

Bereavement and Support Information Guide



Although death is part of life, it can be a distressing and confusing experience. Bereavement is a difficult experience under any situation and is even more distressing with the challenging circumstances of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We recognise that the death of a loved one can be a sad and difficult time and that you, your family and friends may need additional help and support particularly when some families may not have the chance to say goodbye to their loved ones before they died.

What happens when someone dies during COVID-19 pandemic?

Please telephone the hospital bereavement office where your loved one died (see contact numbers below).

Newham University Hospital: Tel: 020 7363 8056 or 020 7363 8055
St Bartholomew's Hospital: Tel: 020 3465 5889 or 020 3465 6892
The Royal London Hospital: Tel: 020 3594 1050 or 020 3594 2030
Whipps Cross Hospital: Tel: 020 8535 6628

Unfortunately, face-to-face meetings are not available at this time. During the pandemic the death certification process has been simplified, however deaths still need to be registered within five days from the date of death in England. Registrations are now taking place remotely, mainly by phone. Documents/information needed to register the death:

- the date and place the person died
- the person's usual address
- the person's first name, middle names and surname (maiden name, if this applies)
- the person's date and place of birth (inc town, county, country)
- the person's occupation and the name and occupation of their husband, wife or civil partner (if the person was married or in a civil partnership)

- if the deceased received a pension or benefit from the Government
- date of birth of their surviving husband, wife or civil partner.

Please note: If you do not have all the information listed above, it is worth checking with the registrar what information is acceptable.

The death certificate will be posted to you, but the 'green form' (Certificate for Burial or Cremation) will likely be sent straight to your funeral director, if you are using one, or to the cemetery/crematorium if the deceased has already been collected. If they have not been collected and you do not yet know what funeral director you are using it may be possible for the 'green form' to be posted to you. Funeral directors are now also authorised to register a death if they are arranging the funeral and authorised by a relative of the deceased.

If the person died at home unexpectedly, you should dial 999 and ask for an ambulance and police immediately.

How to arrange a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic?

As of 23 March, the government guidance states that funerals can only be conducted at the crematorium or graveside, and are only to be attended by close family members. People in high-risk groups (70 or over, pregnant or with certain underlying health conditions), those with coronavirus symptoms or who are meant to be in self-isolation should not attend. The number of mourners should be restricted so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres (3 steps) can be maintained between individuals and only the following people should attend:

- Members of the person's household
- Close family members
- If the deceased has neither household or family members in attendance, then it is possible for a modest number of friends to attend

However, regardless of how many 'close' family members there are, most crematoriums are restricting attendees to a maximum of 10, while some are advising that no one can attend, as are some funeral directors.

Many families will feel keenly the absence of a big funeral service with lots of family and friends and the get-together, reception or wake after it; it may help to discuss with a faith leader the planning of a memorial service when lockdown is over.

The funeral directors' companies will be best placed to advise you on their policies and procedures. Funerals should be arranged over the phone or via electronic means if possible. The funeral director will arrange with the hospital to transfer your loved one to their mortuary.

Washing, dressing & viewing

National guidance is that washing, dressing and viewing the deceased are allowed, including for people who have died from, or with symptoms of, Covid-19, however, you could be asked to view by use of a viewing panel in the coffin, at a distance or through a window. There is a small, but real risk of transmission from the body of the deceased if they died from, or with symptoms of, COVID-19. Therefore, the government strongly advises mourners not to take part in any rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body, for example washing, preparing or dressing the body themselves, and avoid kissing or touching the body. It is strongly advised that those in vulnerable and extremely vulnerable groups have no contact with the body.

Cremations - doctors' fees

Normally, unless the coroner has conducted an investigation, two doctors have to complete forms to allow a cremation to go ahead.

These cost £82 each. However, the government has temporarily suspended the requirement for the second form, meaning that doctors' fees for cremations will now only be £82, not £164.

More information about funeral directors can be obtained from:

National Association of Funeral Directors

618 Warwick Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1AA
Tel: 0121 230 1343, www.nafd.org.uk

National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors

3 Bullfields, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9DB
Tel: 0127 972 6777, www.saif.org.uk,
Email: info@saif.org.uk

Being bereaved can be one of the loneliest experiences you or someone you love may go through and talking or being with family and friends is one of the most helpful ways to cope with this. However, because of the current situation of COVID-19, being physically isolated from others is necessary and this could make the bereavement experience more intense and harder to cope with.

How can you help yourself during bereavement?

It is important that during this difficult time to take good care of yourself by eating healthily, and establishing a routine of sleeping, exercise and relaxation. If you are allowed, go outside for a walk or run and get some fresh air, or do home workouts if not. You may also want to call and text your friends and family and explain that you need to connect with someone and share your thoughts and feelings. Some people have found it helpful to talk to other people that have been through a similar experience or a professional, for example a counsellor or a chaplain.

There are also a number of free and confidential self-referral services in Newham, which can support you with bereavement during this period (Please see Appendix A)

After the death of loved ones, some people may find that life no longer makes sense or has meaning. This can contribute to feelings of despair, hopelessness and suicidal thoughts. This can be part of the normal grieving process; however, please seek help from your GP or other professionals if you are worried about having suicidal thoughts or if you feel like ending your life.

