



University Hospital  
Southampton  
NHS Foundation Trust

# When someone dies

Information for families, friends and carers



## **This booklet has been written to help you following the death of your relative or friend at one of our hospitals.**

When someone dies, there are a number of things to do that you may not be familiar with. In this booklet, you will find practical information about the steps involved, including how to register the death, and how to start the process of arranging a funeral.

You will also find details of the role of the bereavement and family support team and the Medical Examiner Southampton (MES) service, along with details of where you can find more information and support, both practical and emotional.

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## Bereavement and family support team

The loss of a loved one can be one of the most difficult moments that any of us will face. We'd like you to know that our dedicated bereavement and family support team is here for you and those close to you at this time.

We can offer advice, assistance, and practical and emotional support at any time around a bereavement.

We welcome you to contact us at any point, should you need advice or information on:

- any aspect of the bereavement process
- visiting your loved one after they have died
- making funeral arrangements
- any additional paperwork required
- further sources of help and support available to you

We can also provide information about the Medical Examiner Southampton (MES) system, including:

- the role of the Medical Examiner Southampton
- obtaining a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD)
- registering the death
- the coroners' service in Hampshire

## How to contact us

Telephone: **023 8120 4587**

Email: [bereavementcare@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:bereavementcare@uhs.nhs.uk)

Our office hours are 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

## Immediately after a death

**When a death occurs in one of our hospitals, the person who has died's first point of contact will be notified directly by a member of staff on their ward.**

### **Spending time with the person who has died**

If you wish to, you and those close to the person who has died can arrange to spend time with them to say goodbye.

We recommend that this takes place at the funeral home after the person has been discharged to their care.

However, in some cases, it may be possible for you to visit your relative or friend before they leave the hospital.

The bereavement and family support team will help you to arrange this, if you wish.

## Spiritual care service

You can request to see a hospital chaplain if you would like to, at any point.

Our spiritual care service offers support for everyone, and you do not have to have a religious belief to use the service. A member of staff on the ward where your relative or friend has died can contact the service for you.

Alternatively, you can contact the service directly on:

**023 8120 8517** (confidential answer machine), or visit them on D level, centre block in Southampton General Hospital (multifaith chapel).

If you need support out of hours, please contact the hospital switchboard on: **023 8077 7222** and ask for the duty chaplain.

## Property and valuables

A representative from our patient support hub will contact the person who has died's first point of contact to arrange the collection or delivery of any personal belongings.

You can contact the patient support hub to discuss this on:  
**0800 484 0135**.

Valuables and cash are kept in the cashier's office which is open from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. In order to collect valuables, you will need to provide some proof of identification to show you are legally allowed to receive them. This will normally be the person's spouse or an executor named on the will, or if the person who has died did not have a will, the person obtaining 'letters of administration' (a document issued by the probate registry which gives the administrator the legal authority to deal with the estate).

The cashier's office telephone number is: **023 8120 6058**.

## Registering the death

**When a person dies, it must be registered at the office of the Registrar for births, deaths and marriages unless there is to be a coroner's inquiry. A funeral cannot take place until a death has been registered.**

### **What needs to happen before a death can be registered?**

Before a death can be registered, a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) is required.

### **Do I need to do anything to obtain a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD)?**

No. The doctors who were caring for your relative or friend will complete this once the cause of death has been established and discussed with the Medical Examiner Southampton (MES) service.

The Medical Examiner is a national service providing independent review in all hospital and community deaths, which includes overseeing the issuing of MCCDs.

In most cases, the cause of death will be clear, and the doctors will be able to issue the MCCD without delay.

You will be contacted by the Medical Examiner Southampton (MES) service to let you know when you can make an appointment at the Register Office to register the death in person.

The MCCD will be sent to the Register Office electronically. Please do not attempt to book an appointment before this has been confirmed.

### **How to register the death**

You will then need to make an appointment to attend the Register Office located in **Bugle Street, Southampton, SO14 2AJ**.

For full details of the process and to book an appointment, please visit: [www.southampton.gov.uk/register-a-death](http://www.southampton.gov.uk/register-a-death)

Please note that while you can book the appointment online, the actual registration of the death will need to be done in person.

### **Who can register a death?**

You can register the death if you are:

- a relative
- the person making arrangements with the funeral directors
- someone who was present at the death
- an administrator at the hospital

### **What do I need to take to the appointment at the Register Office?**

Please take the following documents with you if you have them:

- the deceased's birth certificate and/or marriage certificate
- the deceased's passport
- proof of address for the deceased (for example, a utility bill that has been issued within the last three months)
- identification document for yourself (passport)

After registering the death, the registrar will give you:

- copies of the death certificate (unless the registrar states otherwise).  
The registrar will ask you how many copies of the certificate you will need. A fee is payable for all copies.

