

# Bereavement Support in Western Cheshire

A booklet for relatives and friends after  
the death of their loved one



**Phone number to arrange for  
collection of certificates**

(and belongings, if appropriate)

**Please ensure that the person handing you this booklet fills out below the names and direct dial phone numbers of the senior staff who were responsible for the care of your relative. This will enable you, if desired, to arrange to obtain answers to any questions, if they arise later.**

**Senior Doctor**

(Consultant or GP)

**Name**

**Direct Dial Phone No.**

**Senior Nurse**

(Ward manager, Nursing  
home manager, District  
nurse team leader, etc)



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# **Bereavement Support in Western Cheshire**

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This booklet is part of a joint project which aims to ensure that bereavement support is available for anyone who may need it in Western Cheshire, regardless of the place or cause of death. For all of the project partners see the detail on the back cover.

On behalf of all the partners in the Bereavement Project, we would like to offer our sympathy to you, your family and your friends at this very difficult time.

**We hope that you will find this booklet helpful. We are extremely keen to receive your comments and suggestions so that we can try to improve future editions. If you feel able to do so, please let us have your views by filling in the details on the Feedback Page, near the middle of this booklet, and returning it to us.**

The booklet is divided into two main sections, Part A and Part B.

### Part A - The Practicalities

This first section aims to provide you with the immediate practical advice regarding the arrangements that will need to be made **over the next few days**. It gives answers to questions such as:

- 1 How and where do I get the necessary medical certificates?
- 2 How and where do I collect belongings and valuables?
- 3 What about post mortems, organ donation and the Coroner?
- 4 How do I arrange a funeral?
- 5 How do I register a death?

### Part B - Coping with Bereavement and Grief

The second section aims to give some ideas for help and emotional support that many people may need **over the weeks and months to come**. It may help you to understand some of the emotions which are normal for people to feel whilst grieving and coping with your bereavement.

**If English is not your first language, you may find it helpful to take someone with you to help with translation when you attend the various appointments over the next few days.**

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## The Practicalities

### 1. What needs to be done?

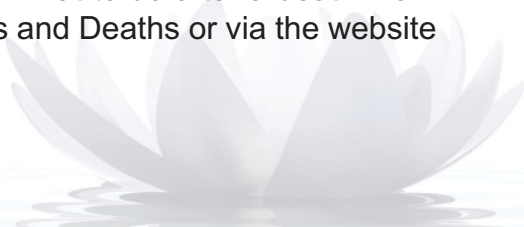
#### Following every death

- ▶ The next working day contact the place where your loved one died (or their own GP if they died at home) to arrange an appointment to:
  - ◆ Collect any belongings and valuables, if necessary
  - ◆ Collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death
- ▶ As soon as possible (certainly within 5 working days) register the death at the Register Office
- ▶ Arrange a funeral, usually via a Funeral Director

#### Other things you should consider

- ▶ Whether or not you wish to arrange to view your relative
- ▶ Whether you want a burial or cremation to be arranged.
- ▶ Talking to someone, e.g. Hospital Chaplain, bereavement staff, etc
- ▶ Contacting various authorities
- ▶ Contacting support agencies
- ▶ Informing others about the death

Other useful information can be found in the Department of Work and Pensions publication called 'What to do after a death' from the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths or via the website on [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)



## 2. Dealing with the immediate practicalities

In order to collect any personal possessions (and to arrange to view the deceased, if desired) please call the first number shown on the front of this booklet. Unless the death has been reported to the Coroner (see section 3) you will also be able to collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.

### 2.1 Countess of Chester Hospital

- ▶ On the next working day following the death of your relative, please contact the Bereavement Support Service Office in one of two ways to arrange an appointment:
  - ◆ Phone 01244 365110 between 10am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday, or
  - ◆ E-mail [patient.servicesofficer@nhs.net](mailto:patient.servicesofficer@nhs.net)
- ▶ When you visit the Bereavement Support Service Office, situated in the main entrance area of the hospital, you will usually be able to collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death on the same day, unless the death has been reported to the Coroner. This will enable you subsequently to obtain the official death certificate from the Register Office (see later section). You will also be given a form which you must complete and give to your chosen Funeral Director and this will authorise the hospital staff to release your deceased relative to the Funeral Director.
- ▶ If, as the next of kin, you wish a different person to collect clothing, cash or valuables then the Bereavement Support Service will need a letter stating that you are nominating someone to do this on your behalf. That person will need to bring with them two forms of identification, e.g. passport and driving licence, along with the letter of authorisation from you.
- ▶ You can if you wish arrange to spend some time with your deceased relative in the viewing suite. You may choose to have a hospital chaplain to accompany you and, if so, do please indicate this when booking your visit. Appointments

for a viewing visit are essential and can be made, in one of two ways as follows:

- ◆ Via the Bereavement Support Office (01244 365110). The appointment will usually be made for an afternoon from Monday to Friday between 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm.
- ◆ In special circumstances you can arrange to view your relative outside these times. To do so, please try if possible to arrange this during normal working hours via the Bereavement Support Office. If this is not possible, please call the hospital switchboard on 01244 365000 and ask them to contact the Clinical Site Co-ordinator so you can discuss and agree the arrangements.

