



Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

Quality Care - for you, with you

Coping with Bereavement

**Information to support you and your family
when a loved one has died**

We would like to express our deepest sympathy to you and your family on the death of your loved one.

We hope this booklet may help guide you through some of the practical and necessary formalities that need to be carried out at this sad and difficult time.

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Taking time

At this difficult time it is important to take a few moments to gather your thoughts, to cry, to talk or to have some time alone. You may have to make some important decisions and it is likely to help you and your family, now and later, to know you had the opportunity to consider your options.

It is often helpful to have the support of family members and friends at this time. If you wish, the staff can also contact your Minister/Priest, Spiritual Leader or the Hospital Chaplain. However, or you may prefer just to be on your own.

The staff who cared for your loved one will do all they can to help and support you at this time. If, in the days or weeks ahead you wish to speak to the healthcare professionals who cared for your loved one at the time of their death, please contact the ward manager/lead community nurse to arrange an appointment.

Patient Support staff can also be contacted for advice, help and support. **Tel:** 028 3861 2395 or 028 3861 4285 from Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm.

Return of belongings *(when your loved one has not died in their own home)*

The staff will ask you your wishes as they prepare to gather your loved one's personal effects together. You can take the belongings immediately or if preferred, they can be collected later. Please confirm with the staff what you would like to do.

The Trust has policies in place regarding the return of valuables. Staff will discuss these arrangements with you, and will advise you if it is necessary to return to collect valuables or money. In some instances legal requirements may prevent a

swift return of belongings, but you will be kept informed through the process. The staff will act as quickly as possible, and your patience will be appreciated.

Organ and Tissue Donation

Some people choose to join the donor register or carry an organ/tissue donor card. In the absence of this, the next of kin can consent to organs/tissues being donated when someone dies. If you know your loved one wished to donate their organs or tissues, or this is something you wish to consider on their behalf, please inform the ward staff, GP or district nurse. Sometimes a medical condition or cause/place of death will mean a person cannot be a donor.

In some hospital areas, for example, the Intensive Care Unit, you may be specifically approached about organ or tissue donation.

Arrangements after death has occurred

Depending on the circumstances and where the death occurred, at an appropriate time the deceased may be brought respectfully to a mortuary or room of repose. This is a special facility where the deceased can remain until the formal arrangements for release to funeral directors or post mortem examinations are complete. The mortuary staff will assist you to see and spend time with the person who has died.

When the Trust is legally able to do so, for example, when the medical certificate of cause of death has been completed, the deceased will be released to your chosen funeral director.

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

A medical certificate of cause of death is required to register your relative's death. This certificate must be completed by a doctor who has treated the deceased within the 28 days before the death occurred. This certificate is usually given to the person recorded as the deceased's "Next of Kin", person with parental responsibility or guardian.

If the deceased had not been seen by a doctor within the 28 days before the death occurred, or in circumstances such as a sudden or unexpected death, a medical certificate of cause of death cannot be issued. Such deaths, by law, are reported to the Coroner, an independent officer of the court who investigates sudden, violent or unexplained deaths.

Staff will provide you with information regarding this certificate.

Post mortem Examination

A post mortem (sometimes called an autopsy) is an examination carried out by a pathologist after a death, where it is necessary to establish the medical cause of death. There are two reasons why a post-mortem may be carried out:

1. Coroners post mortem

If the Coroner decides to investigate the death, he may order a post mortem examination. The Coroner does not need the deceased family's consent to request a post mortem which will be carried out at the State Pathology Service in Belfast. When the post mortem is complete the Coroner's Service will provide a certificate to allow a funeral to take place. The doctor or general practitioner who cared for your relative will discuss this carefully with you and provide you with written information on this process if you require it.

2. A hospital consented post mortem

You may be asked by a doctor for permission to carry out this post mortem. It is an examination carried out with the consent of relatives, in order to more fully understand the illness, the cause of death and to enhance future medical care. It is your decision to grant permission for this. The doctor or general practitioner who cared for your relative may discuss this option with you and provide you with further written information on this process if you require it.

