

Guidance & Support for the Bereaved

Patient Information

Bereavement Services

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Introduction

This booklet is designed to provide practical advice and help during early days of bereavement.

Whilst in this hospital, your relative or friend was on:

Ward:

Under the care of:

Ward Manager Phone No:

May we offer our sympathy to you, your family and your friends during this very sad time. If you need help in any way, please do not hesitate to ask. If you wish, the Nurse in Charge can arrange for you to talk to the Mortuary Staff involved in the care of your loved one, after leaving the ward.

We hope this booklet is of some help to you during the next few days. It is designed to offer practical advice and guidance, about who can help and where further information can be obtained, explaining procedures such as registering a death and arranging a funeral. If you are not sure what to do, please ask for help or support from any of the following people: Bereavement Services Officer, Ward staff, Hospital Chaplains, your GP or Social Worker. Funeral Directors are also very helpful, and they will guide you as much as they can.

The days following bereavement can be very difficult, but there are formalities that must be dealt with promptly.

If you have any requests or concerns, please contact the following services.

- Mortuary Services Tel: 01942 822000.
(8:00am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 4:00pm Monday to Friday).
- Bereavement Services Tel: 01942 822524.
(10:00am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 4:00pm Monday to Friday).
- Medical Examiners Office, Officers Tel; 01942 773567 (enquiries only).
(10am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 4:00pm Monday to Friday)
- Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Team Tel: 01942 822324.
- Bereavement Liaison Specialist Nurse for Bereavement and Donor Support via Tel: 01942 773548 (answerphone facility).

Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care

Our Chaplains provide pastoral, spiritual and religious support, a listening ear and a safe space to be able to talk. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for people of all faiths and none. In an emergency, they can be paged via switchboard on 01942 244000.

If you would like to speak to a chaplain, please ask any member of staff to contact the Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Team. For non-urgent referrals, a message can be left on 01942 822324.

For ongoing support after a death, please contact the Chaplains to arrange an appointment on telephone: 01942 822324.

Tissue Donation

Many kinds of tissue can be donated after death including skin, tendons, bone, heart valves and eyes to help repair or rebuild the lives of thousands of severely injured people. Unlike organ donation, you don't need to die in a hospital intensive care unit or emergency department to donate tissue after death. Almost anyone can be considered for tissue donation, although donation needs to take place within 24 - 48 hours of death.

You may receive a telephone call from the tissue donation specialist nurse to discuss the subject of tissue donation, within a few hours of your relative's death.

If you would like further information, or would prefer not to discuss this option, please call 0800 432 0559 and leave a message. If, however, a patient has died in circumstances where organ donation may be possible, this option is always discussed with families at a hospital. If you want to be an organ donor, your family's support is needed for organ donation to go ahead.

What happens next?

- Bereavement services will contact you as soon as possible on the first working day following your bereavement; this will be to gather some basic information, which will be required by the Medical Examiner's Office.
- A member of the medical examiner team will contact the next of kin to help you understand the cause of death. They will go through the contents of the **Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)** with you and ask if you are in agreement. You will have an opportunity to ask further questions should you wish to do so.
- You may contact the Bereavement Service by ringing 01942 822524 after 10am on the next working day for any advice you may need.

Please do not attend the Bereavement office in person

- Discuss funeral arrangements with your relatives/friends. If there is to be a post-mortem examination, you should not set a date for the funeral until H M Coroner has issued the relevant paperwork.
- Any property/personal items belonging to your relative/friend should have been returned to you before you left the ward; if not, please contact the ward to arrange collection. Valuables such as jewellery and cash that have been handed over for safe-keeping can be collected from the General Office at Wigan Infirmary between 9am and 4pm (Monday to Friday); you will require identification to do this.

Information which may be helpful to you

Appointments

You may wish to use the chart below as a guide for appointment times you have made.

Appointment Information	Date of Appointment	Time	Done
Bereavement Services			
Bereavement Liaison Specialist Nurse			
Register Office			
Funeral Director			

Arranging to see your relative / friend

You are more likely to make the decision to see your relative / friend at the Funeral Directors Chapel of Rest.

The mortuary is in an individual building situated to the rear and left of the hospital and has one very simple viewing room (not a Chapel of Rest); this is used for both viewings and identifications - it provides private surroundings for immediate next of kin only who were unable to be present at the time of death.

Viewings are arranged strictly by appointment only, by contacting the Mortuary Service direct on 01942 822000 during working hours; viewings will only be arranged between Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) 1:00pm and 3:45pm and will be no longer than 15 minutes.

Friends and distant relatives are asked to pay their last respects at the Funeral Director's Chapel of Rest.

Medical Examiner's Office

The role of Medical Examiner is a nationwide system which has been developed recently within all Hospital Trusts in England and Wales. A Medical Examiner is an independent senior consultant/doctor working at the hospital to ensure the information contained on the MCCD is accurate and that referrals to the coroner are performed in a timely and appropriate manner.