### **The green form**

Please note that the certificate for burial or cremation (the green form needed to arrange a funeral) will be scanned electronically, and sent directly to the funeral directors and the place of burial or cremation. The green form will not be given to you directly.

## **Registering by declaration**

If it is not possible for you to register the death in Southampton, you may be able to register by declaration in your hometown.

The local registrar will not be able to register the death or issue you with any certificates but will take the necessary information and forward it to the Register Office in Southampton.

The Southampton registrar will then register the death and issue the relevant certificates. These will be posted to you, which may therefore cause delays in organising the funeral.



## Medical Examiner Southampton (MES)

**As explained on page 6, when a person dies in hospital, in most cases a doctor who has been treating them will issue a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD), which is required to register a death.**

Before this certificate can be written, the doctor will need to review the death during a meeting with a medical examiner (who is a senior medical doctor) from the Medical Examiner Southampton (MES) service.

This meeting is to ensure that the certificate accurately reflects the cause of death and to identify any areas of care that might need to be reviewed.

A medical examiner officer (MEO) will aim to speak to you before this meeting to find out whether you have any concerns or comments about the care received.

If the doctor cannot issue the MCCD (cases where the coroner needs to investigate a death further), a medical examiner officer (MEO) will advise you of the process to be followed and what to do next.

You can find out more about the medical examiner system online: [www.england.nhs.uk/establishing-medical-examiner-system-nhs/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/establishing-medical-examiner-system-nhs/) or via the QR code below.



If you require any further information about the medical examiner service, please email: [medicalexaminer@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:medicalexaminer@uhs.nhs.uk) or telephone: **023 8120 3564**.

## The coroner and post-mortems

**Some deaths are reported by hospital doctors to the coroner.**

This may be the case if:

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

The coroner will decide whether or not a post-mortem examination is needed. A post-mortem examination, also known as an autopsy, is the examination of a body after death. The aim of a post-mortem is to determine the cause of death.

The coroner has a legal right to request a post-mortem even if this is contrary to the family's wishes. They will make any necessary arrangements and give the Register Office the relevant forms so that you can register the death.

A medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) will not be written when a coroner's post-mortem examination is carried out. If there is a post-mortem, the results go only to the coroner in the first instance but can be obtained later by the general practitioner (GP) of the person who has died.

Please tell your funeral director if the death is reported to the coroner. They will liaise with the coroner on your behalf and let you know when you can register the death at the Register Office.

More information is available at:

[www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-public/post-mortems](http://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-public/post-mortems)

or by scanning the QR code.



## Hospital post-mortems

**The doctor who certified the death may ask for permission to carry out a post-mortem examination to help advance medical knowledge and understanding, and teaching.**

Hospital post-mortems are only requested in certain circumstances by doctors involved in the care of the person who has died.

The bereavement and family support team will be able to support you in making the decision that is right for you. It is entirely up to you whether to grant permission. If you do, the examination should not delay the funeral arrangements and you will still receive a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) from the hospital.

If you have further questions or would like more information about post-mortems, including private post-mortems, please contact the bereavement and family support team.

## Arranging a funeral

**Once a death has been registered, a funeral can take place.**

- It is important to contact the funeral director of your choice as soon as possible so that they can start making arrangements on your behalf.
- You do not have to wait until the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) has been issued to contact a funeral director.
- Anyone close to the person who has died can arrange the funeral.

The person who has died may have left instructions in their will or somewhere else, about the type of funeral they wanted and/or whether they wanted to be buried or cremated.

Most funeral directors are available seven days a week and are usually happy to visit you at home to help and advise you. Prices for funerals vary and you may wish to contact several funeral directors and compare prices before you decide.

Alternatively, you may want to carry out the funeral without the assistance of a funeral director. If you would like some advice on how to proceed, please discuss this with a member of the bereavement and family support team.

### **Help with funeral costs**

If you are in receipt of certain benefits, you may be entitled to help with the cost of the funeral.

You can apply using form SF200 (Funeral payment from the Social Fund) which is available from the Register Office and most funeral directors.

You can also access an online version by scanning the QR code.



Please check the details carefully so that you understand which costs the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will cover.

## **Bereavement support payment**

If you are under state pension age and are widowed or your civil partner dies, you may be entitled to a bereavement support payment.