Registering your relative's death

Once the medical certificate of cause of death has been completed, the death will need to be registered with the Registrar of Births and Deaths. All deaths that occur in Northern Ireland must be registered in the council district in which the death occurred or in which the deceased person normally/ usually resided. Your funeral director will be able to advise you if you are unsure.

Registration should take place within 5 days. Your funeral director will require the GRO form 21 which you will receive from the officer registering your relative's death; or a Coroner's Order before a cremation can proceed or a grave in a district council owned cemetery can be opened. A list of local council offices is included at the end of this booklet.

Funeral arrangements

Unless there is a special religious or cultural reason for holding the funeral quickly, you can take some time to arrange your relative's funeral. It is likely that your Minister, Priest, Spiritual Leader or members of your community will be able to assist you with your decisions and planning.

Decisions to be made

- Your loved one might have planned their own funeral or voiced their views on what they would like included or what they would like happen to their body. Written instructions may be contained in their will, or these may have been discussed with a relative or friend. It might be appropriate to consider these wishes when making your plans.
- Your relative may have already paid for their funeral arrangements, and therefore it may also be helpful to be aware of any paperwork concerning this.
- While it is possible to make all the arrangements yourself, you may find the support of a funeral director invaluable as they know all the issues that need to be considered. Friends, family or your spiritual leader may be able to help you choose a funeral director.
- Advice on burial options can be obtained through your funeral director, whether or not you are planning a formal funeral service. He/she will also help you organise the purchase of a grave if necessary. Your Minister/Priest or Spiritual Leader will be able to assist you regarding Church cemeteries. Information on council owned cemeteries can also be obtained from your district council.
- Cremations in Northern Ireland are undertaken in Roselawn Crematorium in Belfast. Further information on cremation can be obtained through your funeral director or by contacting the Crematorium directly on **Tel:** 028 9044 8288. The funeral director will be able to help you with the additional forms required to allow a cremation to take place. Cremations cannot take place until the cause of death is confirmed.

- Funerals can be expensive. Many funeral directors are members of an association such as:
 - The National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)
 - The Funeral Association of Northern Ireland
 - The Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIFD)
 - The Irish Association of Funeral Directors (IAFD)

Members of these associations practice to agreed standards. They should provide you with a price list on request and a written estimate, which should not be exceeded without your permission.

- If you need financial help with funeral costs and are in receipt of benefits, your local Social Security or Jobs and Benefits Office will be able to provide advice. A list of these local offices is included at the end of this booklet.

Repatriation of Deceased

You may wish to have the body or cremated remains of your relative repatriated to another country. To remove a body from Northern Ireland, permission needs to be obtained from the Coroner. Arrangements for the reception and burial/cremation of the body in the country of destination need to be made prior to departure. The funeral director you choose will guide you through these arrangements.

If your relative died here while on vacation, the cost of repatriation may be included in their travel insurance policy. Otherwise, it is worthwhile checking the cost of repatriation before choosing this option. The relevant consulate or embassy of the country to which the body is to be repatriated can also provide you with advice and information. The mortuary staff have experience of repatriation in these circumstances and they will also support you at this time.

People to tell

There are a number of organisations or people to tell when someone dies. Your family General Practitioner will be contacted when your relative has died in hospital. In these circumstances, every possible step will also be taken to cancel future hospital appointments.

A list of other agencies you may need to contact is provided below. This is not comprehensive, and there might be others you need to contact. You may not need to contact all these departments in person, but it is helpful to keep a list so you know who has been informed. Important offices include:

- Solicitor
- Other hospitals the person attended
- Social Security Office (to cancel direct payments such as benefits or attendance allowance)
- Home care services eg district nursing, home help, day care centre etc
- Banks/building societies/credit card companies/post office
- Insurance company, pension provider and/or financial advisor
- Inland revenue
- Car company and car/house insurance
- Telephone (landline and mobile)
- Employer
- Utilities companies (gas and electric)
- Housing executive
- Cancel mail from mailing lists or databases by contacting the bereavement register on:

www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk

Things to return

- Registration documents of car (if a change of ownership is to be recorded)
- Driving Licence
- Passport
- Library books and tickets