The aim of the service is to:

- provide bereaved families with clear information, and give them the opportunity to raise concerns
- improve the quality/accuracy of MCCD
- ensure referrals to coroners are appropriate
- support local learning/improvement by identifying matters in need of clinical governance and related processes
- provide the public with greater safeguards through improved and consistent scrutiny of all non-coronial deaths, and support healthcare providers to improve care through better learning
- align with related systems such as the Learning from Deaths Framework and Universal Mortality Reviews.

You can find further information regarding the Medical Examiner Service on the trust web site.

Registering the death

The Bereavement Office at the hospital will send the MCCD electronically to the Registrars Team. They will also send the Registrars Team your name and contact details.

If the coroner has been involved, they will produce the relevant documentation and send it electronically to the Registrar Office. The coroner will also advise when they have done this.

Until the Registrars Team receive the MCCD or coroner documentation, they are unable to complete the registration or offer an appointment.

Once the Registrars Team have received all the relevant documentation, they will contact you by telephone to book you an appointment to attend the Registration Office to register the death. The Registrars Team will aim to contact you within one working day of receiving the MCCD or coroner documentation.

Please do not contact the Registrars Team, they will contact you.

Wigan and Leigh Register Office

Wigan and Leigh Register office have appointments available Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

To complete a death registration, you can attend:

- Wigan Life Centre
- Leigh Life Centre

Who can register a death?

- A relative of the deceased
- Someone present at the death
- The person making the funeral arrangements (not the Funeral Director)
- Please note if English is not your first language, you may prefer to have someone with you to help

More information on registering a death is available at www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Birth-Marriage-Deaths

Tell Us Once

As part of the telephone registration process, you will be offered the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) Tell Us Once service. This service will notify many different organisations that are signed up to the scheme making it easier and simpler to sort out the deceased person's affairs. If you do not wish to use this service, please advise the registrar on the day of your appointment. More information about the scheme, and any documents you may need to produce at the death registration appointment can be found on the Wigan Council website www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Births-Marriage-Deaths

How H M Coroner can become involved

If the death is referred to H M Coroner

In some instances, there is a legal requirement for the Doctor to refer a death to the H M Coroner. If you have any questions about a death being referred to H M Coroner, the Bereavement Service staff will discuss and explain the procedure in detail.

What does the coroner do?

A coroner makes enquiries into the deaths that are reported to them. It is their duty to find out the medical cause of death, if it is not known, and to enquire about the cause of death if it was due to violence or was otherwise unnatural. The coroner will instruct the doctor to issue a MCCD if there is a known natural cause of death or instruct a post mortem where a cause of death cannot be provided. If the post mortem provides a natural cause of death, the coroner will issue a MCCD; an inquest will be held where an unnatural cause of death

is provided, and interim paperwork will be issued so that a funeral may take place prior to the inquest.

Are all deaths reported to the coroner?

No. In most cases the deceased's own G.P, or hospital doctor who has been treating the deceased, is able to give a cause of death. Deaths are usually reported to the coroner by the police or by the hospital doctor who has been treating the deceased. A GP will also report an unexpected death to the coroner.

The death will be reported to the coroner if it has resulted from or occurred in any of these circumstances:

- The cause of death is not known or is uncertain.
- The deceased was not attended by a doctor during their last illness.
- The deceased has been in hospital for less than 24 hours.
- The Doctor treating the deceased had not seen them either after death or in the 14 days prior to their death.
- The death occurred whilst a patient was undergoing an operation, did not recover from the anaesthetic, or has died within 30 days of the procedure.
- The death was caused by an industrial disease.
- The death was violent, unnatural, or occurred under suspicious circumstances.
- The death of any baby or child under the age of 18.
- The death is drug or alcohol related.

The coroner may be the only person who can certify the cause of death.

Deaths in the Emergency Care Centre

If the death occurred in the Emergency Care Centre (ECC), arrangements are different. It is unlikely that a MCCD will be issued immediately, as most deaths in ECC tend to be sudden and unexpected. If a doctor is unable to issue an MCCD, the death will be reported to the coroner and a member of the coroner's office will be in touch with you the following working day. You should be aware that sometimes clothes are soiled or damaged and, in these circumstances, they may be disposed of.

For further information regarding Coroner's procedures, you can contact H M Coroner's Office which is open Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) 9am to 12:30pm and 1pm to 4pm and is located at:

H M Coroner's Office

Greater Manchester West
Paderborn House
Civic Centre
Howell Croft North
Bolton BL1 1JW
Telephone: 01204 338799

Consented hospital post-mortems

Occasionally, the Doctor treating the deceased will issue a MCCD and may seek consent for a post-mortem examination to be carried out to gain a fuller understanding of the deceased's illness or the cause of death. To improve their understanding of the disease, tissue samples may be taken for the purpose of future medical education or research, which will help to contribute to better care for the family and /or other patients in the future. This kind of post-mortem examination is only carried out with consent from the next of kin, or prior consent from the deceased; this cannot be carried out without obtaining signed consent.

For both Coroner and hospital post-mortem examinations, medical and nursing staff, paramedics and police may be present to observe as part of their training, or to further develop their professional skills. Consent is not required for this, if you have any objections, you may contact the mortuary and your wishes will be respected.

