

Help for Bereaved Relatives

A practical guide to help you cope with administrative issues in the early days of your bereavement

**It is important to phone the Bereavement Office in the first instance
01752 439492**



*We are here
for you*

When your loved one dies...

OUR SYMPATHY

We wish to extend to you our deepest sympathy and condolences in your bereavement and, in order to help you during this difficult time, may we offer you some guidance.

The first week of bereavement is a time of grief and sorrow this is natural. Unfortunately, it is also a period during which a number of matters need to be dealt with.

All of this can prove confusing and bewildering, but we hope this booklet will be of assistance to you.

This booklet is provided to help you deal with practical arrangements at this difficult time.

The following issues are covered:

• What to do first	3
• Collecting Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death	4
• Clothing and valuables	5
• Sir Jules Thorne Viewing Suite	5
• Arranging the Funeral	6
• Burial or Cremation	6
• Request for Post Mortem	7
• The Coroner	8
• Registering the Death	9
• Map	12
• People to Inform	13
• When Someone Dies	14
• Support and advice	16
• After the Funeral	18

What to do first

You probably do not want to think about practical arrangements at this time of sorrow, but some things have to be done. It is important that you contact a funeral director as soon as possible so that they can start making arrangements on your behalf. You do not need to wait for the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death.

To find out how you can collect the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death, please contact the Bereavement Team **by telephone or email the next working day after the death**. Please do not come into the hospital until we have spoken to you by telephone, as the paperwork may not be ready and your journey may be wasted.

☎ 01752 439492

Email: plh-tr.BereavementService@nhs.net

When you have been given an appointment to collect your certificate, the receptionist at our main entrance will direct you to the Bereavement Team waiting area situated on level 7.

If you need further help, in any way, please do not hesitate to get in touch. The bereavement team are available for help or advice by ☎ 01752 439492 or by email: plh-tr.BereavementService@nhs.net, Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm.

If you come by car to Derriford Hospital, you can park free of charge in any of our patient and visitor car parks by either displaying this booklet on your dashboard, or, in a barriered car park, bring your token and this booklet with you to the parking desk reception who will clear the token for you.

The Hospital Chaplains are available to talk with you if required, and the Hospital Chapel on level 7 is open at any hour. You can also contact the Hospital Chaplain on ☎ 01752 245255.

Collecting the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death

The hospital will issue a Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death unless there is to be a Coroner's investigation. Please be aware this will be completed by doctors and may take several days.

You will need to telephone the Bereavement Team ☎ 01752 439492 on the next working day following the death (**if the death occurs at the weekend or Bank Holiday, please call on the following Monday or first working day**). If the Bereavement Team are unavailable, it is important that you leave a message or if possible email. Once the certificate has been received by the office, you will be contacted for an appointment to collect the certificate and any property.

Cremation Forms

In the case where a person is to be cremated, a cremation form is required and will have to be completed by two doctors. 1) The doctor completing the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death and 2) A doctor not involved in the patient's care, usually a pathology doctor. This can sometimes cause a delay in the deceased being released from the hospital to the funeral director. This form will be collected by your Funeral Director when they collect your loved one.

Deaths in the Emergency Department.

If your relative's death occurred in the Emergency Department or on the way to hospital, a doctor may not be able to issue a Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death. These deaths are usually unexpected and often within 24 hours of admission to hospital. For any of these reasons the ED doctor must inform the coroner's officer. The coroner's officer will advise you whether an ED doctor or GP will issue one, or whether a post mortem will need to be carried out. They can be contacted on ☎ 01752 487401/487402.

Clothing and valuables

When you collect the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death from the Bereavement Team at the hospital, you will be able to collect the property we may have. Please be advised that any property, other than valuables, left with the Bereavement Team, will be disposed of, if not collected, within two months.

Sir Jules Thorne Viewing Suite

It may help to see your loved one after they have died, this can be arranged for the next of kin or immediate family in the hospital's viewing suite by the Bereavement Team, or in the funeral director's Chapel of Rest.