How can you help another person who is bereaved?

You might have friends or family that have experienced loss as a consequence to COVID-19, or loss due to other causes and may experience intense trauma particularly when being cut off from their usual support network. You can help them by staying in contact more than ever – whether by phone, text or video call. As their friend, partner or colleague, give them the opportunity to talk about their feelings and about the person they lost.

How can you help children cope with grief?

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in the UK are closed and children are staying home and unable to see their friends or relatives. All children will have questions about the Coronavirus and its impact, but some children have experienced loss of their loved ones or have a member of their family who is ill and their stress/anxiety will be intense.

Children who experience death of a family member will be worried about the health of their surviving family. It is important to reassure your child by talking to them honestly and calmly about what is happening around them. Acknowledge their worries by having a gentle conversation and reassure your child that they should come and talk to you when worried so that they do not feel they are on their own.

There are some common reactions observed in children who experience the loss of someone they know. Examples include sleep difficulties or nightmares, change in appetite, loss of interest in usual activities, difficulty concentrating, refusal to do schoolwork and/or disruptive behaviour etc. These are typical reactions and reflect the child's attempt to deal with a traumatic situation. There are a number of actions you can take to help your child through these difficult times. Examples include:

- Reassuring them that they are not to blame and that different feelings are ok
- Talking and making conversations with them, including about what has happened, asking questions and building memories
- Limiting the amount of time they hear or check the news
- Distracting them by doing other activities
- Maintaining a daily routine
- Demonstrating that adults are there to look after them

Further advice and information

Children's Bereavement Services

Child Bereavement UK (Stratford Branch)

Provide support for bereaved children and their family.

Tel: 020 8519 7025

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

Grief Encounter

Provide free service to support bereaved children and their families.

Monday to Friday 9am - 9pm

Free call on Tel: 0808 802 0111

Email: griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk

Website: www.griefencounter.org.uk

Child Death Helpline

A free telephone service for people bereaved by the death of a child.

Tel: 0800 282 986

Website: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Hope Again

Support young people living after loss; contact via email or call the FREE helpline.

Monday - Friday 9.30am - 5pm.

Tel: 0808 808 1677

Email: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Provide support and guidance to bereaved children, young people and their families.

Tel: 08088 02 021

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk

Adult Bereavement Services

Newham Bereavement Service (MIND) – Local service

The Newham Bereavement Service is for adults living in Newham who have experienced grief, loss and bereavement.

The offer includes a range of support services:

- Bereavement Counselling
- Group Support
- Advice and Information

To make a referral to the service you can:

Call: 020 7510 1081 or 020 7510 4268 for the Newham Bereavement Service and you will be put through to the coordinator

Or

Email: referral@mithn.org.uk

Website: www.mithn.org.uk

Age UK

Combines Age Concern and Help the Aged.

Advice line 0800 169 2081

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

ASSIST Trauma Care

Offer therapeutic help to children, adults, individuals and families affected by a wide range of traumatic occurrences.

Tel: 01788 560 800

Email: admin@assisttraumacare.org.uk

www.assisttraumacare.org.uk

Bereavement Advice Centre

Not-for-profit organisation that provides practical information and advice on the procedures after the death of a person.

Tel: 0800 634 9494

www.bereavementadvice.org

Compassionate Friends

Support bereaved parents.

Tel: Helpline – 0345 123 2304

www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

Provide counselling, support and advice to bereaved people.

Tel: 0844 477 9400

www.cruse.org.uk

CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young)

Tel: 01737 363 222

Website: www.c-r-y.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 808 0000

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Samaritans

Samaritans offer confidential support around the clock to anyone that wants to talk through their problems (free phone from landline or mobile).

Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Sudden

Supporting people after sudden death.

Website: www.suddendeath.org

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Offer support daily from 9am to 9pm.

Tel: 0300 111 5065

Website: www.uk-sobs.org.uk

The Silver Line

A free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Tel: 0800 4 70 80 90 (free call)

Through Unity

Supporting families bereaved by homicide.

Tel: 07947 684 605

Victim Support

For the relatives of victims of homicide or unnatural deaths, or people who are the victims of crimes.

Weeknights 8pm to 8am,

Weekends Saturday 5pm to Monday 8am

Tel: 0808 1689 111

WAY Widowed and Young

For men and women aged 50 or under when their partner has died.

Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Voluntary Sector Organisations VCS Local Services

The Drop-in Bereavement centre provides

1. Telephone bereavement counselling informative poster
2. Virtual services provided by the DIBC
3. Telephone Befriending Service

For more information call 0207 511 6444/07396 016523

Highway Vineyard Church

Running a 6-week course called the 'Bereavement journey' from Holy Trinity Brompton church

There is talks plus an opportunity to discuss in a group. The course topics include:

1. Separation and loss
2. The impact and pain of bereavement;
3. Adjusting to change,
4. Anger and guilt
5. Coping with other's reactions and moving on healthy -
6. Plus an optional session which explores a faith perspective