Information for relatives and carers following bereavement

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other format or language please contact us quoting the leaflet code (CTPALS055) and the language or format you require.

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Thomas Drive
Liverpool
Merseyside
L14 3PE
Telephone: 0151-228 1616
www.lhch.nhs.uk
Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Services Department 0151 228 1616
Customer Care Team 0151 600 1257

Local Government Organisations
Coroner’s Office 0151 233 4700
Register Office 0151 233 3004

Support Organisations
Cruse Bereavement Care 0844 477 9490
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

The Samaritans 0845 909 090
www.samaritans.org

Liverpool Bereavement Services 0151 708 6706
25 Hope Street
Liverpool L1 9BQ

St Helens Bereavement Services 01744 451793
INFORMATION FOR RELATIVES AND CARERS FOLLOWING BEREAVEMENT

Our Sympathy
The Trust Management and staff at the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital wish to express their sympathy to you, your family and friends at this sad and difficult time. We would like to help you in any way we can.

Introduction
When someone dies there are many decisions and arrangements to be made. This bereavement booklet has been prepared to give you help and guidance about what to do. The arrangements that need to be made can be confusing, so please do not be afraid to ask if there is anything that you are unsure of as we will be pleased to help you in any way that we can.

The Patient Services Department or ward staff will also give you a booklet entitled ‘What to do after a death in England and Wales’ issued by the Benefits Agency which will give you more information.

Regardless of your religion or beliefs, you may wish to seek the support of a minister, priest or religious leader. The hospital chaplains will be happy to talk with you or put you in touch with a minister of your own faith. If you feel this would be helpful, please ask a member of staff to contact the Chaplain on duty.
Practical steps you will need to take following a Bereavement

- Contact the Patient Services Department to:
  - collect any clothing, cash and valuables
  - collect the Medical Certificate that shows the cause of death
- Register the death at a local register office
- Contact a funeral director to organise the funeral

These are explained in more detail throughout this leaflet.

**Things you may wish to consider doing:**

- You may wish to arrange a viewing of the deceased
- Inform people of the death or get someone to do this on your behalf
- You may wish to talk to someone who is not a relative or friend. Please see the back of this leaflet for contact details of support agencies
- Talk to the hospital Chaplain

**What to do first**

You should contact the Patient Services Department on **0151 600 1038** to arrange to collect the Medical Certificate and any clothing, cash and valuables.

The Patient Services Department is open Monday – Friday from 9.00 am – 4.00 pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

If the death has occurred after 4 pm on a Friday you will need to contact the Patient Services Department on the next working day.
Providing that there is not going to be a Coroner’s Investigation, the Patient Services Department will give you the following:

- A medical certificate that shows the cause of death
- A formal notice that states the doctor has signed the Medical Certificate
- General advice on how to register a death
- Further advice regarding any general queries
- Arrange an appointment for you at the local Register Office

**Post Mortem**

If the death was known to have been caused by a natural illness but the doctors wish to know more about the cause of death they may ask relatives for permission to carry out a post mortem examination. Post mortem examination can assist doctors in increasing medical knowledge and teaching.

- A hospital post mortem is not compulsory and you can refuse permission for this
- If you do decide to grant permission, you will be asked to sign a form
- A post mortem examination should not delay the funeral arrangements
As you establish clear and satisfactory memories of the past you begin to realise fully that your loved one will not come back and later you begin to feel that he or she is, in a special way, part of your life again.

Grief is a very individual process and we each react differently. So do not feel that you should necessarily experience the feelings exactly as described.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve and although the feelings of utter devastation do pass there is no time limit on it. Also remember that even with a family each member of the family will have a different relationship with the deceased person and will therefore have a different perspective on their loss. We all grieve and cope with our loss in varying ways. Try to understand this and be patient with one another, someone else may feel the same deep hurt as you but show their grief in a different way.

It is important that you have an opportunity to talk about what has happened and to share your emotions. You may find it easier to talk to complete strangers about what has happened – you may not.

If you feel you need to talk to someone sympathetic who is outside your immediate family or with other people who have been through a similar experience there are several organisations that will give this kind of support.

The Coroner
Either the doctor or the Registrar of Deaths may report a death to the coroner. There are a number of reasons why a death might be referred to the coroner, including if the death occurred:

- During a surgical operation
- Before recovery from an anaesthetic
- If the cause of death is unknown

The Coroner may arrange for a post mortem examination. The consent of the relatives is not needed, but they are entitled to be represented by a doctor.

Having established a cause of death the Coroner will then issue a Death Certificate.

Registering the Death
The death must be registered at the Register Office in the Registration District where it occurred.

The death needs to be registered within 5 working days unless the Coroner is investigating the circumstances relating to the death.

The Register Office for Liverpool is:
Liverpool Register Office
Cotton Exchange
Old Hall Street
Liverpool L3 9LQ
These feelings of guilt may need to be talked through many times before any peace of mind can be reached – this is part of the healing process.

Anger and aggression can also be expressions of grief. Anger at what has happened and the injustice of the loss, anger at the proper lack of understanding in others, anger at those who have allowed our love ones to die. The source of this anger is usually at death itself and our helplessness in the face of it. The person who died may become a focus for this anger, but because it wouldn’t be seemly to rage against the dead, the hostility is shifted to others – family, friends and hospital staff for instance.

Anger should not be bottled up; if it is it can gnaw away for years and rob you of your peace of mind. Try and work through your feelings with someone you can confide in, preferably someone not emotionally involved in your own loss.

Remembering and reliving the immediate past and then gradually more distant memories, is part of the yearning period of grief. Remembering is painful because it can bring back many sad memories, perhaps re-awakening the grief of former losses or periods of distress and unhappiness; but remembering is needed in healing, and can bring back happy memories too, which are greatly comforting. One effect of this remembering is that your relationship with the person who has died begins to change.

