

**Information for Bereaved  
Relatives and Friends  
following a death at  
Solihull Hospital**



*The staff wish to express their sincere sympathy and offer their condolences to you and your family at this time.*

*In the first few weeks of bereavement, which can be a particularly difficult time, you will need to deal with several practical matters. This booklet aims to provide some useful help and advice during the early days of your bereavement.*

*Please don't hesitate to ask questions if you are uncertain about any matter; our Bereavement Officers, Nursing and Medical staff will always be pleased to help.*

## Formalities

Certain formalities must be dealt with following the death of a relative or friend.

Before the death can be registered, you will require a Medical Certificate that states the cause of death. This is normally issued by a hospital doctor and will be given to you by a member of staff in the Bereavement Office at the hospital.

Once the medical certificate of cause of death has been completed, it has to be authorised by a Medical Examiner (a senior doctor who has had no input into your relative's care) to ensure accuracy of the cause of death. This means that it will be **three** working days before the certificate is ready for collection.

The first step is to contact the Bereavement Office by telephone **after 11.00hrs the next working day** on 0121 424 5360. The office is open between the hours of 11.00hrs and 15.00hrs, Monday to Friday. Please note that the office is closed weekends and Bank Holidays.

When you contact the office the phone may go to an answerphone; this is because the staff are tending to relatives. Your call is extremely important to us and although it is frustrating not to be able to speak to someone straight away, if you leave your name, telephone number and a short message, a member of Bereavement staff will return your call as soon as possible. During the conversation we will ask you for some information which will be required for the legal paperwork.

Therefore we would advise you not to attend the hospital **without first speaking to the staff in the Bereavement Office.**

The Bereavement staff will also explain what you need to do next and help with any questions you may have. They will also contact your relative's GP to inform them of the death.

When the medical certificate is ready, you will receive a call from the Bereavement staff to arrange an appointment for you to collect it from the Bereavement Office.

The Bereavement Office is located near the South Entrance at the back of the hospital near Pharmacy.

Please do not attend without first contacting the Bereavement Office to make an appointment.

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## **Coroner**

In some circumstances, the death may have to be referred, by law, to the Coroner.

These may include:

- If the death was sudden or unexplained
- If the death occurred during or following surgery/ procedures
- If your relative had a fall/fracture
- If the death occurred following Chemotherapy
- If your relative was involved in an accident
- If the death of your relative may have involved an industrial disease

Referrals to the Coroner need not be a cause for concern, although it will delay the issuing of the Medical Certificate. The Bereavement staff will talk through why the referral has been made and will explain the process to you.

The role of the Coroner is to establish the cause of a person's death.

Once a referral to the Coroner is made, after reviewing the situation, the Coroner may give permission for the hospital doctor to issue the Medical Certificate. If the cause of the person's death is unknown the Coroner may order a post mortem. This is a physical examination to identify the cause of death.

Although your consent is not needed for this procedure, the Coroner's officers will inform you if the procedure is required. Alternatively if the Coroner feels that more investigation is necessary, an Inquest may be held.

A Coroner's Inquest will provide an opportunity for all those involved to talk through the time leading up to the death. This allows family members to hear the circumstances of events leading up to their relative's death. It also provides an opportunity for relatives to ask questions regarding their relative's care and subsequent death.

If your relative's death occurred in the **Accident and Emergency Department**, it is highly likely that the doctor will not be able to issue a certificate without the involvement of the Coroner's Office.

For further information regarding your relative's referral to the Coroner, you may contact the **Coroner's Administrator on: 0121 303 3228, selecting option 1.**

### **Hospital Post Mortem**

Even when the doctors know the cause of death, they may make a request for a hospital post mortem in order to gain further knowledge about the illness. Unlike a Coroner's post mortem, this can only be done with the agreement of the next of kin and after a consent form has been signed.

### **Viewing arrangements**

This is a very personal decision. If you would like to view your deceased relative or friend whilst they are in hospital, please contact the ward or unit where your relative or friend died so that an appointment can be arranged for you. At weekends, viewing appointments are available between the hours of 11am and 3pm and are arranged in the same way: by calling the ward.

