the death should arrange this with the office where the death was registered. You may be asked to provide documentary evidence to prove an error was made.

Once you have registered the death you can inform your chosen funeral director that the death is registered so that arrangements can now proceed.

If the death has been referred to the coroner, you will not be able to register the death until the registrar has received a notification from the coroner's office.

## The registrar's office

### For deaths occurring in Bristol

This can be done by contacting the Bristol Register Office on **0117 922 2800** between the hours of 08.30 - 18.00 to arrange an appointment at either of the centres below. Alternatively, you can book an appointment online at: [www.bristol.gov.uk/death](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/death)

Please be aware that Bristol City Council operates an appointment system for both venues:

#### 1. Bristol Register Office

**The Old Council House, Corn Street, Bristol BS1 1JG**

Opening hours for appointments:

Monday – Friday 09.00 - 16:00

(Parking is difficult)

#### 2. Southmead Hospital

**The Brunel Building, Bristol BS10 5NB**

Opening hours for appointments:

Monday - Friday 09.30 – 16.00

### For deaths occurring in South Gloucestershire

This can be done by contacting South Gloucestershire Registration Service on **01454 863 140** between the hours of 08.45 - 17.00.

To arrange an appointment at either of the centres on the following page. Please be aware that South Gloucestershire operates an appointment system for both venues:

#### 1. Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood

Opening hours for appointments:

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 09.30 - 13.00

13.45 - 15.45





# Organisations you need to contact

## Tell us Once

You will need to report the death to various organisations and government departments. GOV.UK runs a service called Tell us Once, which will help you to contact these. In doing so you will not have to pay for extra death certificates for each organization they contact. There is a cost in providing the certificate to organisations who are not contacted by Tell us Once.

If you wish to use this service, inform the registrar when you attend the register office, and the options will be explained to you. The registrar will show you what to do and this is a service many people find invaluable. You will be able to access this service by telephone or online once you have registered the death.

If you choose not to use the Tell us Once service, you will need to report the death to various organisations and government departments.

The following are organisations which may be appropriate to notify:

## Local Councils

- Housing Benefit office
- Council Tax
- Collection of payment for council services
- Libraries
- Electoral Services
- Blue Badges
- Adult Services
- Childrens Services
- Council Housing

## **Department for Work and Pensions**

- Pension, Disability and Carer's Services
- Job centre Plus
- Overseas Health Team

## **Revenue and Customs**

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit
- Personal Taxation

## **Identity and Passport Service**

- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
- Ministry of Defense
- Service Personnel and Veterans Agency
- War Pensions Scheme



## People you might need to inform

Type	Informed	Notes
Family		
Friends		
Healthcare providers, i.e., optician, dentist, GP		
Bank or building society, credit card providers		
Premium bonds, long term savings companies (ISAs)		
Anyone holding money for the deceased person		
Social Services such as home help or care		
Previous / current place of work (occupational pension), trade unions		
Executor of the estate (Will)		
Insurance companies (Car, home, Life insurance)		
Residential or nursing home		

Type	Informed	Notes
Landlord or housing agency		
Mortgage company		
Utility companies (water, electric, gas, phone, internet, TV license)		
Hire purchase companies		
Post Office (to redirect mail)		
Cancel any upcoming payments		
Transport (to day centres or clubs)		
Deliveries (milk, food boxes, newspapers)		
Return of any borrowed equipment (medical or social)		
Religious organisations (faith leaders)		
Stop any junk mail		

## **Grief and other difficult feelings**

You are probably reading this leaflet because someone close to you has died recently. Whoever has died, your loss is unique to you, and you will cope with it in your own way. Although bereavement is a highly personal experience, many people go through a range of reactions and emotions when someone they are close to dies. Realising that these feelings are quite normal may help.

### **Support offered by St Peter's Hospice**

Bereavement support is available to relatives, including children and close friends of patients who have been under the care of St Peter's Hospice. We offer:

- information
- 1:1 support with trained volunteers access to group support
- monthly drop-in

If you would like to access any of this support, please phone **0117 915 9454** to make an initial appointment.

We will need to ask the following information in order to register you on our system:

- your name
- your address and contact number your date of birth.
- the name of your loved one

### **Other help and support available**

**GOV.UK – What to do when someone dies**

**[www.gov.uk/after-a-death/overview](http://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/overview)**

For practical advice of what you need to do following the death of a loved one.



**GOV.UK – Get help with funeral costs**  
**[www.gov.uk/funeral-payments](http://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments)**

For information regarding help towards funeral costs.

**Age UK**

England Tel: **0117 929 7537**

Web: **[www.ageuk.org.uk/bristol](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/bristol)**

Age UK is a national network of groups providing services for older people with companionship, support, and signposting.

