

Information and Support Available After Someone Has Died






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This publication is available in other languages and formats on request. Please call NHS Grampian on 01224 551116 or email: gram.communications@nhs.scot

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How you may feel

When a loved one dies, there is no “right” way to feel. Your feelings and emotions can change from moment to moment. People may feel shocked, numb, full of pain, angry or guilty. You may also feel very alone at this time so:

- Try to keep in touch with others using phone, text, internet or social media. Even if you don’t always feel like it, talking usually helps.
- Try to keep to a regular routine and get rest. Look after yourself.
- Ask for practical help from friends, family or neighbours. Most people like to help.
- There are a number of telephone helplines that you can call. Don’t feel guilty if you are struggling.



Useful Contacts

Age Scotland offers practical help and advice regarding money matters, health and wellbeing including bereavement for those over 50.

Helpline: 0800 12 44 222

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland

Breathing Space a free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.

Helpline: 0800 838587

Website: www.breathingspace.scot

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland is a charity, staffed by volunteers, who provide bereavement support to people throughout Scotland.

Support Helpline: 0808 802 6161

Website: www.crusescotland.org.uk

SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide) offers support and advice for people bereaved by suicide

Helpline: 0300 111 5065 – Monday and Tuesday 9am – 7pm

Website: www.uksobs.org

Switchboard (LGBT+ Helpline) offers support and advice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people who are facing bereavement.

Helpline: 0800 0119 100

Website: www.switchboard.lgbt

WAY (Widowed and Young) offers a peer-to-peer support network for anyone who has lost a partner before their 51st birthday.

Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk





What you need to do

- You will need to tell close family and friends what has happened.
- You must register the death.
- You should think about the funeral. If you wish, you can contact a funeral director before you register the death.
- You should look for the will of the person who has died. If you can't find this, but know that a will was written, their solicitor may have a copy.

The death of someone close can be overwhelming and you may need help to do these things. Relatives, friends or neighbours can support you. A faith or belief group representative may be able to help you too.

What if I want to see the person who has died?

- Ward staff can help with arrangements if the person has been taken to the hospital mortuary.
- Or funeral directors can arrange for you to see the person at the funeral home.
- Some people choose to have their relative at home before the funeral. The funeral director can advise on this.

Who else needs to know?

When someone dies, you may need to tell other organisations and services, for example, the UK Passport Service and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

Tell Us Once is a service which enables bereaved people to inform most government departments of a death at the same time.

A registrar will explain the Tell Us Once service when you register the death. Website: www.mygov.scot/tell-us-once



How to arrange a funeral?

- You do not have to wait until the death has been registered.
- You can speak to a funeral director as soon as you feel ready. The funeral director will guide you through the arrangements.
- You can find the contact details of local funeral directors in the phone book or online.
- You do not have to organise a 'traditional' funeral. There are other options. For example, a direct cremation and separate memorial event.
- You do not have to use a funeral director. If you wish to make arrangements yourself information can be found online, for example, through the Citizens Advice Bureau.

You might want to consider

- Has the person who died left instructions for their funeral?
- Family and friends may wish help.
- Will it be a burial or cremation? Where will it take place?
- Who will conduct the ceremony? If the person died in hospital, the Health Care Chaplaincy Service / Spiritual Care Team can give you advice and support, or put you in touch with representatives of religious and non-religious organisations.
- Will you put a death notice in the newspaper? What would you like it to say?

Paying for the funeral

- Funeral costs vary and you may be surprised how much a funeral can cost. There are charges for the burial or cremation as well as charges for the funeral director's services.
- Funeral directors should explain their costs and give you a written estimate. They may ask for a deposit before the funeral is confirmed.
- Before meeting the funeral director, you should think about how you are going to pay for this.

Estate of the person who's died

You may need help from the executor or administrator of the person's estate to check their personal papers and accounts. The executor or administrator will find out what funds are available to cover the costs of the funeral. For example:

- A pre-paid funeral
- An insurance policy
- Bank accounts
- Other assets

Help with the cost of the funeral

The person making the arrangements is responsible for the funeral bill. If the person who died does not have the funds to pay for their own funeral then you might be able to get help with the costs.

Funeral Support Payment

Funeral Support Payment is provided by Social Security Scotland to people who live in Scotland and need help with funeral costs.