There is a map at the back of this booklet detailing the location.

To ensure that there is no unnecessary waiting time there is an appointments system for registering deaths. If an appointment has not been made for you by our Patient Services Department, you should telephone the Register Office direct at anytime to make an appointment on 0151 233 3004.

Appointments will be offered at the Register Office during the hours of:

- Monday to Thursday 10 am – 4.30 pm
- Friday 10.00 am – 3.15 pm

It is also possible to make a declaration to register a death before any Registrar in England and Wales. This will be posted to the Register Office for the district where the death took place. If you choose to do this there may be some delay in making the funeral arrangements and in receiving some documents.

Who can register the death?

- A relative of the deceased patient
- Someone who was present at the time of death
- The person making the funeral arrangements
Bereavement & Grief
You may wish to read the following information about bereavement and the grieving process or you may wish to return to it at a later time.

The loss of someone close to you is one of the most demanding and distressing situations that you will ever have to face. It is not always easy to come to terms with your emotions. Bereavement and our feelings of grief are highly personal and embracing and each person will experience it in their own individual way.

Grief is not a constant depression, but acute waves of severe loss and longing which in time may come less often.

Periods of sudden, anxious yearning can make us restless and moody. They come because, without being fully aware of it we are searching for the person we have lost. This can be distressing and bewildering for us because we cannot, in a physical sense, get back the person we love.

Another painful expression of grief is guilt. Most of us blame ourselves because with hindsight, we wish we could have done things differently – now there is no chance to put matters right nor any opportunity of ‘being forgiven’, we may even feel that we could have prevented or postponed the death if we had acted differently.

What happens at the Register office?
When you go to the registrar you should take:
- The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (given by the Patient Services Department)
- The deceased’s birth and marriage certificate, if available

The Registrar will give you two forms:

1) A green form which is the Certificate for Burial or Cremation which must be given to the funeral director who is arranging the funeral.

2) A white form which is the Certificate of Registration of Death, which must be sent to the Department of Social Security together with any benefit/allowance books. The white form is also needed if you are asking for help with funeral expenses from the social fund.

The Registrar does not automatically issue additional copies of the Death Certificate, but you may obtain additional ones for a small charge, or obtain one at a later date. This can be useful as some agencies request an original.

To Arrange a Viewing

Hospital Mortuary
Following a death the deceased patient is taken to the hospital mortuary. You may wish to attend the mortuary for a viewing. The Patient Services Department can arrange an appointment to visit the mortuary between the hours of 1.30pm – 4.30pm
Monday to Friday. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to visit outside of these hours by prior arrangement.

**Arranging the funeral and choosing a funeral director**

Family, friends or clergy may be able to suggest reputable funeral directors. Alternatively, most local funeral directors will be listed in the Yellow Pages.

A funeral director will help you make all the arrangements for the funeral and will usually provide the following services:

- Transfer of the deceased from the hospital mortuary to their chapel of rest
- Care for the deceased prior to the funeral
- Make all the necessary arrangements including arranging the burial or cremation
- Suggest a suitable coffin and hearse
- Optional extras such as providing a car for mourners during the funeral

Sometimes if the person who has died has been ill for a long time and the death was expected, they may have left specific requests or wishes regarding their funeral.

It is important that you do not confirm funeral arrangements until you are sure the death does not have to be reported to the Coroner, since this may affect the date when the funeral can be held.

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**Practical Do’s and Don’ts**

**DO** seek the practical help you need – You can get practical help from the funeral director, the family doctor, a solicitor, welfare officers and Human Resource Departments at work places, your minister of religion, social services department or a Citizen’s Advice Bureau.

In the hospital you can also speak to the ward sister, the hospital chaplain or the Customer Care Team.

**DO** allow close family and friends to give you the support and help you need.

**DO** contact an agency such as Cruse who can provide help when you feel the need to talk through any difficulties.

**DON’T** let family and friends hurry you into making decisions until you are ready – such as clearing out all of the deceased’s belongings before you are ready to tackle the task yourself.

**DON’T** move home while you are still grieving. You will need time to adjust to your changed circumstances.

**DON’T** try and hurry the healing process; take it at your own pace.
Who to inform about the death
You will probably want to inform relatives and friends about the death straight away. Other people who may also need to know could include the following:

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<tr>
<th>Who to inform</th>
<th>Informed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Family doctor</td>
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<td>Any other hospitals</td>
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<td>The benefits agency (pensions, benefits)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank or building society</td>
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<td>Social services (home helps)</td>
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<td>School, college or university</td>
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<td>Place of work</td>
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<td>Minister of Faith (Religious Leader)</td>
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<td>Solicitor</td>
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<td>Executors of the Estate (will)</td>
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<td>Insurance companies</td>
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<td>Inland Revenue</td>
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<td>Residential or nursing home</td>
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<td>Landlord or housing department</td>
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<td>Council tax offices</td>
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<td>Electricity, Gas, telephone, Water companies</td>
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<td>Post office to redirect mail</td>
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<td>DVLA Swansea</td>
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<td>Cancel any appointments</td>
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Chapel of Rest
When you have chosen a funeral director they will take the deceased to their chapel of rest. This usually happens within a couple of days of the death. You may wish to view the deceased at the chapel of rest and will need to contact the funeral director to make an appointment.

Paying for the funeral
If the deceased was on qualifying benefits the family may be able to obtain help towards the cost of the funeral from the social fund.

Qualifying benefits are:

- Income support
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Working Families’ Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Disabled Persons’ Tax Credit

You should discuss your claim with your funeral director and someone from your local Social Security Office. Please be aware that the DSS limit the amount of grant payable, and this may not always cover the full cost of the funeral.