Many families prefer to wait until the deceased is in the care of their chosen Funeral Director. Some people may not want to see their deceased relative and prefer to remember them the way they were.

## **Dignified Relocation**

During busy periods, it may be necessary to transfer the care of your loved one to a different hospital site within the Heart of England NHS Trust or to a chapel of rest provided by Co-op Funeral Care.

If you have identified a funeral director, please inform the Bereavement Office to enable us, if possible, to facilitate the transfer of your loved one directly into the care of your appointed funeral home.

## **Tissue Donation**

Many families find the donation of tissues (eg. cornea, heart valves, skin and bone) a source of comfort. If you feel your relative would have liked to help others in this special way please contact the Tissue Donor Service, via the 24 hour message pager, on 07659 180773, as soon as possible.

The Tissue Donor Co-ordinator will reassure you regarding any fears or misunderstandings you may have and offer advice and support.

## **Registering a death**

Once you have attended your appointment at the Bereavement Office and received the Medical Certificate you will need to register the death at the Register Office. Deaths should be registered within five working days unless there has been some Coroner's involvement. To do this you will need to make an appointment at the Register Office in Solihull, details of which are on page 6.

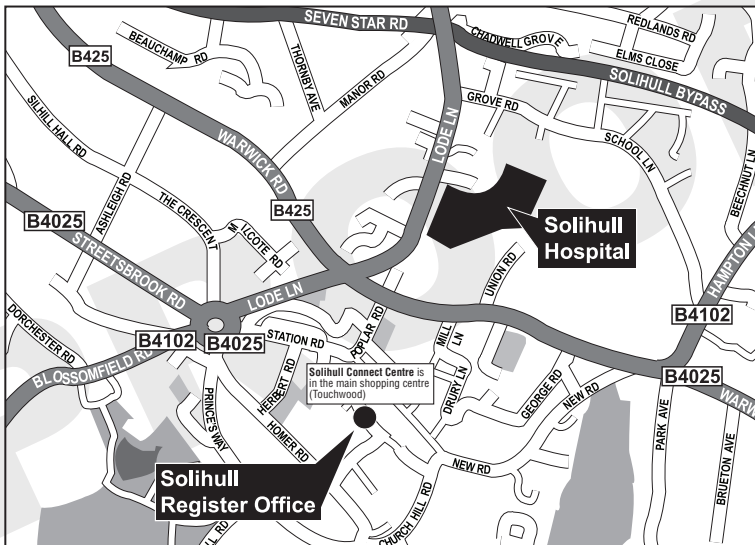
**We ask that you do not make an appointment with the Register Office until you have been advised to do so by the staff in the Bereavement Office.**

**Solihull Register Office:**  
Solihull Connect  
Library Square  
Solihull B91 3RG

**Monday to Friday**  
**9am to 4pm**  
**by appointment only**  
Tel: 0121 704 8002

**Parking:**

- Parking is in the Touchwood Centre near to Solihull Register Office.



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## **What you will need to register the death:**

If you have obtained the Medical Certificate from the hospital you will need to take it with you to your Registration appointment.

However if the Coroner has issued the Certificate, the staff at the Coroner's office will explain the registration process to you.

If possible it is useful to take with you the deceased person's birth certificate, passport and medical card as these will help you to answer the following questions:-

- The date and place of death
- The full names and surname of the deceased person (and maiden name if applicable)
- The usual address of the deceased person
- The date and place of their birth
- Their occupation (and the full name and occupation of their husband if the deceased was a married woman or widow)
- Whether the deceased person was in receipt of a pension or any type of allowance from public funds
- If the deceased person was married, the date of birth of their surviving widow or widower and their marriage certificate if available

## **The Registrar will then provide you with the following:**

- The official death certificate
- A certificate for burial or cremation (green form) which you will need to give to your Funeral Director

The Registrar will also ask you if you require copies of the Death Certificate for legal and financial purposes. Copies are available at the time of registration for a cash only fee.

## **Arranging the Funeral**

It is advisable to speak to the staff in the Bereavement Office prior to making any funeral arrangements. This is to ensure that we have explained whether there may be any delays in issuing the appropriate documentation, such as Coroner's involvement.