Collection of nursing or care equipment

Your relative might have been receiving district nursing or other community services before they died. It is likely that the district nurse will contact the family to offer her sympathy. The district nurse may also arrange with you a suitable time for equipment within the home to be collected. You can also contact the person or service who supplied the equipment or your local Health and Social Services Community Stores Department. Please contact:

Newry and Mourne Stores

Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry

Tel: 028 3083 5000

Armagh and Dungannon Stores

St Luke's Hospital, Armagh

Tel: 028 3752 2381

Craigavon and Banbridge Stores

Manor Drive, Lurgan

Tel: 028 3834 1316

Section 2: Coping with Bereavement

Grieving

Everyone will experience bereavement at some time in their life. Grief is what we feel following a loss. While often a painful and emotional time, it is a very natural process. Everyone's response to a loss is individual but there are some common experiences that people share:

- Many people describe shock soon after the death of a loved one, especially when the death has been sudden;
- Feelings of numbness, panic, disbelief, anger, guilt, crying or being unable to cry, emptiness, anxiety, agitation, depression, and sometimes relief;
- For some, sleeping or eating might be difficult.

Everyone grieves differently and there is no set way in which to get through this time. It can be hard to accept your loved one has died and it is not unusual to think you have seen or heard them. All these reactions are natural. Mixed emotions and complicated feelings are understandable at this difficult time.

In the days, weeks and months following a bereavement

Bereavement is always a difficult time but there are things you can do to help yourself through it. Seek ways that are helpful for you to cope with your loss. For example:

- Talk to people about how you feel. Don't bottle things up. Ask for help if you feel you are not coping;
- Make sure you look after your own health. This is a time when you may become prone to illness. Eat well, rest properly and take extra care;

- Often family, friends, spiritual leaders or your local community are able to provide the support you need. For others, talking to someone outside your family might be helpful. Your General Practitioner is a useful point for first contact, or you may prefer to contact one of the organisations listed at the back of this booklet for advice or support;
- If your health is not good consult your doctor;
- Do not rush to make major decisions, such as moving house or disposing of possessions, until you have had time to adjust to the death;
- Special dates, such as birthdays and anniversaries can be particularly emotional times. Deciding in advance how you will mark these occasions can be helpful.

Helping Bereaved Children

It is never easy to break the news of a death to a child. Adults often feel the need to protect children from the facts about death. They may feel that children will not understand, or that they will be too upset. However, we often underestimate a child's ability to cope. Children often find it more difficult to cope when they do not know what is happening. They could imagine something that is worse than knowing the truth.

Breaking the news

- A parent or someone known and trusted by the child may break the news about the death soon after it has occurred, consoling the child in the best way appropriate.
- Using simple factual words such as 'dead' or 'has died' may help to avoid confusion in the child's mind.

- Answering a child's questions as truthfully as possible is best. You may become emotional but shedding tears is normal and indicates to the child how much the deceased meant to you.
- Each child will respond differently when someone dies; their understanding of death and the questions they ask may be related to their age. Further information on how you can assist them at this difficult time can be found through contacting some of the organisations mentioned at the back of this booklet;
- Informing the child's school of the death will help the teacher support the child when they return to school.

Seeing the deceased and attending the funeral

Like adults, children, even young ones can be helped to make choices about seeing the deceased and attending the funeral;

- With gentle preparation and if they feel comfortable, a caring adult should accompany the child. This may give the child the opportunity to say goodbye or place a flower, letter or toy in the coffin.
- It may be helpful to involve children in the preparations for the funeral, such as selecting readings or poems.

Section 3: Information and Local Support

During November each year the Trust holds a special service to remember patients who have died. This service is advertised in local press. You can also contact the Bereavement Co-ordinator or the Patient Support Office for information on the service.