If you wish to see your loved one in the hospital's viewing suite **it is important to make an appointment first**. To do this you can make the necessary arrangements with the Bereavement Team on ☎ 01752 439492, out of hours by telephoning 0845 155 8155 (main switchboard) who will contact the on call manager to make these arrangements for you.

Arranging the funeral

Most funeral directors are available seven days a week. If you wish, they can visit your home to advise you on the necessary arrangements.

Prices for funerals do vary and you may wish to see a brochure and price list or contact several funeral directors to compare prices before you make a final decision. Additional information is available on www.yourfuneralchoice.com.

If you receive certain benefits through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) you may be eligible for help towards the cost of the funeral. The funeral director will be able to help you claim or you can ask your local DWP office for leaflet **NP 45** "A guide to bereavement benefits". Please check these details carefully so that you understand which costs the DWP will cover.

Burial

Most churches have set fees for burials of which your funeral director can advise you. The costs may be higher for the burial of someone who lived outside the parish. Most non-denominational cemeteries are owned by either local authorities or private companies, so fees may vary.

Cremation

No one can be cremated until the cause of death is definitely known. The funeral director will advise you of the process. Ashes can be scattered in a garden of remembrance or in a favourite spot - permission for this may have to be granted, or they can be buried in a church yard or cemetery.

Hospital Post Mortem

The doctor who has written the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death may ask for permission for the family, for a post mortem examination to assist in medical knowledge and teaching.

You are free to decide whether to grant permission for this. If you do agree to a post mortem, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

If it is difficult for doctors to establish the cause of death, it may be necessary to involve the Coroner. The Coroner does not need to ask for permission if he decides a post mortem is necessary.

The Coroner

The Coroner is a lawyer or doctor responsible for investigating some deaths.

A death may be reported to the Coroner by either the doctor or the registrar of deaths. There are a number of reasons why a death might be referred to the Coroner.

For example:

- if the cause of death is uncertain
- if the death was sudden or violent or caused by an accident
- when death might be due to an industrial injury or disease
- if the death occurred while the patient was undergoing an operation or was under the effect of an anaesthetic.
- if a death occurred following accident or fall

If the Coroner does not wish to carry out a post mortem he will issue a certificate (Form A) for the registrar of deaths.

The Coroner's Office can be contacted on:

☎ 01752 439679

The Coroner's Office normal working hours are Monday to Friday
8.15am - 3.15pm

Registering the death

After you have collected the Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death at the hospital you will need to make an appointment with the Plymouth Register Office to register the death. You are required to do this in the area the death occurred and within 5 days. If you require further details, the Plymouth Register Office will assist you.

There is specific information you will need to take with you when you register. A list is provided for you on page 10.

It is probably better to go home and gather the correct information before going to the register office. Once information has been recorded in the register, it cannot easily be corrected and you may be asked by the registrar to confirm some details.

Please make sure you are legally able to register the death before you go to the register office. This can be confirmed by Plymouth Register Office staff.

If you need any help or advice please telephone the Plymouth Register Office and a registrar will gladly give you further information.

The Plymouth Register Office can be contacted on:

☎ 01752 268331

And is located at:

Lockyer Street
Plymouth PL1 2QD

☎ 01752 268331

Opening Times:

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 9.00am - 5.00pm

Tuesday 9.00am - 6.00pm

Friday 9.00am - 4.30pm

Information which will be required by the Register Office

The Medical Certificate for the Cause of Death from the hospital or certificate from the Coroner.

The medical card or National Health Service number belonging to the deceased. (The Bereavement Officer will usually give this to you when you collect the certificate.)

.....

The date and place of death

Full name and surname.....

Maiden surname (if applicable)

Date of birth

Town and county of birth.....

Last full time occupation

The name and occupation of husband/wife/civil partner if they were married/civil partnership

.....

Address including postcode.....

.....

If the deceased was married, the date of birth of the surviving spouse

.....