## 2.2 Ellesmere Port Hospital

- ▶ On the next working day after the death of your relative please phone 01244 362928 or 01244 362986 to speak to the Hospital Administrator to arrange an appointment to collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death, unless the death has been reported to the Coroner. This will enable you subsequently to obtain the official death certificate from the Register Office (see later section). You will also be given a form which you must complete and give to your chosen Funeral Director and this will authorise the hospital staff to release your deceased relative to the Funeral Director.
- ▶ Clothing, personal possessions, cash and valuables will be released to you at that time. If, as next of kin, you wish a different person to collect clothing, cash or valuables then please state this and give the name of the person when making the appointment. That person will need to bring a form of identification.
- ▶ You can if you wish arrange to spend some time with your deceased relative. Arrangements to do this during normal working hours can be made by contacting the Hospital Administrator on the numbers shown above. Alternative times can usually be accommodated by arrangement.

## 2.3 The Hospice of the Good Shepherd

- ▶ Phone the Hospice on 01244 851091, if advice on the procedure has not already been provided or in the unlikely event the death has been reported to the Coroner.
- ▶ An appointment will be made for you to collect any personal possessions along with the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (if not already provided), unless the death has been reported to the Coroner.

## 2.4 Nursing Home

- ▶ Phone the nursing home on the number you have been given if advice on procedure has not already been provided.
- ▶ An appointment will be made to collect any personal possessions along with the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death unless the death has been reported to the Coroner.

## 2.5 At home

- ▶ **Expected death and seen by a GP in the last 14 days**  
Verification of death may be performed by a GP or sometimes by a community nurse. The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will be issued by a GP
- ▶ **Unexpected death or not seen by a GP in the last 14 days**  
It is not possible for a GP to issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death in these circumstances and the Coroner will need to be informed to deal with the case. See the later section dealing with “Deaths referred to the coroner”
- ▶ **Death in evenings, in the night and at weekends**  
Death can usually be verified by contacting the “Out of Hours GP service” or community nurse. Depending on the circumstances (see above) either the usual GP will issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death on the following working day or the Coroner will be informed to deal with the case.

You may wish to use the chart below for your appointments.

Appointment Information	Page	Date of Appointment	Time	Done
Collect Medical Certificate Cause of Death & personal possessions				
Arrange to view your friend or relative				
Register Office				
Funeral Director				

### 3. Deaths involving the Coroner

In some instances there is a legal requirement for the doctor to refer a death to the Coroner. This may result in a post-mortem examination. If you have any questions about a death being referred to the Coroner, the clinical team or Bereavement Officer involved will discuss and explain the procedure in detail.

#### Who are Coroners?

Coroners are usually lawyers, but sometimes are doctors. Coroners are independent judicial officers – this means that no-one else can tell them or direct them as to what they should do but they must follow the laws and regulations which apply. Coroners are helped by their officers who are investigators with, typically, a police or medical background. These officers receive the reports of deaths and make enquiries on behalf of the Coroner. In the event that the death has occurred suddenly and unexpectedly in the community, it will often be a police officer who will have attended. However, unless the death has been deemed to be suspicious, the police officer will have attended on behalf of the Coroner.

#### What does the Coroner do?

A Coroner enquires into those deaths reported to them. It is their duty to find out the medical cause of death, if it is not known, and

to enquire about the cause of death if it was due to violence, or industrial disease or was otherwise unnatural.

### **How are deaths reported to the Coroner?**

Deaths are usually reported to the Coroner by the police or by the doctor who has been treating the deceased. A doctor will also report an unexpected death to the Coroner.

### **When is a death reported to the Coroner?**

The death will be reported to the Coroner if it resulted from or occurred in any of these, and sometimes other, circumstances.

- ◆ The cause of death is not known or is uncertain.
- ◆ The deceased was not attended by a doctor during their last illness.
- ◆ The doctor treating the deceased had not seen them either after death or in the 14 days prior to their death.
- ◆ The death occurred whilst a patient was undergoing an operation or did not recover from the anaesthetic.
- ◆ The death was caused by an industrial injury or disease.
- ◆ The death was violent or unnatural or occurred under suspicious circumstances.
- ◆ The death occurred as a result of violence, neglect or abortion, or any kind of poisoning.

The Coroner may be the only person who can certify the cause of death.