SHSCT Support Services

Patient Support Services

Craigavon Area Hospital
68 Lurgan Road, Portadown BT63 5QQ

Tel: 028 3861 2395 or 028 3861 4285

Email: patientsupport.cah@southerntrust.hscni.net

Office Opening

Monday to Thursday: 9.00 am - 5.00 pm

Friday: 9.00 am - 2.00 pm

Patient Support is a confidential and free service.

You can ask any member of staff to contact us on your behalf or you can visit the office in the main hospital foyer during opening hours.

You can also write a letter to the Patient Support Service (address above).

SHSCT Support Services

Ulster Cancer Foundation Counsellor

Craigavon Area Hospital
68 Lurgan Road, Portadown BT63 5QQ

Tel: 028 3861 3645

Office Opening

Monday to Wednesday (Answering Service available)

Counselling available to anyone whose life has been affected by cancer diagnoses.

Bereavement Co-ordinator Office

The Rowans
Craigavon Area Hospital
68 Lurgan Road, Portadown BT63 5QQ

Tel: 028 3861 3861

Email: anne.coyle@southerntrust.hscni.net

The Bereavement Co-ordinator will signpost you to appropriate bereavement support.

NI Direct - Website

www.nidirect.gov.uk

Official Government website for information about Northern Ireland Government Services including death and bereavement.

Local Council Offices

Armagh City and District Council

The Council Offices
The Palace Demesne
Armagh BT60 4EL

Tel: 028 3752 9600

Banbridge District Council

Civic Building
Downshire Road
Banbridge BT32 3JY

Tel: 028 4066 0600

Craigavon Borough Council

Civic Centre
PO Box 66
Lakeview Road
Craigavon BT64 1AL

Tel: 028 3832 1400

Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council

Circular Road
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

Tel: 028 8772 0300

Newry and Mourne District Council

District Council Offices
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

Tel: 028 3031 3031

Social Security / Jobs and Benefits Offices

Armagh

Alexander Road
Armagh BT61 7JL

Tel: 028 3752 9777

Banbridge

18 Castlewellan Road
Banbridge BT32 4AZ

Tel: 028 4062 0800

Dungannon

Crown Buildings
36 Thomas Street
Dungannon BT70 1EN

Tel: 028 8775 4754

Kilkeel

Newry Street
Kilkeel BT34 4DN

Tel: 028 4161 1433

Lurgan

Alexander Crescent
Lurgan BT66 6BB

Tel: 028 3831 5600

Newry

40 Bridge Street
Newry BT35 8AJ

Tel: 028 3026 5522

Portadown

140 Jervis Street
Portadown BT62 1HA

Tel: 028 3839 7200

Bereavement Support Organisations

Care in Crisis

39 Union Street, Lurgan BT66 8DY

Tel: 028 3832 9900

Web: www.careincrisis.org.uk

Services Offered

Confidential counselling service for bereavement, pregnancy related issues eg miscarriage, stillbirth, stress, marriage and relationship problems.

Cruse Bereavement Care

Northern Ireland Regional Office

Graham House, Knockbracken Healthcare Park,
Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8BH

Tel: 028 9079 2419

Web: www.cruse.org.uk

Cruse young people's information: www.RD4U.org.uk

Local offices

Merrion House, 46 The Square, Moy BT71 7SG

Tel: 028 8778 4004

Office 9, Enterprise House

WIN Business Park, Canal Quay, Newry BT35 6PH

Tel: 028 3025 2322

Services offered

Cruse Bereavement Care provides counselling and support services for adults, young people and children.

They also offer information, advice, education and training services.

Bereavement Support Organisations

Compassionate Friends NI

c/o 46 Derrymagowan Road, Dungannon BT71 6SY

Local Help line Tel: 028 8778 8016

National Help line Tel: 0845 123 2304

Web: www.tcf.org.uk

Services offered: An organisation where bereaved parents and their families offer understanding and support to others after the death of a child or children. It offers support, advice and information to other relatives, friends and professionals who are helping the family. Local Support Groups are also available.

Meningitis Trust

3 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6OJ

Tel: 0845 1204 680

Web: www.meningitis-trust.org

Services offered: Provides specific services for those who have been bereaved as a result of meningitis.