- A contribution can be made available to the nearest relative or friend, if they receive certain benefits, and have responsibility for organising the funeral.
- Funeral Support Payment is unlikely to cover the full costs of the funeral.
- Only one person can receive funeral support payment for the funeral being arranged.
- For more information on Funeral Support Payment please contact Social Security Scotland on **0800 182 2222** or visit **www.mygov.scot/funeral-support-payment**

Bereavement Support Payment

- Bereavement Support Payment is provided by the Department of Work and Pensions. The payment is in addition to the Funeral Support Payment.
- Bereavement Support Payment is available to the husband, wife, or civil partner if they are under State Pension Age and live in the UK or a country that pays bereavement benefits.
- Further information about whether you may be eligible can be found via **www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment**
- You can also apply by phone via the Bereavement Service Helpline **0800 151 2012**

Removal of Child Burial and Cremation Charges

On 30th May 2018 the Scottish Government made a joint commitment with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) that local authorities in Scotland will no longer charge burial and cremation fees for children (anyone under 18 years of age). You will not need to apply separately for this.

Local council burial or cremation

When a person dies and no arrangements are in place for burial or cremation, the council must make these arrangements. Information about this provision is available from individual local councils.

To find out which council area you are in, please visit:

www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD or Form 11)

The MCCD gives information about the person who has died including what caused their death. Currently you will be asked where you intend to register the death, this can be at any registrar's office in Scotland, and the NHS will ensure that the MCCD is emailed directly there. You can also request a copy of the Form 11 is emailed to you if you wish.

If you have any questions or concerns about the content of a MCCD please speak with the doctor providing the certificate, or if these occur to you at a later stage, you can ask Healthcare Improvement Scotland to carry out an interested person review.

For information on Registering a Death, please see page 16.

What happens if there is a hospital post mortem examination?

A hospital post mortem examination (sometimes called an autopsy) is the medical examination of a person who has died. Sometimes the doctor will ask you as the next of kin to authorise a hospital post mortem examination to understand more about why someone died. A hospital post mortem examination can only be carried out if authorised by the person before they died or a person close to the deceased.



What happens if a death is reported to the Procurator Fiscal?

When a death is sudden, unexplained or caused by certain illnesses, it must be reported to the Procurator Fiscal. Doctors, registrars or the police usually report such deaths, but anyone who is concerned about a death can contact the Procurator Fiscal.

If the Procurator Fiscal decides to investigate a death, the police will often speak to the doctor or relatives of the person who has died. This is to gather information that will help the Procurator Fiscal reach a decision as to whether further investigations are required. The Procurator Fiscal may instruct a post mortem examination to confirm cause of death but will always consider your wishes in making such decisions.

The Procurator Fiscal will try to answer any questions you may have and will complete their investigations as quickly as possible. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service is Scotland's prosecution service and can be contacted via:

Phone: **0300 020 3000**

Website: **www.copfs.gov.uk**

Death Certification Review Service

Following the introduction of the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 a random sample of certificates (MCCDs) are selected for review through the registration system. These reviews are designed to check the quality and accuracy of certificates and to improve how this information is recorded. Reviews will be conducted by a team of medical reviewers, all of whom are experienced doctors.

If the death you are registering is selected for review you may not immediately be able to complete the registration of death. The registrar will explain the review process, timescales and will contact you when the review is complete.

You can make initial funeral arrangements while a review is underway, however, the funeral cannot take place until the review is completed.

Further information about the Death Certification Review Service can be found:

Telephone: **0300 123 1898**

Website: **<https://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.scot/inspections-reviews-and-regulation/death-certification-review-service-dcrs/>**



Registering a Death

Once the doctor has confirmed the MCCD will be issued, the person who will register the death - the informant - should contact the registrar by telephone or other means such as email to make arrangements to begin the death registration process. You will be offered a telephone appointment when the registrar will explain the process as well as providing any other information you will need. It is important that the death is registered at the earliest opportunity and must be registered **within eight days**.

Registering a death has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and may be subject to change.

Further information is available via:

National Records of Scotland

www.nrscotland.gov.uk

or www.mygov.scot/register-death

Following Registration

Once registration is complete you will be sent an abbreviated death extract, commonly known as the death certificate, this confirms that the death has been registered. During the registration process the registrar will ask if you wish to order further copies of the Death Certificate, these may be required by banks or insurance companies.

A Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14) is sent to the person arranging the funeral, usually the funeral director, and this allows burial or cremation to go ahead. If you need the funeral to go ahead quickly, in special circumstances, you may be granted advance registration. You can read more about how to apply for advance registration from Healthcare Improvement Scotland:

www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

How to deal with your feelings?