You can find out more at:

[www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment](https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment)

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) bereavement service on: **0345 606 0265** for advice.

## **Where to find guidance on settling a person's estate**

Settling a person's estate is the term used to describe the process of dealing with the property and finances of a person who has died.

This has to be done according to certain rules.

If you are the named executor of the person who has died's will, it is your responsibility to see that the person's wishes, as you understand them, are carried out. This may include paying funeral expenses, debts and taxes, as well as dealing with their possessions and other assets.

You can choose to do this yourself by contacting the local Probate Office to obtain the relevant forms and guidance, or you can use a solicitor whose fees will usually be collected from the estate.

If there is no will, the closest living relative can apply to become administrator of the estate. For more information on this, contact:

Probate Call Centre on: **0300 303 0648**

(Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

Or visit:

[www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate/if-theres-not-a-will](https://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate/if-theres-not-a-will)



More information is available online:

[www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies](https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies)



[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/death-and-wills/what-to-do-after-a-death](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/death-and-wills/what-to-do-after-a-death)



## Tell Us Once service

**Tell Us Once is a service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. A death must be registered before you can use the Tell Us Once service.**

Find out about the service online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once> or via the QR code.



Or telephone: **0800 085 7308**.

It is easier if you have the person's:

- national insurance number
- details of any benefits or services they were receiving
- their driving licence and passport

However, don't worry if you don't have these things, as you can use the Tell Us Once service without them.

## Grief and bereavement support

### **Bereavement, grief and loss can cause many different symptoms and they affect people in different ways.**

There's no right or wrong way to feel. Even if you knew that your loved one was dying, there may still be a sense of shock and it can be difficult to accept. Everyone experiences grief differently, with a range of feelings and emotions that can be overwhelming.

Some of the most common symptoms can include:

- shock and numbness – this is usually the first reaction to loss
- overwhelming sadness
- tiredness or exhaustion
- anger towards the person you've lost or the reason for your loss
- guilt, for example, guilt about feeling angry, about something you said or did not say, or not being able to stop your loved one dying

There is information about grief and bereavement support on the NHS website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Your GP can offer support following the death of someone close to you, and you may wish to inform them of what has happened. If you are experiencing pain, poor sleep or are feeling that you cannot cope, it is very important that you inform your GP. They will be able to help you and advise you about additional support services specific to your needs, and those of your family.

Please see page 16 for details of organisations that you or those close to you may wish to contact or visit online for further support.

## Useful contacts

The organisations below can offer emotional support and practical advice following bereavement.

### **Bereavement Service helpline**

Telephone: **0800 731 0469**

Textphone: **0800 731 0464**

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Telephone: **0808 808 1677**

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

Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm (excluding bank holidays) with extended hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays to 8pm.

### **Citizen's advice service**

Telephone: **0800 144 8848**

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

### **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)**

Telephone: **020 7008 1500**

Website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office)

### **Grief Chat**

Telephone: **01524 889823**

Website: [www.griefchat.co.uk](http://www.griefchat.co.uk)

Email: [info@griefchat.co.uk](mailto:info@griefchat.co.uk)

Free, professional online support through grief with a qualified bereavement counsellor.

### **Money Advice Service**

Telephone: **0800 138 7777**

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



## Relay UK

If you can't hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say using Relay UK. Phone: **18001** followed by **0800 731 0469**. Once you're connected, you can type or speak your conversation. You can use Relay UK with an app or a textphone.

## Simon Says

Telephone: **023 8064 7550**

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

Email: [info@simonsays.org.uk](mailto:info@simonsays.org.uk)

Hampshire-based charity who support young people during or following the loss of a significant person in their lives. Extensive resources for parents, relatives and professionals, including school staff, can be found on their website.

## The Samaritans

Telephone: **116 123**

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

24-hour helpline support every day of the year for anyone in distress. You can get in touch about anything that's troubling you.

## Winston's Wish

Telephone: **08088 020 021**

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

Email: [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)

A national charity supporting grieving children and families.

## Key hospital contacts

Main switchboard: **023 8077 7222**

Bereavement and family support: **023 8120 4587**

Spiritual care: **023 8120 8517**

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS): **023 8120 6325**

Patient support hub: **0800 484 0135**

Cashiers Office: **023 8120 6058**

## Southampton Hospitals Charity

**Southampton Hospitals Charity helps to enhance the care and treatment of patients at University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust.**

The hospital charity pays for the little and big extras which are not funded by the NHS. It helps deliver an enhanced environment, specialist equipment, training and research to improve the health and wellbeing of patients, their relatives and staff.