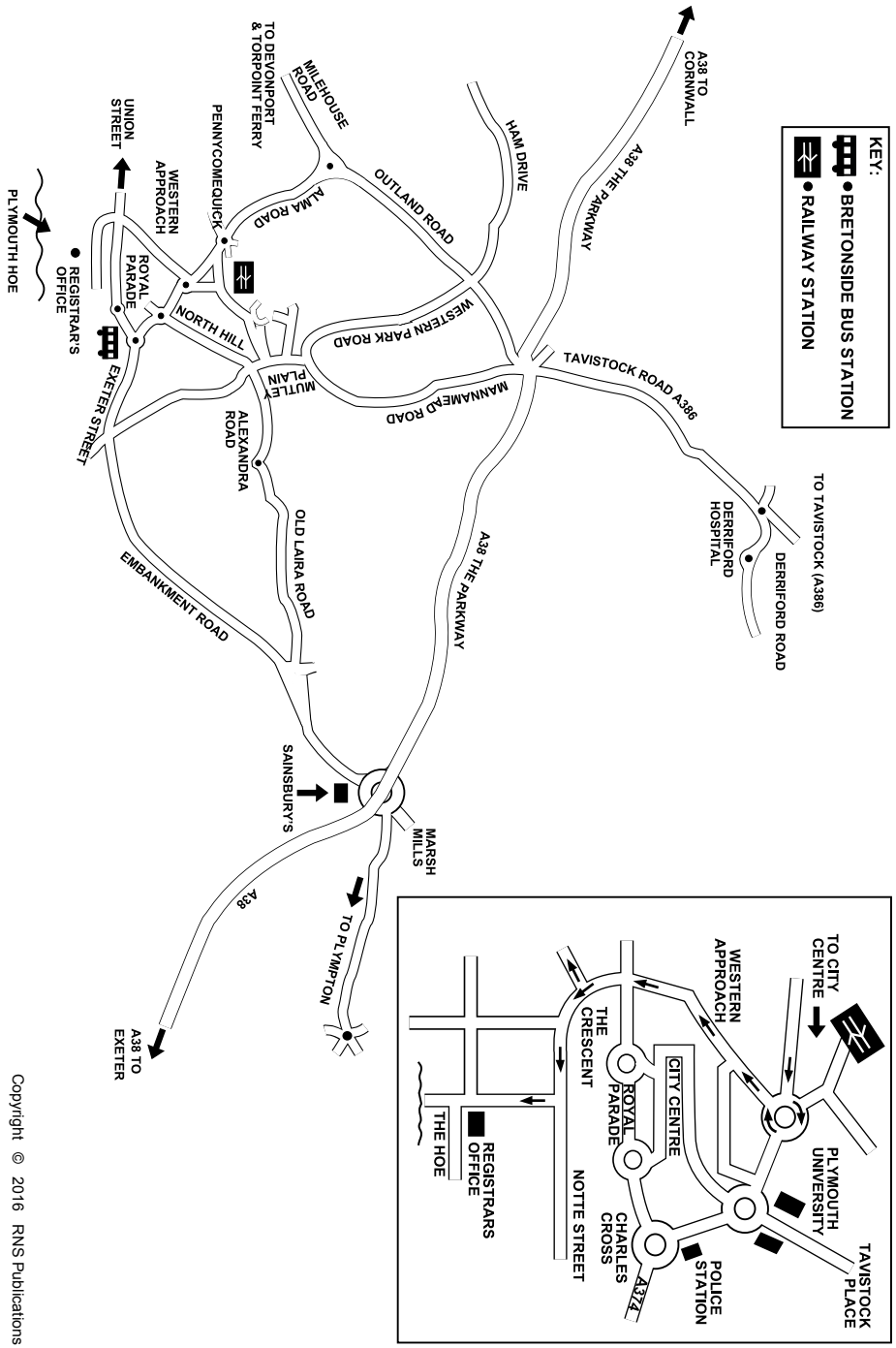
The reference number of any pension paid out of public funds apart from state retirement pension.....

