

# 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)
- 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, and 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.

Please be aware that viewings in the mortuary are currently suspended

### 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 greater transparency and opportunities 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.

## Registering the death

From 6th April 2020, face-to-face registrations have been suspended. Until further notice, we will be registering deaths and still births over the telephone.

During this emergency period the Registration Service has introduced a new process:

- The GP surgery, hospital or hospice will send the Register Office an electronic copy of the MCCD, along with the next of kin contact details
- The Registrars will then call the next of kin to complete the registration over the telephone - they aim to complete this within 3 days working days of receiving the certificate to avoid delays to any arrangements
- Following registration, the necessary certificates for burial or cremation will be issued electronically to the relevant organisation/authority. This process will reduce the need for documents to be posted or hand delivered in person at a register office or elsewhere
- Death Certificates can be purchased with payment over the telephone and will be posted to the next of kin.

If the coroner has been involved or the informant has not been contacted by the Register Office after 3 days of the doctor sending the MCCD, you can:

Request a call back for a telephone death registration by emailing  
WiganRegisterOffice@wigan.gov.uk

### Wigan Register Office

Wigan Register Office is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

## 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](http://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 persons 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](http://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 (formerly Accident & Emergency)**

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 in order to gain a fuller understanding of the deceased's illness or the cause of death. In order 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. Don't 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 have to 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.

<b>These are:</b>	<b>Done</b>
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)	

<b>Things that will need to be returned</b>	<b>Done</b>
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.wwl.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  
www.ageuk.org.uk/wiganborough/ Tel: 01942 241972

Department for Works and Pensions  
www.gov.uk Tel: 0800 731 0469

Wigan and Leigh Citizens Advice Bureau  
Wigan Life Centre, The Wiend, Wigan, WN1 1NJ  
Leigh CAB, 6 The Avenue, Leigh, WN7 1ES  
www.wigancab.org Tel: 0300 9077

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)  
Supporting bereaved parents and their friends  
www.tcf.org.uk Tel: 0345 123 2304

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

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

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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: .....



Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

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## 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 to 4pm)

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

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## 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 pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: [wwl.nhs.uk](http://wwl.nhs.uk)

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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.**



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

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[www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)