Arranging a funeral

The organising of a funeral can be done as soon after death as you feel comfortable. When you appoint your chosen funeral director, you will be asked to sign a mortuary authorisation form to say they are acting on your behalf; this will be used to collect your loved one from the mortuary. The deceased may have left instructions regarding their wishes for the funeral arrangements; you do not need to wait until you have registered the death. However, do not feel you have to rush, take time to think about what you want. Every family is different: you may wish to organise and arrange the funeral yourself, hold a Civil Funeral or use a funeral director who will look after all the arrangements on your behalf.

Final funeral arrangements such as a date for the funeral should not be made until you have liaised with our Bereavement Service Office or the Coroner if a post mortem is to be carried out.

You can find information about organising a funeral yourself via the internet or contact information for your local Funeral Directors from your local telephone directory, or via the internet.

Funeral directors will manage the funeral arrangements and give advice and support.

These factors may influence your choice:

- Location of the firm's premises.
- Range of services provided.
- The way you are treated by the staff.
- Cost.
- Recommendation of those who have used the service.
- Ownership (small family business or large firm).

Remember that with any funeral, a funeral provider only gets one chance to get it right. Do not be forced to make any decision with which you are uncomfortable.

Paying for the funeral

If you are organising a funeral, you are responsible for paying the bill; you should check how you are going to pay for it. If you are finding it difficult to pay for a funeral that you must arrange, you may be entitled to receive a Social Fund Funeral payment from the Department for Works and Pensions, providing you or your partner receive means-tested benefits.

Who needs to be told about the death?

You will probably want to let family, friends and neighbours know of the death right away. There are several other people who may also need to know, if not notified when registering the death.

These are:	Done
Family Doctor	
The Benefits Agency (pensions, benefits)	
The Bank, Giro, Credit Cards, Building Society	
Social Services (home help, home care)	
Schools, Colleges or University attended	
Place of work (occupational pension)	
Executors of the Estate (wills)	

Solicitor	
Insurance Companies (Life, Car etc)	
HM Revenue & Customs	
Electricity, Gas, Telephone, Water Companies	
Dentist / Optician	
The Bereavement Register (reduce unwanted mail – see useful contacts)	

Things that will need to be returned	Done
Pension / Benefit Books	
Driving Licence	
Passport	
NHS Equipment on Loan	
Drugs and Medication to your local or hospital Pharmacy	
National Insurance Card	
Blue Badge Parking Disc	

Children and grief

We often protect children from the facts of death. Children of all ages feel grief and distress and we often underestimate a child's resources and ability to cope.

Talk to children as soon after a death as possible, be open and honest with them, explaining facts in a simple manner, using appropriate words such as dead, rather than asleep.

It is helpful to be open with children and share feelings of sadness; by doing this, children will learn that it is natural to be sad and to cry when someone dies. Children often like to draw pictures or write stories as part of their way of saying goodbye.

Dealing with grief

Please refer to leaflet BS 007 Bereavement Support - Helping you to cope.

This can be found on the Trust Website <https://www.wvl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> listed under letter B-Bereavement Services.

Useful Addresses and Telephone Numbers...

Local Support:

Age UK, Pennyhurst Mill, Haig Street, Wigan WN3 4AZ Tel: 01942 241972
www.ageuk.org.uk/wiganborough/

Useful Addresses and Telephone Numbers

Department for Works and Pensions
www.gov.uk

Tel: 0800 731 0469

Wigan and Leigh Citizens Advice Bureau

Tel: 0300 9077

Wigan Life Centre, The Wiend, Wigan, WN1 1NJ
Leigh CAB, 6 The Avenue, Leigh, WN7 1ES
www.wigancab.org

The Samaritans Wigan
www.samaritans.org.uk

Tel: 01942 492 222

Wigan Family Welfare
Wigan Churches' Association for Family Welfare
www.wiganfamilywelfare.co.uk

Tel: 01942 867888

Carers Loss & Bereavement Counselling Service
Stop Mail – Helping reduce junk mail
www.stopmail.co.uk

Tel: 01942 828771

Tel: 0333 240 0343

National Support:
Child Death Helpline
www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Tel: 0800 282 986

Cruse Bereavement Care
www.cruse.org.uk

Tel: 08081677

Young Persons Freephone Helpline
www.hopeagain.org.uk

Tel: 0808 808 1677

The Compassionate Friends (UK)

Tel: 0345 123 2304

Supporting bereaved parents and their friends
www.tcf.org.uk

Child Bereavement
www.childbereavement.org.uk

Tel: 0800 028 8840

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide
www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Tel: 0300 111 5065

As a Trust we welcome feedback on the service we provide, whether good or bad, so that we can act on these comments to improve the service we provide.

Bereavement Service Feedback

Please tick the relevant box

	YES	NO
Did you find the service provided by the Bereavement Centre helpful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	YES	NO
Did you find the Bereavement Support leaflet useful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We welcome any comments that you may have to improve our service:

Please send to: Bereavement Service Manager
Mortuary & Bereavement Services
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan, WN1 2NN

(Optional) To enable us to provide feedback we would appreciate your:

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Comments

[illegible]

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan
WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request.

For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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Call 111 first when it's less urgent than 999.



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