When the funeral is to be a cremation, an additional form will be completed by doctors at the hospital. This will be required by the crematorium to enable cremation to take place. The Bereavement Office staff and your Funeral Director will arrange this for you.

## People you may need to notify:

### Legal / Financial

- Bank / Building Society
- Solicitor
- Insurance companies
- Credit card companies

### Employment / Pension

- Dept of Work & Pensions
- Social Security office
- Inland Revenue
- Employer
- Trade Union

### Domestic & Personal

- TV Licensing
- Gas / Electricity / Water
- Newspaper / Milkman
- Telephone company
- Rental companies
- Vehicle Licensing
- Council Offices
- Cancel appointments
- Clubs / Associations
- Royal Mail deliveries

### Items that may need returning:

- Pensions / Benefits books
- Driving Licence
- NHS equipment on loan
- Passport
- National Insurance card
- Library cards / season tickets

## **Further information**

After a few days, you may find that you have questions about your relative's care and it is important that these are answered appropriately. The Bereavement staff will be able to assist in making an appointment with the Consultant and/or the nurses involved in the care of your relative.

If you have any issues regarding the care your relative received the Patient Services department is available to support and assist you with any concerns you may have. The Patient Services department may be contacted in the following ways:

**Tel: 0121 424 0808**

**Email:**

**[bhs-tr.Complaints-ConcernsandCompliments@nhs.net](mailto:bhs-tr.Complaints-ConcernsandCompliments@nhs.net)**

**In writing:**

**Patient Services Department**

**Main Entrance**

**Heartlands Hospital**

**Bordesley Green**

**Birmingham**

**B9 5SS**

## **In Memory Donations**

Rather than flowers at the funeral of their loved ones, many people now ask for donations in their memory. Your Funeral Director can arrange for donations to go to a charity or cause of your choice.

If you would like to make a donation to the hospital, you can choose which area receives the donation. It can be used to support the ward that cared for your relative through their end of life or to buy specific items, either medical or for the comfort and care of patients.

Donations should be sent to the address below:

**Donated Funds Department**  
1st Floor Devon House  
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital  
Bordesley Green  
B9 5SS

Please include details of your contact information and we will write to you to let you know how much has been donated.

More information can be found on the Trusts Donation Website: [www.heartofenglandcharity.org.uk](http://www.heartofenglandcharity.org.uk)



***Support From Others***

*Don't tell me that you understand.*

*Don't tell me that you know.*

*Don't tell me that I will survive,*

*How I will surely grow.*

*Don't come at me with answers*

*That can only come from me.*

*Don't tell me how my grief will pass,*

*That I will soon be free.*

*Accept me in my ups and downs.*

*I need someone to share.*

*Just hold my hand and let me cry*

*To show me that you care.*

***Anon***

## **Support**

People do not always find it easy to talk about death. You may feel that you cannot show your emotions or are expected to put on a brave face. However, talking about your feelings often helps. If you do not feel able to confide in a friend, a religious leader or your doctor may be able to help. We do also offer a follow up telephone service for all bereaved families or friends, should they feel this would be valuable.

We have provided a list of contact numbers of various organisations to offer you support, which are located in the Useful Information section of this booklet.

Do try to look after yourself and take extra care. Do allow yourself time to work through your grief as this is an important part of your future well-being.

## **Talking to children about death**

As adults we feel the need to protect our children from things that we might find difficult. It is easy to assume children will not understand death and bereavement, or that it will be too upsetting for them. However, we can often underestimate a child's ability to cope. Like adults, children find it harder to cope if they are not told what is happening and can be more frightened by their own imagination. Children should be told facts in a simple manner, using appropriate words, eg: dead, rather than lost or asleep. Give them plenty of time to ask questions, and offer plenty of love and reassurance.

It is helpful for adults to share feelings with children, such as feelings of sadness. By doing so they learn that it is natural to feel sad when someone dies. Children often like to draw pictures or write stories as part of their way of saying goodbye.

## **Useful information**

### **CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE**

Birmingham branch: 0121 687 8010

Helpline: 0808 808 1677

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

Provides bereavement support, advice and leaflets.