This information you have given to the registrar will form the entry in the register of deaths. You can buy certified copies of the entry at the time of registration. Certified copies purchased after the date of registration will increase in price.

The registrar will give you:

A green form to hand to the funeral director unless the Coroner has already sent his own form.

A white form (BD8) to send to the Department of Work & Pensions. You may be able to claim certain benefits and arrears of pension with this form. You can obtain from the hospital or register office an information booklet **DWP 1027** "What To Do After A Death" issued by the Department of Work & Pensions.



People to inform

There are various people, companies and other interested parties who need to be informed of the death, especially if the deceased lived alone. The Register Office offer a “Tell Us Once” service and they can inform the following:

- DWP Benefits and Pensions
- HMRC Tax Office
- Passport Agency - to cancel a passport
- Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency - to cancel a driving licence
- Veterans’ Agency - War Pension

And Local Authority Services, such as:

- Council Tax
- Electoral Services
- Blue Badge Department
- Bus Passes
- Housing Benefit
- Library Services
- Adult Social Services

To book an appointment, please contact your local register office and ask for a Tell Us Once appointment. You will need to bring the National Insurance number of the person you are notifying us about, and if applicable, their passport, driving licence, blue badge, bus pass, and library card.

Other people that will need to be contacted by you are:

- Local Social Services if meals on wheels, home help, day centre transport were used.
- Any other hospital the person was attending.
- Any employer or trade union.
- A child’s or young person’s teacher, employer or college, should be informed if a parent, brother, sister, grandparent or close friend has died.
- Car insurance company. People driving a car insured in the deceased’s name are not legally insured.

- Local offices of gas, electricity, telephone company, Royal Mail deliveries, local newsagents and milkman.
- Professional organisations
- Private landlord

If there was any NHS equipment being used it will need to be returned to either the hospital or health centre from where it came.

When someone dies

The death of someone close to you is a devastating experience and can bring about stronger emotions than most people have ever felt before.

Even if you have known that your loved one was dying there is still a sense of shock when the death occurs. You may feel cold, numb, empty and unreal for a time. Following this you may experience such emotions as anger, panic, guilt and sadness. This may also be accompanied by periods of restlessness, especially at night when it is difficult to sleep. You may also react by becoming irritable or critical of yourself and others which can lead to feelings of despair. All these are natural reactions to bereavement and are not a sign that you cannot cope any more.

You will obviously want to ensure that the necessary arrangements are efficiently organised, but also with dignity and respect for the person you have lost.

You may wish to organise things by yourself, but if not, why not consider the help of relatives or a close and trusted friend? Very often relatives or close friends of the family want to help and share the burden.

During this time you will need the support of others. Do not be afraid to speak about your feelings to someone. This is often a difficult time for family and friends too. They may be afraid to speak about your loved one for fear of upsetting you.

It may be necessary for you to take the first step, let them know you want to talk and would like their support.

You might also wish to seek the support of a minister or priest, regardless of your religious beliefs. The Hospital Chaplain is happy to see you and can put you in touch with a minister of your own denomination. You can contact the Hospital Chaplain on 01752 245255.

Grief is a very individual process and we can each react differently so do not feel that you should necessarily experience feelings exactly as described. What is important is that you allow yourself time to grieve and come to terms with your loss in whatever way is right for you.

In time, the pain will ease and you will find yourself being able to remember your loved one without becoming distressed. This is a good sign, and a clear indication that you are beginning to come to terms with your loss.

Your doctor can help

Bereavement can turn our world upside down and is one of the most painful experiences we have to endure. Most of the time bereavement is something that we all go through without the need for medical attention. On occasion you or your family may need additional support, there is help available and you should contact your family doctor.

Support and advice

Many of us need help to deal with grief or feel the need for extra support. This help is available and many people gain support from seeking it. The following individuals and organisations may be useful.

