Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

When a Child Dies in Hospital

Version number: **7**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

When a Child Dies in Hospital

Patient Information

Child Health Services

- Author ID: SN
- Leaflet ref: CH 052
- Version: 7
- Leaflet title: When a Child Dies in Hospital
- Last review: August 2021
- Expiry date: August 2023

Our message to you

The loss of your child is probably the worst thing that can happen to you. No one will be able to tell you exactly how it feels, as it affects everyone differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Grief can involve a range of feelings, numbness, disbelief, anger, guilt, sadness, emptiness, relief, and denial. You may have so many different feelings that you wonder if you are going mad or will ever be able to enjoy life again. This is a perfectly normal reaction considering the range of emotions involved.

This leaflet has been especially prepared for families whose child has died whilst in the care of our hospital, it is based on the support offered by the Alder Centre with their kind permission, the information is prepared by those who have experienced the death of a child either personally or professionally. We hope you find it of some help in assisting you and your family.

Please read this leaflet with the support of a relative, friend, religious contact, or a member of staff as some of what we have to say must be direct.

Immediately after your child dies

When your child has died, we will want to help you to do whatever you feel is right for you and your family. The decisions you make now can have an effect for a long time. There may be some difficult choices to make, whether to agree to a post-mortem, whether to have your child home before the funeral and the choice between cremation or burial. It might be hard to know what to do for the best.

You will be able to spend time with your child and help to wash and dress him or her in clothes of your choosing you may wish to bring your child’s favourite toy or teddy and

arrange for photographs or a handprint to be taken.

We will try to make sure that you have as much time as you wish to spend with your child to cuddle and begin to say goodbye. The hospital chaplains are always available and can be contacted to offer support, ask any member of staff if this is your wish.

Obtaining a medical certificate of death

A paediatric doctor who has cared for your child will issue a medical certificate stating the cause of death as soon as possible. The Bereavement Officer will arrange for you to be issued with the certificate of death signed by the doctor, but there may be some delay if your child's death has been referred to the Coroner. If this happens the Coroner will issue the medical certificate of death.

Registering the death

Any death occurring in the Borough of Wigan must be registered within five working days unless the Coroner is investigating the circumstances relating to the death. This five-day period may be extended to fourteen days in certain circumstances.

The Registrar will ask for some or all the following:

- Certificate of the cause of death (given on the ward).
- Parent's full names, home addresses and occupation.
- Childs full name, home address, date, and place of birth.
- Date place and time of death (shown on certificate of death). See DSS booklet.

The Registrar will give you two forms. The green form must be given to the funeral director who is arranging the funeral, a certificate of registration of death, which must be sent or taken to the DSS along with any allowance book. This form is also needed if you are asking for some help with funeral expenses from the social fund.

The registrar charges for the issuing of a death certificate. It is often helpful to purchase additional copies at the same time.

Registrar's Office opening times:

Leigh Registrar, Town Hall, Leigh

Telephone 01942 489003

By appointment only, Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 12:30pm and 1:30pm to 4pm

Wigan Registrar, New Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan

Telephone 01942 489003

By appointment only, Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 12:30pm and 2pm to 4:30pm

When the Coroner is involved

A Coroner is member of the legal profession who is responsible for investigating deaths in certain circumstances.

When a Coroner is involved your funeral director will assist you in provisionally planning your child's funeral, but nothing further can be done without the Coroners consent until your child has been released back to you.

If the cause of your child's death is not known, the Coroner may ask for a post-mortem examination. Having established a cause of death the Coroner will then issue a death certificate. Sometimes it is necessary to have an inquest to fully understand the cause. If this is the case, the Coroner will open an inquest and advise on what needs to be done, arrangements for the funeral can be made.

Once the Coroner has all the information all the necessary forms will be forwarded to the Registrars Office, this process can take several days. Either you or a close relative may then register the death.

Paying for the funeral

The cost of the funeral may vary; it may be wise to telephone several different Funeral Directors for the service they provide.

Some Funeral Directors may provide their own service free of charge for a child's funeral; this can help reduce the total costs. Please ask your Funeral Director about this.

Families on certain benefits may be able to apply for help towards the costs of the funeral from the social fund. The qualifying benefits are:

- Income Support.

- Income based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Housing Benefit.
- Council Tax Benefit.
- Tax Credit.
- Disability Working Allowance.

You should complete DSS form SF200 and discuss your claim with your Funeral Director. Please be aware that the DSS limit the amount of grant payable, and that it may not cover the full cost of the funeral.