### **AGE CONCERN**

Age Concern Birmingham, Coleshill House,  
75 Coleshill Street, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1SH

Tel: 0121 236 2197

Age Concern South Staffordshire, 28 Salter Street, Stafford,  
Staffs ST16 2JU

National Helpline: 0800 009966

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

Offers advice, information and services for the elderly and their carers.

### **SAMARITANS**

13 Bow Street, Birmingham, B1 1DW

Tel: 0121 666 6644

Or: The Philip Dix Centre, Corporation Street, Tamworth,  
Staffs. B79 7DN

Tel: 01827 709637/8

National Helpline: 116 123

Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Work with the despairing and suicidal.

### **BIRMINGHAM BEREAVEMENT ADVICE**

Tel: 0800 258 5950

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

Offers practical advice and support after the loss of a relative or friend.



## **ROADPEACE**

P.O. Box 2579. London, NW10 3 PW

Helpline: 0845 4500 355

Website: [www.roadpeace.org](http://www.roadpeace.org)

Provides support and information and local contact for those bereaved or injured in a road crash.

## **AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS UK & EIRE**

57B Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BB

Helpline: 020 7403 0888

Email: [enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk)

Website: [www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)

Provides help and support for families and friends of those who have died from alcohol related illness

## **SUDDEN DEATH SUPPORT ASSOCIATION**

Chapel Green House, Chapel Green, Wokingham,  
Berkshire, RG40 3ER

Tel: 01189 790790

Help group for those bereaved suddenly through and accident.

## **CHILD DEATH HELPLINE**

Child Death Helpline Department

Great Ormond Street Hospital, Great Ormond Street,  
London, WC1N 3JH

Tel: 020 7813 282986

Helpline: 0800 282986

Website: [www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

Provides a listening service run by volunteers who have experienced the death of a child.

## **THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

53 North Street, Bristol, BS3 1EN

Tel: 03451 20 37 85

Helpline: 03451 23 23 04

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

Self help organisation for parents whose child, even adult, has died. Range of leaflets available.

## **SUNRISE**

Sunrise Child Bereavement Centre (West Midlands)

43a Calthorpe Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 1TS

Tel: 0121 454 1705

Provides support to all affected by the death of a child, particularly parents and siblings.

## **The Lullaby Trust (formerly FSID)**

11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB

Bereavement Support: 0808 802 6868

Website: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

Offers befriending, advice and support to families bereaved by a cot death.

## **SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide)**

The Flamsteed Centre, Albert Street, Ilkeston,

Derbyshire, DE7 5GU

Helpline: 0300 111 5065

Website: [www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)

Self help group which offers support to families and friends of those who have committed suicide.

### **SAMM (Support after Murder and Manslaughter)**

Cranmer House, 39 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6DZ

Tel: 0845 872 3440

Website: [www.samm.org.uk](http://www.samm.org.uk)

Provide support through self help group for families and friends of murder and manslaughter victims.

### **TERENCE HIGGINS TRUST**

314-320 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8DP

Helpline: 0808 802 1221

Website: [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

Provides information and support concerning HIV and AIDS issues.

### **SOLIHULL BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICE**

Ullswater House, Solihull Hospital, Lode Lane,  
Solihull, B91 2JL

Tel: 0121 424 5103

Provides support and counselling for the bereaved in the Solihull area.

### **WINSTON'S WISH**

The Clara Burgess Centre

Westmoreland House, 80-86 Bath Road, Cheltenham,  
Gloucestershire, GL53 7JT

Tel: 01242 515157

An organisation helping bereaved children and young people rebuild their lives after a family death.

### **ST GILES BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT**

St Giles Hospice Support Centre

Lindridge Road, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B75 6JB

Tel: 0121 378 6290 or 01543 434536

## **Other Avenues of Help**

Your family doctor or Health Visitor can put you in touch with other organisations that may be of help. Social Services may be able to give practical advice. Your local clergy person or religious leader may also be of help.

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***The inclusion of any advertisements does not imply that the Trust endorses any particular services or products.***

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## Notes

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