Support

- Bereavement Counselling Service:
www.bcsplymouth.co.uk
- Bereavement Support Network: ☎ 0333 240 0343
or www.bereavementsupport.co.uk
- Cruse: ☎ 01752 408134
for help with emotional and practical problems
- Jeramiah's Journey: ☎ 01752 424348
Support for bereaved children and their families
- Mustard Tree: ☎ 01752 763672
Counselling for those bereaved through cancer
- Samaritans ☎ 01752 221666
- St Lukes Hospice:
www.stlukes-hospice.org.uk/bereavement-helpful-info

Advice

- Probate Registry ☎ 01208 261581

Tissue donation

If at this difficult time you feel able to consider tissue donation, it may be helpful to know that

- Heart valves and eyes (corneas) can be donated up to 24-48 hours following death
- Agreeing to tissue donation is not expected - it is an option. However, you may be contacted by a donor transplant co-ordinator if your relative was on the Organ Donor Register
- The family can consent on behalf of the patient
- It is not necessary to have a Donor Card

The decision to donate is of course very personal, so if you want to discuss this further, please speak to the ward staff or contact the on-call transplant co-ordinator via the switchboard ☎ 0845 155 8155.

After the funeral

Settling the deceased person's estate can be confusing, time consuming and distressing. If you have been named as executor in the will, it is your responsibility to see that the person's wishes, as you understand them are carried out.

This will include payment of funeral expenses. Debts and taxes as well as the disposal of their possessions and other assets.

If it seems likely to be complex it may be worth using solicitors and accountants to help you. Fees will be charged for these services, usually by the hour. This money will come out of the estate. Make it clear precisely what work your solicitors or accountants are required to do. While the estate is being sorted out, immediate access to funds can sometimes be difficult, but a solicitor may be able to arrange alternative financial support. Alternatively you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau for free advice.

Life then begins to return to normal for most people, except close relatives and friends who could find the process of adjustment to their loss more difficult. Try to avoid making hasty decisions, especially if you now find yourself living alone.

Remembering

Everyone will have their own ways to remember the person who has died. Talk about them, mention their name as often as you can and put the emphasis on the good things that happened when they were alive. Members of the family or close friends might appreciate a photograph or a small keepsake as a reminder.

Most important of all will be your own memories.

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS), Derriford Hospital

PALS is about **listening, learning and working** with you to improve your health service. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the care your loved one received please contact PALS Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm on:

Telephone: ☎ 01752 439884/432564

Email: plh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you want to talk

We understand that when looking back some people may have some unanswered questions and we would like to offer you the opportunity to discuss your relative's time in our care.

If you would like to accept our invitation please call the Bereavement Team on ☎ 01752 439492 who will be able to make arrangements.

Miss me, but let me go

When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me,
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free.
Miss me a little - but not too long.
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love that we once shared
Miss me - but let me go.
For this is a journey that we all must take,
And each must go alone.
It's all a part of the Master's plan,
A step on the road to home.
When you are lonely, and sick of heart,
Go to the friends we know,
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds.
Miss me - but let me go.

Anon

Death is nothing at all-
I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I and you are you.
Whatever we were to each other that we are still.

Call me by my old familiar name,
speak to me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference in your tone;
wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without effort,
without the ghost of a shadow on it.

Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as it ever was;
there is absolutely unbroken continuity.
What is death but a negligible accident?
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight.

I am waiting for you for an interval,
somewhere very near just around the corner.
All is well.
Nothing is past; nothing is lost.
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.

Henry Scott Holland (1847 - 1918)

This booklet has been produced in consultation with the Register Office and local funeral directors. We hope you find it helpful. If you have any comments or suggestions on how we may improve it please let us know. Contact the Bereavement Officers on 01752 439492 or write to us at the Bereavement Office, Level 07, Derriford Hospital, Plymouth PL6 8DH.

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

We wish to thank the advertisers and sponsors without whom this publication would not have been possible. However, the hospital does not endorse any of the products or services they provide

Ref: D-26/PS/AR/ help for bereaved relatives
August 2015 For Review: 2016

Published July 2016

ONLY UPDATE PUBLISHED DATE
(REFERENCE IS HOSPITAL'S DATE)

Notes

A series of 25 horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