### Contact us

Telephone: **023 8120 8881**

Website: [southamptonhospitalscharity.org](http://southamptonhospitalscharity.org)

Email: [charity@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:charity@uhs.nhs.uk)

Registered charity number: **1051543**

### Donating in memory of a loved one

Donating to the hospital charity in memory of someone special is one of the many meaningful ways to celebrate their life. You will be ensuring that future patients and their families receive the very best care in our hospitals. Whether you would like to make a one-off gift, set up a regular donation to commemorate an important date, or create an online tribute page, we're here to support you as you find the most fitting way to remember your loved one.

If you would like to donate, you can do so by telephone, online, or by sending a cheque in the post. Let us know the name of your loved one and if there is a special area of the hospital which you would like to benefit from your gift.

Please remember to tell us your name and contact details so we can write to thank you for your donation. Cheques should be made payable to 'Southampton Hospitals Charity' and posted to our address on the next page.

Freepost RRUA-CSKX-JUBZ  
Southampton Hospitals Charity  
Southampton General Hospital  
Tremona Road  
Southampton  
SO16 6YD



**Southampton  
Hospitals  
Charity**

Charity Registration Number: 1051543

### **Collecting at a funeral or memorial service**

Many people choose to request donations at a loved one's funeral or memorial service as an alternative to flowers. We are particularly grateful for these very special donations.

Please let the funeral director know that you would like to support Southampton Hospitals Charity and specify if you would like your gift to benefit a particular ward or department so we can ensure your wishes are fulfilled.

### **Creating an online tribute**

MuchLoved offers a free tribute service to help you remember and commemorate your loved one. It allows you to create your own special memorial website where you can share memories, thoughts and stories with family and friends as well as light candles, add music, photos and videos.

You can also collect donations for Southampton Hospitals Charity in your loved one's name.

The MuchLoved website can be found at: [www.muchloved.com](http://www.muchloved.com)

## List of people to inform

You will need to inform other people and organisations that the person has died. You do not need to do this immediately, but it is important that they are advised as soon as possible, once you feel able to. We have included a list of suggestions in the table below.

<b>People or organisations to inform</b>	
GP (general practitioner)	
Bank and/or building society	
Government services, via the Tell Us once service	
Dentist, optician, carer team and anyone else who has been providing care	
Employer and trade union (if applicable)	
Mortgage provider, housing association or council housing office	
Pension providers	
Utility and energy suppliers	
Social services (if applicable)	
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)	
Passport office	
Membership clubs or activities	
The Bereavement Register (removes the person's details from mailing lists and stops most advertising mail): <a href="http://www.thebereavementregister.org.uk">www.thebereavementregister.org.uk</a>	



## When someone dies

### A step-by-step guide

The person who has died's first point of contact will be notified directly by a member of staff on their ward.

The person who has died will stay in the care of the hospital until a funeral director has been appointed.

It's a good idea to try to locate any useful paperwork regarding the person who has died's will, wishes and funeral plans.

It can be helpful to make two lists of people you need to contact:

- a personal list, for example, family, friends and work colleagues
- a professional list, for example, financial organisations, insurance companies and the family solicitor

Contact these as and when you feel able to.

Any property and valuables will be kept safe.

- The patient support hub team will be in touch to arrange collection or delivery of non-valuable items.
- Items of value can be collected from the cashier's office within the hospital.

Arrangements to see the person who has died can be made by contacting the bereavement and family support team.

You can choose a funeral director to help you arrange the funeral, if you wish.

The Medical Examiner Southampton (MES) service will contact you regarding the certification and registration process, and explain the next steps, as well as expected timescales.

The medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) will then be issued, unless the death is being referred to the coroner.

An appointment can be made to register the death at the Register Office.

Once the death has been registered, you will receive a unique code for the 'Tell Us Once' service. This notifies all government agencies of the death.

Steps can now be taken to settle the estate of the person who has died.



Advice  
and  
support

You can contact the bereavement and family support team at any stage throughout this process, and at any point afterwards, for guidance and support.

Bereavement and family support team  
1st Floor Trust Management Offices (MP310)  
University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust  
Southampton General Hospital  
Tremona Road  
Southampton  
SO16 6YD

Telephone: **023 8120 4587**

Email: [bereavementcare@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:bereavementcare@uhs.nhs.uk)

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email [\*\*patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk\*\*](mailto:patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk)

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit [\*\*www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport\*\*](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)

[\*\*www.uhs.nhs.uk\*\*](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk)

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**Experience  
of care team**