### **What will the Coroner do?**

The Coroner may decide that the death was quite natural and will allow a doctor to issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (the Coroner may contact relatives directly to discuss this). If not, the Coroner may ask a pathologist to examine the body by means of a post-mortem examination. If the result of the post-mortem examination shows the death to have been due to natural causes, the Coroner will issue the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and this will be sent to the Register Office directly. The Coroner will advise you once this certificate has been issued and you may then make an appointment to register the death at the Register Office.

## What if the death was not due to natural causes?

The Coroner will hold an Inquest but he can issue a burial or cremation order so that the funeral can take place before the inquest. An inquest is an inquiry to find out exactly who has died and how, when and where they died, together with information needed by the Registrar of Deaths, so that the death can be registered. Because there will be a delay before a full Death Certificate is available, the Coroner will usually issue an Interim Death Certificate which is accepted by most banks and building societies.

For further information regarding Coroner's procedures you can contact the Coroner's office which is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 8.30am – 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 4.00pm and is located at:  
Cheshire Coroner's Office  
The West Annexe, Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH  
Tel. No 01925 442473 / 442474  
Website: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

## 4. Post-Mortem examinations

### Coroner's Post-Mortem

Tissue cannot be taken from the body for any purpose except to establish the cause of death. Sometimes small pieces of tissue (similar to a biopsy with a live patient) are taken for examination under the microscope in order to establish the cause of death. You will be consulted if this is the case. Rarely, is it necessary to retain a whole organ for a limited period of time but this will not happen without you being consulted. The consultation process will include taking your instructions as to whether the organ in question is to be returned to the body or otherwise disposed of.

### Hospital Post-Mortems

Occasionally the doctor treating the deceased may seek consent from relatives for a post-mortem examination to be carried out in order to gain a fuller understanding of the deceased's final illness

or the cause of death. It may also be carried out to obtain tissue or any part from the body for the purpose of future medical education or research, which will help to contribute to better care of other patients in the future. This kind of post-mortem examination is only carried out with the full consent of the deceased's next-of-kin. It is however not a legal requirement. Where a hospital post-mortem is carried out the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will still be issued by the hospital.

### **Organ and tissue donation.**

If the death happened in hospital, the staff may ask for your permission to use organs or tissue for transplant purposes. The transplantation of organs such as hearts, livers and kidneys can save people's lives. Not everyone is a suitable organ donor and the decision to request the removal of organs is made by the doctors who were involved in the care. After organ donation, the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will be issued, unless the death has been referred to the Coroner. Arrangements can be made for you to see your relative or friend once donation has taken place, either by the ward staff or the Bereavement Support staff.

It is now possible to use corneas, skin, bone, heart valves and tendons in transplantation, so just one donor can help many others, thus freeing people from long and sometimes painful treatments. Tissue cannot be removed unless the relatives give consent. Did the deceased carry a donor card or were they on the Donor Register? It is easier to give that consent if you know donation was the deceased person's wish. As tissue for transplantation has to be removed very soon after death to improve the chances of successful outcomes, hospital staff have no option but to approach you in the very early stages of your bereavement. Where retrieval takes place, the body is treated with respect and dignity throughout. Being a donor does not cause delay to funeral arrangements.

## Corneal donation

The cornea is the small, clear front part of the eye, which can be donated after death. Corneal transplantation can save people's sight and the removal of corneas does not disfigure the donor in any way. Corneal donation can be carried out up to 48 hours after the death. If you think that your relative/friend would have wished to donate their corneas please contact the Countess of Chester Hospital, 01244 365000 and ask for Westminster Eye Unit, or the Bereavement Support Service staff.

The Bereavement Support Service will be able to contact the Transplant Co-ordinator if further information is required at any time.

## 5. Registering the Death

### Where to register the death.

You will need to make an appointment to register the death. This must be done within 5 working days (unless it has been reported to the Coroner) and, usually, in the district Register Office where the death has occurred. Please note, a death cannot be registered without a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.

The Chester Register Office is open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm excluding bank holidays. It is located at:

Chester Register Office,  
Goldsmith House, Goss St, Chester, CH1 2BG.

To make an appointment please ring  
01244 972668 or 0300 123 7037.

If you live in the Ellesmere Port area, the Northwich area or the Winsford area you may wish to make an appointment to attend your local office. Do still ring the Chester office but indicate that you would like to register the death at one of these other offices. You will then be given an appointment and directions to find the relevant office. Alternatively, it may be possible to book an appointment online to register the death in Cheshire West. There is more information on the website on page 10,

Website: [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/registration](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/registration)

E-mail: [chesterregisteroffice@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:chesterregisteroffice@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

Arrangements can be made to register a death, elsewhere, but this may delay the funeral by a few days as the forms have to be posted to the office where you wish to register the death.