If you are not eligible for help, and are having difficulty with the funeral costs, please phone the hospital or your own social worker who will advise you.

Arranging the funeral

The following points may help you decide what arrangements you would like to make for your child. There is no hurry to decide unless there are special religious or cultural reasons.

The funeral is a very personal occasion; so don't be rushed into making any important decisions about the service. You should not be afraid to ask for any special requests, which may be helpful to you and your family, or ask for explanations of anything you, do not understand fully.

There are different forms of service, both religious and non-religious which can be made available by most funeral directors. You may want to ask family, friends, a local minister, or priest for suggestions. Our hospital chaplains have conducted funerals for many parents and their experience and advice are available. There may be music played (perhaps a theme tune from the television or your child's favourite song) or, a particular poem or reading you would like to have that holds a special meaning for you and your family.

If you have other children, it is important to involve them in discussing the arrangements. They have their own confusion and grief to bear, they may wish to be present at the funeral, to see their brother or sister, to put a small favourite toy in the coffin or send a posy of flowers.

It can be surprising how a child, thought to be too young to realise what is happening, has a contribution to make when given the opportunity.

After the funeral

In the past some parents have found it useful to return to the ward and to talk to the staff /doctors that have cared for your child. Often parents have questions about their child's illness or death. It may be possible to have a meeting outside the hospital; you can arrange to do this by contacting the Bereavement Nurse at the hospital.

Further help for parents and families

It is our wish that parents, carers, and families are sensitively supported at this difficult time. We hope you are given all the support and information you require.

If you feel that for any reason you are not receiving the support you need, please discuss your concerns with a member of staff, the hospital Bereavement Officer or Patient Relations.

Bereavement Counselling

A telephone helpline for those affected by the death of a child was established at the Alder Centre in Liverpool, in June 1989 and a similar helpline, the Child Death Helpline, was established at Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1992.

In October 1995, the experience and tradition of the Alder Centre and Great Ormond Street were brought together in the setting up of the National Child Death Helpline, staffed by the same experienced, trained volunteers, virtually all of whom are themselves bereaved parents. Volunteers are trained and supervised within the Alder Centre and Great Ormond Street. Callers to the Child Death helpline may be parents, relatives, teachers, nurses and all who have been affected by a child's death in whatever circumstances; from miscarriage to the death of an adult child, however long ago.

The Child Helpline is staffed 7 nights a week from 7pm to 10pm and on Monday Wednesday and Friday every week from 10am to 1pm. Telephone numbers can be found at the back of this leaflet. For more information the Alder Centre booklets can be obtained on the ward information board or from ward staff.

Useful Contacts

HM Coroner

Paderborn House, Civic Centre, Bolton, BL1 1JW.

Telephone: 01204 338779

Wigan Borough

Wigan Borough

Bereavement Service, Co-ordinator Andrew Bond

Telephone 01942 486992, Mon to Fri 8:30am to 4:30pm

Alder Centre

Telephone: 0151 252 5391

Bereavement Counselling

Mon to Thurs 9am to 5pm, Fri to 4:30pm

Child Death Helpline

Telephone: 0800 282 986

Mon / Wed / Fri, 10am to1pm. Evenings 7pm to 10pm

Compassionate Friends

Telephone 0845 123 2304

Every day 10am – 4pm & 7pm – 10pm

Email: infoatcs.org.uk

Cruise Bereavement Care

0870 167 1677

Child Bereavement Trust

01494 446 648

National Meningitis Trust

0845 600 0800

Roadpeace

National Charity for Road Traffic Victims

0845 4500 355

C.H.I.C.S.

Children’s Cancer Support

0151 931 3061 or 0151 523 8886

Coroners Liaison Office

0161 856 7962

Hospital Chaplain

01942 822324

S.I.D.S Helpline

(Sudden infant death syndrome)

02072 332 090

Wigan Church Association

Family Welfare

537 Warrington Road

Spring View

Lower Ince, Wigan

01942 707017

Office hours only, answering at all other times

(Offers bereavement counselling)

London Lighthouse

For those affected by HIV & AIDS

111-117 Lancaster Road

London, W11 1QT

020 7313 2900 (24 hours)

S.A.N.D.S

Information Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society

0207 436 7940 / 0207 436 5881 helpline

Miscarriage Association

Clayton Hospital

PO Box 24, Ossett, West Yorks

01942 200799

Spoons Charity

0300 365 0363

https://spoons.org.uk/



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