**Bereavement Advice Centre**

Helpline: **0800 634 9494**

Web: **[www.bereavementadvice.org](http://www.bereavementadvice.org)**

The Bereavement Advice Centre offers practical advice on what to do when someone dies.

**Citizens Advice Bureau**

Look in your phone book to find your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau, or go to their website: **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

**The Compassionate Friends**

**53 North Street, Bristol BS3 1EN**

Helpline: **0845 120 3785**

Web: **[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)**

The Compassionate Friends is a nationwide self-help organisation. Parents who have been bereaved themselves offer friendship and support to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and their families. They offer a telephone helpline and online forum.

## **Cruse Bereavement Care**

**PO Box 800, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1RG**

**Helpline: 0808 808 1677**

**Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)**

**Web: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)**

Cruse Bereavement Care offers free information, advice, and support to bereaved people. Cruse runs a helpline, and can supply a wide range of books, leaflets, and a newsletter for bereaved people.

## **Facing Bereavement**

**Web: [www.facingbereavement.co.uk](http://www.facingbereavement.co.uk)**

Facing Bereavement contains articles offering advice and guidance on facing and dealing with bereavement.

## **Institute of Civil Funerals**

**Tel: 01480 861411**

**Web: [www.iocf.org.uk](http://www.iocf.org.uk)**

The Institute of Civil Funerals can help you find someone to conduct a non-religious funeral.

## **Natural Death Centre**

**Tel: 01962 712 690**

**Email: [contact@naturaldeath.org.uk](mailto:contact@naturaldeath.org.uk)**

**Web: [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)**

The Natural Death Centre offers advice on arranging a funeral with or without using a funeral director. They list natural burial gardens and advice on how to choose one.

## **Probate and Inheritance Tax**

**Tel: 0300 123 1072**

**Web: [www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate](http://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate)**

## **Samaritans**

Tel: **116 123 (freephone)**

Email: **jo@samaritans.org**

Web: **www.samaritans.org**

Samaritans are ordinary people from all walks of life who offer a sympathetic listening ear to despairing and suicidal people of all ages. Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; all calls are charged at the local rate.

## **Veterans UK (Service Personnel and Veterans Agency)**

**Norcross, Thornton Cleveleys, Blackpool FY5 3WP**

Tel: **0808 1914 218**

Web: **veterans-uk@med.uk**

Veterans UK can offer support and advice to war pensioners, war widows, their dependents, and carers.

## **War Widows Association of Great Britain**

**War Widows Assoc Mail**

**PO Box 29265**

**Dunfermline**

**KY12 2FH**

Tel: **0845 241 2189**

Email: **info@warwidowsassociation.org.uk**

Web: **www.warwidows.org.uk**

The War Widows Association gives advice, help and support to war widows and dependents.

## Remembering your loved one

Many people choose to focus on something like attending a remembrance event or raising money in memory of their loved one.

As a charity, making a gift to St Peter's Hospice in the name of your relative is a memorable and lasting way to celebrate their life as well as supporting our ongoing work. There are a number of ways you can do this:

**Donation envelopes** - asking friends and family to make a donation to St Peter's Hospice in lieu of flowers at a funeral. We can provide donation envelopes that can be given out at the funeral. They can either be collected by you or the funeral directors and sent back to us.

**Tribute Fund** - Set up an online Tribute Fund in memory of your relative. The online pages can be personalised to reflect your relative's passions and interests and you, your friends and family can leave messages, upload photos and make donations in their memory.

**Light up a Life** - Our Light up a Life events take place in December and invite families and friends to come together to remember and celebrate the lives of loved ones who are no longer with us. You can choose to have your relative's name inscribed in the Book of Remembrance, which is available to view after the service, or add a message of remembrance to our online Tree of Light.



For more information about the above or other fundraising events you can take part in to raise money in memory of your loved one, please call us on **01275 391 400** or email **[donations@stpetershospice.org](mailto:donations@stpetershospice.org)**

## Memory Tree

St Peter's Hospice Memory Tree is a beautiful and meaningful way to remember your relative.

Dedicate a leaf on our hand sculptured Memory Tree which nestles in the corner of the Hospice Garden.

The copper leaf will be engraved with the name of your relative and you will be invited to hang the leaf on the Memory Tree, making it a poignant and lasting way to remember them. Your leaf will stay on the tree for one year. At the end of the year, you will be given the opportunity to keep your leaf on the tree or have it returned to you to keep.

To find out more contact Becky Mitchell on **01275 391 455** or email **[donations@stpetershospice.org](mailto:donations@stpetershospice.org)**











# St Peter's Hospice

St Peter's Hospice,  
Charlton Road, Brentry, Bristol, BS10 6NL

Tel: 0117 915 9400

**[stpetershospice.org](http://stpetershospice.org)**

Registered Charity No. 269177