### How to register the death

- 1 Collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.
- 2 Make an appointment at the Register Office.
- 3 Take the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death to the Register Office within 5 working days. (If the hospital doctor has spoken to the Coroner about the death, the Bereavement Support Service staff will advise you on the procedures in these circumstances)

### Who can register the death

- ◆ A relative of the deceased
- ◆ Someone present at the death
- ◆ The person making the funeral arrangements

Please note if English is not your first language you may prefer to take someone with you to help.

### What needs to be taken to register the death

- ◆ The Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death
- ◆ The deceased's medical card, if available.
- ◆ The deceased's birth certificate, if available.
- ◆ The deceased's marriage or civil partnership certificate, if appropriate and available.

## What the registrar will need to know

Tick when you have the following information.

The date and place of death	
The deceased's last usual address	
The deceased's first names and surname (and maiden name where appropriate)	
The deceased's date and place of birth (town and county if born in the U.K, and country if born abroad).	
The deceased's occupation (or last occupation if retired), and the name and occupation of their spouse or civil partner if applicable	
Whether the deceased was receiving a pension or allowance from public funds	
If the deceased was married, the full name and date of birth of the surviving widow, widower or civil partner.	

### The registrar will give you:

- ♦ **A Certificate of Burial or Cremation:** this certificate is green in colour and should be given to your Funeral Director as early as possible.
- ♦ **A Certificate of Registration of Death (Form BD8):** this may need to be sent to the Social Security Office and is provided free of charge. Read the information on the back of the certificate and if any of it applies, fill in the certificate and post or take it to your Social Security office.
- ♦ **The Death Certificate:** this is a copy of the entry in the Death Register. You may need *one or more* Death Certificates for the will, and for any pension claims, insurance policies, etc. These are available for a small fee. Further copies can be obtained at a later date if required.

Other useful information can be found in the Department of Work and Pensions publication called 'What to do after a death' or by accessing the website on [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

## 6. Choosing a Funeral Director and arranging a funeral

You do not have to wait until you have registered the death before contacting a Funeral Director. Funeral Directors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the earlier the Funeral Director becomes involved, the sooner they will be able to act on your behalf. However the final arrangements for the funeral should not be made until you are sure the death does not have to be referred to the Coroner. If the death has been referred to the Coroner his office will advise you what to do. Your Funeral Director will liaise with the Coroner for you.

If there is to be a post-mortem examination the date when the funeral can be held may be affected.

The deceased may have left instructions regarding their wishes for the funeral arrangements.

Funeral Directors addresses and telephone numbers can be obtained from your local telephone directory, Yellow Pages, Thompson's Local Directory, or the internet.

### Rights and options

The main requirements in England and Wales are that the death is certified by a Doctor or Coroner, that it is registered with a Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths and that the body is either buried or cremated.

- ◆ You do not have to have a funeral ceremony
- ◆ You do not have to have a religious minister
- ◆ You do not have to use a Funeral Director
- ◆ A ceremony does not have to take place in a crematorium or place of worship

## Alternatives to traditional funerals

There are more options concerning the content of a funeral ceremony and its duration than many people realise. The majority of people choose to make their arrangements through a Funeral Director. But some people see “do-it-yourself” funerals as more personal and less expensive. If this approach appeals and you have time to research and prepare, enquire at the cemeteries and crematorium department of your local authority for guidance. You could also get information from the Natural Death Centre ([www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk) – Helpline - 0871 288 2098). Some Funeral Directors are willing to help with such funerals.

## Repatriation

Sending bodies abroad requires permission from the Coroner at least four days before the body is to be moved. The paperwork that is required and the regulations are dependent on the country of destination and need to be checked with the relevant Embassy or Consulate. Some Funeral Directors have experience with Repatriation and can give advice.

## Choosing a Funeral Director

Funeral Directors will manage funeral arrangements and give advice and support. Check if the Funeral Director you choose belongs to a trade association. This requires them to provide full information about their services and prices. These factors may influence your choice:

- ◆ Location of the firm’s premises
- ◆ Range of services provided
- ◆ The way you are treated by the staff
- ◆ Cost
- ◆ Recommendation of those who have used the service
- ◆ Ownership (small family business or large firm)

## A Simple Funeral

Most people would probably require the Funeral Director to provide the following services as a minimum:

- ◆ Make all the necessary arrangements
- ◆ Provide appropriate staff
- ◆ Provide a suitable coffin
- ◆ Transfer the deceased from the place of death to the Funeral Director's premises
- ◆ Care for the deceased prior to the funeral
- ◆ Provide a hearse to the nearest cemetery or crematorium
- ◆ Arrange for burial or cremation as appropriate

Embalming, viewing of the deceased, or providing a limousine for mourners are optional extras.