Take your time

You may feel numb, or find it difficult to believe what has happened. In the first few days and weeks you may feel lost and have a loss of purpose. You may also feel panicky about what needs to be done, or about what lies ahead.

In the first few days it is important to allow yourself:

- Time to take in what has happened
- Time to talk about the person who has died
- Time for yourself

Do it your way

We are all different and we react to death in different ways. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Just do what feels right for you. Try to keep in touch with others using phone, text, email or social media. **Talking usually helps.**

Take care of yourself

Even if you don't feel like it try to eat well and avoid drinking too much alcohol. Try to keep to a routine. Doing simple things like a gentle walk or warm bath can help.

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Remember

Grief is normal – it is part of what it is to be human and to have feelings.

Grief has no shortcuts – grief takes time. It may take longer than you and the people around you expect.

Grief can be scary – and can lead to depressing thoughts and even thoughts of suicide. It is natural to think this way and okay to talk about it. Speak to your doctor if you are worried about how you are feeling.

Finally, it is important not to expect too much of yourself. The death of someone close is a major event and there are no quick ways of adjusting. It is normal to have moments when you find yourself not thinking about the person who has died. It can be helpful to find someone you trust to talk to – for example, a friend, your doctor, or faith / belief group representative.

Ask for help from friends, family or neighbours as **most people want to help**.





Supporting Children

If you are supporting children after a death, remember that children grieve too. They often express their grief through behaviour which will differ depending upon the age of the child. They may become quieter or more tearful or angry in everyday situations. They may have physical symptoms, for example, a sore tummy.

When someone dies children usually realise something is wrong and they need help to understand what has happened and to express their feelings. It is important to be honest with children. You should tell them the person has died and explain what this means using words they will understand.

Children may feel hurt or angry that the person has died or may feel it is because of something they said or did. After the death of someone close children will worry they, or others close to them, could die too.

Children will move in and out of their grief being sad and tearful one moment and playing the next. Try to keep children to their routine as this will help maintain a sense of normality.

Allow children to express their feelings openly and provide reassurance to help them understand they are not to blame and their feelings are normal. Be open and honest when answering questions which may be repetitive. You may choose to look through photos together and share stories about special times as sharing memories can help all the family.

Adults often worry about letting children see the person who has died or attend the funeral. Every child is different but if they are going to attend you can help by explaining what will happen. Younger children might like to draw or write something to be placed with or in the coffin. You could ask older children for ideas for the funeral, for example, a special piece of music or a favourite memory to share.



ARCHIE'S Child Bereavement Service

Offers a wide range of services which are carefully tailored to suit the individual needs of the child and their family. Support can include providing specialist books to help a child understand what the death of a loved one means and to understand their emotions. For some families this might be all the support they need but others may access many more of the services on offer.

Website: www.archie.org/bereavement

Helpline: 01224 559559

Other Child Bereavement Services

Child Bereavement UK

Child Bereavement UK helps to support children, parents and families when a child grieves or when a child dies. Free, confidential bereavement support is available by telephone, video or instant messenger wherever you live in the UK.

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

Helpline: 0800 02 888 40

Winston's Wish

A UK bereavement charity which offers advice for those supporting bereaved children and young people after the death of someone important.

Website: www.winstonswish.org

Helpline: 08088 020 021

Further Information:

Stop Mail

A free service designed to stop direct marketing or unsolicited mails addressed to the recently deceased.

www.stopmail.co.uk

Tel: 0808 168 9607

At a Loss provides a UK signposting website for anyone bereaved and those supporting them.

Website: **www.ataloss.org**

Citizens Advice Scotland

Free confidential, impartial and independent advice about almost anything, including NHS services and your rights. To find your nearest branch, look in your phone book or on Citizens Advice Scotland's homepage.

Website: **https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/**

Department for Work and Pensions

Phone: 0800 731 0469

Website: **www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions**

NHS Inform

Scotland's national health information service.

Free phone: 0800 22 44 88

Website: **www.nhsinform.scot**

The Compassionate Friends

Support for bereaved parents and their families.

Phone: 0345 123 2304

Website: www.tcf.org.uk

The National Records of Scotland (NRS)

NRS is responsible for the arrangements in registering deaths in Scotland.

Phone: 0131 202 0451

Website: www.nrscotland.gov.uk

Samaritans:

A confidential emotional support service for anyone experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Helpline: 116 123

Website: www.samaritans.org



For the most up to date information,
please scan this QR code to access an online
version of this document or visit
www.nhsgrampian.org/bereavement