Remember Our Child

Graham House, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Belfast BT8 8BH

Tel: 028 9079 7975

Services offered: Northern Ireland Partnership of Child Loss Support Groups.

The Samaritans

Craigavon: **Tel:** 028 3833 3555 Newry: **Tel:** 028 3026 6366

National Helpline Tel: 08457 909 090

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Services offered: Confidential emotional support, 24 hours per day. They are there for you if you are worried about something, feel upset or confused, or you just want to talk to someone.

Bereavement Support Organisations

Southern Area Hospice Services

Courtenay Hill, Newry BT34 2EB

Tel: 028 3026 7711

Services offered: Provide bereavement support for those whose loved one received hospice care.

The Springwell Centre

Edward Street, Lurgan

Tel: 028 3834 7222

Email: Philomena@springwellcentre.com

Web: www.springwellcentre.com

Services offered: Confidential counselling for adults, children, young people, couples and families. Springwell also runs a rainbows programme to support children and young people grieving the loss of a loved one through death, divorce or separation.

STEP

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme

Unit T7, 2 Coalisland Road, Dungannon BT71 6JT

Tel: 028 8772 9002 or 028 8775 0211

Web: www.stepni.org

Services offered: STEP is a community development and training organization. It offers Migrant Support including advice and guidance through face to face appointments with bi-lingual staff.

Lifeline 0808 808 8000

Counsellors available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week who are experienced in dealing with issues such as depression, anxiety etc to give you help and support, in confidence.

Supporting People with Learning Disability or Dementia - Useful Websites

Mencap: www.mencap.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Supporting Children

Barnardo's Child Bereavement Support Service

23 Windsor Avenue, Belfast BT9 6GE

Tel: 028 9069 4000

Advice line Tel: 028 9064 5899

Web: www.barnardos.org.uk/childbereavementservice

Barnardos provides:

- An advice line for adults who are concerned about a bereaved child.
- Individual and group support to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have been bereaved.
- Training and information nights for parents and professionals to assist in developing methods of helping bereaved children.

Nova Trauma Support

10 Church Street, Banbridge BT32 4AA

Tel: 028 4062 8758

Email: ni.nova@barnardos.org.uk

Web: www.barnardos.org.uk/nova

Services offered: Nova is a Barnardos NI trauma support service. Nova provides a range of supports for children, families and communities.

Useful Websites

Child Bereavement Network

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org.uk

Child Bereavement Trust: www.childbereavement.org.uk

Area Support Groups for those Bereaved by Suicide

The Resource Centres listed below are points for contact in local areas that provide information on health and wellbeing, support and signposting for suicide and self-harm prevention related issues.

REACT Ltd

30a Ardery's Lane, Banbridge

Tel: 028 4062 8829

Email: counreact@aol.com

The Niamh Louise Foundation

Western House, Coalisland

Tel: 028 8774 0354

Email: info@niamhlouisefoundation.com

Website: www.niamhlouisefoundation.com

REACT Ltd

The Nautilus Centre, Rooney Road, Killeel BT34 4AX

Tel/Fax: 028 4176 9344

Email: craigreact@aol.com

PIPS Upper Bann

Flat 17, Mount Zion House, Edward Street, Lurgan BT66 6DB

Tel: 028 3831 0151

PIPS Newry and Mourne

22 Kilmorey Street, Newry BT34 2DE

Tel: 028 3026 6195 or 07707 039 799

Email: info@pipsnewryandmourne.com

Action Mental Health MensSana

13 Church Street, Portadown BT62 3LN

Tel: 028 3839 2314

Email: cloughran@amh.org.uk

Website: www.menssanaproject.org.uk

Contact Us

We welcome your comments, suggestions, compliments or complaints and we will use them to assist us in improving our services.

To make your views known, please contact:

Central Reporting Point

Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Beechfield House
Craigavon Area Hospital
68 Lurgan Road
Portadown
BT63 5QQ

Tel: 028 3861 4150

Email: Centralpoint.st@southerntrust.hscni.net

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