### Funeral costs

Costs for the same services may vary considerably from one Funeral Director to another. You may wish to get more than one quote to compare costs. "Disbursements" are fees paid to others, e.g. for cremation, minister, doctor's certificates, newspaper announcements, flowers, etc. Ask the Funeral Director for a written quotation detailing all these fees. Funeral payments are normally recoverable from the deceased's estate. Remember the cheapest or most expensive service is not necessarily the best value.

### Paying for a Funeral

If you arrange a funeral, you are responsible for paying the bill, so please check where the money will be coming from and if there is enough.

If you are finding it difficult to pay for a funeral that you have to arrange, you may be entitled to receive a Social Fund Funeral payment from the Department for Work and Pensions providing you or your partner receive one of the following:

- ◆ Income Support/Employment and Support Allowance
- ◆ Housing Benefit

- ◆ Council Tax Benefit
- ◆ Job Seekers Allowance (income based)
- ◆ Disabled Person's Tax credit
- ◆ Working Family's Tax Credit.

Please note there may still be a fee which has to be paid immediately, even if you are entitled to receive a Social Fund Funeral Payment. Please discuss this with your Funeral Director.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can help with all legal and practical matters following a death. The telephone numbers are listed in Part B, Section 5.

Age UK provides advice and information to anyone over the age of 50 about funeral arrangements and welfare benefits etc. See Part B, Section 5.

The Independent Order of Oddfellows publishes an annual survey of funeral costs, which will give you an idea of the average prices charged in the region. Tel: 0800 028 1810

There are also two booklets that might be of help to you (published by the Department for Work and Pensions)

- ◆ Funeral Payment from the Social Fund (SF 200 04/09)
- ◆ What to do after a death in England & Wales

These are available from the Countess of Chester Hospital Bereavement Support Office, Register Office, Social Services, Job Centre Plus offices and all main Post Offices.

## 7. Wills

If you have any queries about the deceased person's will or regarding the absence of a will you can contact:

Liverpool District Probate Registry  
Tel: 0151 236 8264

## 8. Who else needs to be told?

You will probably want to let family, friends and neighbours know of the death right away. There are several other people who may also need to know and the table below may be helpful to you. There are plans by the Department of Work and Pensions to provide a service called "Tell Us Once" which, if available in the future, you may find useful as one call should notify several government departments of the death of your relative. The local Register Office will be able to tell you if this is available in your area yet.

	Done
The Priest, Vicar or Minister of Other Faiths	
Family Doctor	
The Benefits Agency (pensions, benefits)	
The Bank, Giro, Credit Cards, Building Society	
Social Services (home help, home care)	
Schools, Colleges or University attended	
Place of work (occupational pension)	
Executors of the Estate (wills)	
Solicitor	
Insurance Companies	
Library Service	
HM Revenue and Customs (Inland Revenue / Tax Office)	
Residential or Nursing Home	
Landlord, Housing Department	
Electricity, Gas, Telephone, Water Companies	
Post Office (redirect mail)	
D.V.L.A. Swansea	
Careline	
Cancel any appointments including any existing hospital appointments.	

The deceased may have been living alone so you will need to ensure that their home is secure and remove all signs that indicate no one is there. You may wish to collect spare keys from other relatives, friends and neighbours.

Please note if you are writing to a solicitor, bank, building society or insurance company, etc you will need to include an official copy of the Death Certificate or Coroner's Interim Death Certificate, so do try to obtain the required number of copies when at the Register Office to save the inconvenience of having to get extra copies later. Photocopies are not accepted for insurance or legal reasons. You may need to include the relevant account and policy numbers if available.

## 9. Hospital, Hospice, Community Chaplains and Ministers

The Chaplaincy team and spiritual care team are available to offer spiritual, religious and pastoral care for bereaved people as part of a wider 'multi-faith' Chaplaincy provision. The Chaplaincy team also have up-to-date contact details for the leaders of other local Faith Communities and the Humanist Society. Alternatively, for friends and families who have died in the community you may want to contact your own ministers or spiritual care leaders. To speak to a Chaplain from the Countess of Chester Hospital or the Hospice see telephone numbers below:

Countess of Chester Hospital: 01244 364543

Hospice of the Good Shepherd: 01244 851091

## 10. Example letter

Here is an example of a letter that you may find useful when informing people about the death.

[ Your Name]  
[Your Address]  
[Your Postal Code]  
[Your Telephone Number]

Date  
[Address to whom you are writing]  
[Name]  
[Department]  
[Company]  
[Road]  
[City]  
[Postal Code]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to inform you of the death of [name of the deceased and date of birth].

Please find enclosed with this letter the documentation/papers that need to be returned to you.

[Name of deceased] died in or at [hospital name or home address] on [date].

If you require any further information please contact me at the above address.

Yours faithfully,

[Your name]

## Feedback Form for Comments and Suggestions

Do please use this form (see overleaf) to send us your views on this booklet. Any comments you wish to make are important to us. But of course if you have specific suggestions to offer then those will be even more useful, so we can improve future editions.

You can, if you wish, return this form without giving any personal details. However, we would appreciate it if you would provide us your contact details so that we can clarify anything that is important and acknowledge your comments.

As well as this booklet, we are also trying to improve many other aspects of the bereavement process as part of this project. Over the coming months and years the project team plan to send out some brief questionnaires and your help and feedback concerning your own experiences would be extremely valuable to us. You are, of course, under no obligation to help. Would you please let us know your preference by ringing the appropriate response below for you personally.

**Yes - I am happy to be contacted in the future with occasional questionnaires**

**No - I do not wish to receive any questionnaires**

Many thanks.

*Carol Jones, on behalf of the Project Team*

Please use BLOCK LETTERS when filling in details below!

**Name** .....

**Address** .....

**Postcode** .....

**Telephone Number** .....

**Email address** .....

See over the page to provide your feedback and for the return address





**Did you find this booklet useful?**

Yes / No

**Comment?** .....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Where did your relative die?**

Hospice / Hospital / In own home / Nursing Home / Other

**Any other general comments?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

*Thank you for the time you have taken to give us your comments.*

**Please return this completed form to:**

Carol Jones  
Bereavement Project Team, Hospice of the Good Shepherd  
Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester CH2 4DG

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## Part B

### Coping with Bereavement and Grief

The death of someone close can be devastating. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to grieve and your experience of grief will be different from other people's. Your reactions may be influenced by a number of things including your previous experiences of bereavement, your age and personality, your religious and spiritual beliefs, cultural background, your actual life circumstances and how you cope with loss.

The following information aims to help you understand some of the emotions which you may face during your bereavement and to make some practical suggestions to help you through this difficult time. At the back of this booklet there are some addresses and telephone numbers of organisations which may be helpful to you.

#### 1. Understanding Grief

Every person's experience of grief is different but when someone close dies you may initially feel **shocked, numb, angry, guilty and scared**. These feelings can change to feelings of **sadness, pining, loneliness** – thinking about how you will cope in the future may frighten you.

These are some of the common feelings that many people share and over time you may find that these feelings lessen. Whilst every person's experience of grief is unique there are some common reactions to bereavement.

#### 'Is it normal to have physical reactions to my loss?'

Physical reactions to a death are very common. You may find you don't want to eat, you feel exhausted and frequently people

find that they are unable to sleep. Poor sleep patterns can leave you unable to think clearly and feeling drained. Other physical symptoms can include feeling empty inside, headaches, stomach aches and generally feeling run down. Whilst these reactions should pass in time, if they persist you may want to consult your GP.

### **'Am I going mad? I keep on hearing their voice'**

You may have what you feel are some odd experiences. It is not unusual to see or hear the person who has died. Many people talk to the person as if they were still there. This can happen when you are not expecting it, almost as if your mind has 'forgotten' for a moment that they have died.

### **'Why can't I stop going over and over every detail of his last few days?'**

It is a common reaction to keep on repeatedly thinking about what happened particularly if the death was sudden and traumatic or occurred in traumatic circumstances. It seems to be the mind's way of processing what has happened and this tends to reduce over time. Talking with the health care professionals involved at the time of death may help – see the contact details on the front cover.

### **'I feel like there's no point in going on'**

It is not unusual for people coping with bereavement to think about their own death and ending their own life as a way out of the pain. It is really important to share these thoughts with people you can trust. It is very common to feel hopeless and despairing after the death of someone close but if these feelings continue and you feel overwhelmed, please see the section on **When to seek further help**.

### **'I just feel so guilty'**

A lot of people wonder whether they could have done anything differently which might have helped or prevented the death; they



may feel guilt at somehow having let the person down or think constantly 'if only I had ...'. It is also common to feel relief at someone's death following a long and painful illness and then to feel guilty for feeling like this. It can be extremely painful to live with these emotions but ultimately feeling guilty will not help. If you can, try and focus on the good times and avoid focusing on events in the past which you cannot change.

### **'Why do I feel so angry?'**

Unfortunately the death of someone close can bring changes in terms of financial and family responsibilities that you may feel you can't cope with. You may feel really angry that you are being left on your own to handle all these things. Or perhaps you feel angry with someone you consider to be responsible for the death. Anger is a healthy and normal part of grief; it is a reaction to feeling out of control and abandoned. If you do have any questions about the final illness of your loved one, then it may well be helpful to make contact with the doctors or nurses who looked after them – see the contact details on the front page of this booklet.

### **'Why have people stopped caring? They don't come around any more or ring me like they used to'**

Sometimes people avoid the bereaved person because they don't know what to say or do or are scared of upsetting you. Sometimes people just do not realise how long it takes to recover from a death and expect you to be feeling better very quickly. You may need to tell friends and family that it helps to talk about the person who has died.

### **'I can't concentrate and I am worried about how I will cope at work'**

People find it hard to concentrate after a death; you may find it really difficult to read a book or watch television. It's quite normal to feel like this and to forget where things are or what you are



meant to be doing. However this can be worrying and can cause problems at work. It is a good idea to talk to your manager to explain this. It may even be worthwhile exploring whether there is a possibility of altering your working hours or other ways of working to help you through this difficult period.

### **‘When am I going to start to feel better?’**

It takes time to heal from grief and each of us responds differently. Coming to terms with a death is a very gradual process which can take a long time. In the initial days after a bereavement family and friends often pull together and support you but frequently the reality of the death takes time to sink in and it is often when family and friends think you should be ‘getting better’ and pull back a little that you feel at your most lonely and sad.

Over time people usually find that they are able to get on with their lives whilst continuing to remember their loved ones. Generally people start to feel like this within one or two years of the death. If you are beginning to start rebuilding your life try not to feel guilty. It is normal to begin to recover and to start to rebuild your life – it does not in any way mean you are being disloyal to the person who has died.

## **2. Taking care of yourself – do’s and don’ts**

It is generally agreed that the following may be helpful at this difficult time.

- ◆ **Do** express your emotions
- ◆ **Do** remember that you need time to rest, think and sleep.
- ◆ **Do** let children talk about their emotions and express themselves.
- ◆ **Do** send children back to school and let them continue with their usual activities.
- ◆ **Do** be gentle with yourself. If you have had a bad day, put it behind you and have another go.

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- ◆ **Don't** stifle your feelings
  - ◆ **Don't** avoid talking about what has happened.
  - ◆ **Don't** forget that children experience similar feelings and need to share in the grief process.

### 3. When to seek further help

The following is a list of symptoms and feelings often associated with grief. Whilst these can be a normal part of grieving, if they persist and make it difficult to manage day to day tasks you may wish to seek professional help if you:

- ◆ Are always feeling exhausted, anxious, suicidal, depressed, helpless, experiencing uncontrollable anger, sleeplessness or feeling stressed.
- ◆ Are becoming withdrawn and unable to speak to or spend time with family and friends, or finding it difficult to cope at work, school etc.
- ◆ Are becoming dependent on drugs or alcohol.
- ◆ Have little desire to get involved in activities you once enjoyed.

Your family doctor may be able to help particularly if you are worried about your own health. You can also contact the Bereavement Project Team to discuss whether there may be other avenues of support that you could explore to help you through this difficult time. Remember, this may be in the first few weeks or many months after someone has died (see the later section on Seeking Help at a Later Date)

## 4. Useful booklets and leaflets

- ◆ What to do after a death in England and Wales, Benefits Agency Booklet
- ◆ Funeral Payment from the Social Fund (SF200 04/09)
- ◆ How to obtain Probate (PA2)
- ◆ A detailed guide to Bereavement Benefits (NP45) Social Security Agency
- ◆ Reading for adults on bereavement see the following website or ask or at your local library  
[www.stchristophers.org.uk](http://www.stchristophers.org.uk)
- ◆ Reading for children and young adults on bereavement see the website below, if you do not have access to the internet, your local library will be able to help you.  
[www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle](http://www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle)

## 5. Support Organisations

### Local organisations that may be able to offer help

#### **Age Concern Chester (AgeUK)**

4 Queen St, Chester, CH1 3JG. Tel: 01244 401500

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

Provides information and advice to people over 50 on a variety of topics

#### **Citizens Advice Bureau - Chester**

Folliott House, 53 Northgate St, Chester CH1 2HQ. Tel: 0844 8269690

#### **Citizens Advice Bureau - Ellesmere Port (Cheshire West)**

1 Whitby Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 8AA. Tel: 08444 111 444

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

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.

#### **Macmillan Support & Information Manager**

Countess of Chester Hospital, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1UL. Tel: 01244 364 948

E-mail: [elizabeth.taylor18@nhs.net](mailto:elizabeth.taylor18@nhs.net)

This service is to support patients or family members who are or have been affected by cancer.



### **Reflect Children's and Young People's Counselling Service**

Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester, CH2 4DG

Tel: 01244 851104 Website: [www.hospiceofthegoodshepherd.com](http://www.hospiceofthegoodshepherd.com)

REFLECT offers bereavement support and counselling for children, young people and their families in Chester, rural Chester, Deeside and Ellesmere Port

### **The Bereavement Project .**

Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester, CH2 4DG

Tel: 01244 853193 E-mail [bereavement@hospiceotgs.com](mailto:bereavement@hospiceotgs.com)

### **Mollington Drop In for the bereaved**

Mollington Village Hall, Station Road, Backford, Chester, CH1 6NT

Tel: 01244 853193

On the 1st and 3rd Tuesday morning of every month, between 10.00am and midday a team of befrienders invite you to join them socially to meet them and others who have also experienced bereavement. The befrienders also visit people in their homes.

## **National organisations that may be able to help**

### **The Samaritans (local)**

36 Upper Northgate St, Chester. Tel: 01244 377999

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

24-hour telephone emotional and practical support and face to face befriending during the day at their local branches.

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Tel: 0208 939 9530 / Helpline: 0844 477 9400

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

Offers counselling, support and advice. A newsletter and extensive list of books and leaflets are published. See also - [www.RD4U.org.uk](http://www.RD4U.org.uk) the Cruse Website for Children and Young People & their young people's freephone helpline no: 0808 808 1677.

### **Lesbian and Gay**

#### **Bereavement Project**

Tel: 020 8455 8894 (Evenings: 7.00pm to 10.00pm) [www.londonfriend.org.uk](http://www.londonfriend.org.uk)

Telephone helpline offering advice and emotional support to people bereaved by the death of a same sex partner. Support would also be given to other family members, friends, carers, etc.

### **National Association of Widows**

Tel: 0845 838 2261

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

Offers telephone support and advice and may be able to put widows in contact with people in a similar situation in their area.

**Roadpeace**

Tel: 0845 4500 355 9am – 5pm. Website: [www.roadpeace.org](http://www.roadpeace.org)

RoadPeace offers a practical and emotional support service to the bereaved and injured through road traffic accidents.

**Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM)**

Tel: 0845 872 3440 Helpline. Website: [www.samm.org.uk](http://www.samm.org.uk)

Help through befriending, for people who have suffered the loss of a child, relative or friend of any age, as a result of murder or manslaughter. Contacts can be arranged through visits and letters or by telephone.

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

Tel: 0844 5616855 (9am-9pm everyday) Helpline. Website: [www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)

Exist to meet the needs and break the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.

**The Compassionate Friends**

Tel: 0845 1232304. Website: [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

An organisation of bereaved parents and their families offering understanding, support and encouragement to others after the death of a child or children of any age.

**Terence Higgins Trust**

Tel: 020 7812 1600 (9.30 – 5.30pm daily) Website: [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

Provides practical support, help, counselling and advice to anyone who has lost someone due to AIDS / HIV.

**The WAY Foundation**

Tel: 0300 012 4929. Email: [info@wayfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@wayfoundation.org.uk)

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

Support for young widowed (married or not) men and women with or without children.

**Winston's Wish**

Tel: 08452 03 04 05. Website: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

Leading childhood bereavement charity offering practical support and guidance to families and anyone concerned about a grieving child.



## 6. Where can I get support at a later date?

It is hoped that this booklet has helped you understand some of the practical, emotional and physical effects of losing someone you love. As the booklet states, some people may need more help and support sometime after the loss of someone close to them. This may be weeks, months or even years later. If you feel you are struggling, please do let someone know. This may be your GP, or you may want to contact one of the organisations listed above. However, if you feel you need more one-to-one support please contact the Bereavement Project Team on 01244 853193

Alternatively, cut this page out, provide your name, address and contact phone number and return it to the address at the bottom of the page:

**Name:** .....

**Address:** .....

.....

**Postcode** .....

**Contact Phone Number:** .....

**Please return your details to:**

Carol Jones

Bereavement Project Team

Hospice of the Good Shepherd

Gordon Lane, Backford, Chester, CH2 4DG

Telephone: 01244 853193

E-mail [bereavement@hospiceotgs.com](mailto:bereavement@hospiceotgs.com)



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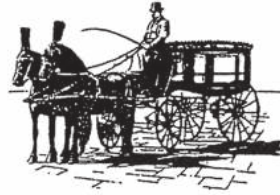
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If you would like to speak to someone about your bereavement now or in the future please contact Carol Jones, Bereavement Project Team, Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Gordon Lane, Backford, CH2 4DG.

**01244 853193**

**[bereavement@hospiceotgs.com](mailto:bereavement@hospiceotgs.com)**

We hope that you found this booklet helpful, if you have any comments to make about this booklet please see page 19 & 20.



Notes:





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**We are very keen to receive your  
comments on this booklet.  
Please see the tear off form near the middle  
for details of how to do this.  
*Many thanks!***

Part A of this booklet, “The Practicalities”, has been adapted from the Countess of Chester Hospital booklet “Bereavement Support for relatives and friends after the death of their loved one”.

Part B, “Coping with Bereavement and Grief”, has been developed and added as part of the Bereavement Project.

