



Coronavirus: Bereavement, funerals and grief

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We welcome your comments on this leaflet and the services we provide. You'll find comment boxes at reception, on the wards, in the Iona Café and in Day Therapies.

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Coronavirus: Bereavement, funerals and grief

We know that when someone dies it can cause painful feelings of sadness, loneliness and grief. There are also a number of practical tasks which will need to be completed, and these can cause additional stress and worry at an already difficult time.

Because of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) there have been some significant changes in the way bereavements and funerals are being managed, and we know that some of these will be distressing for families and friends. The information below may be hard to read but we hope it will at least help you to know what to expect and might offer you some suggestions for how to manage at this very sad and challenging time. If you would like further information or support for yourself or your family at this difficult time, contact the Access Team on **0131 551 7751** and they will direct you to the most appropriate services for your needs.

The information in this resource is correct at the time of publishing (23 April 2020) but the situation is very fast-changing. For the most up-to-date information check the information published by the National Association of Funeral Directors www.nafd.org.uk and Cruse Bereavement Care www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief or, contact us on **0131 551 7751**.

VIEWING AND VISITING

- We are very sorry but it is no longer possible to view the person who died at the hospice. Please check with the Funeral Director regarding arrangements for viewing at their premises. The Funeral Director may allow viewing but please be aware that some restrictions may be in place (e.g. physical distancing, visits at specific times, limited numbers, groups having to be from the same household).
- We will ask you to wait 72 hours before you attempt to collect a patient's possessions from the hospice, for infection control reasons. Please do not come to the hospice if you are self-isolating, have symptoms, or if you are in a high-risk group.

REGISTERING THE DEATH

- If the person died in St Columba's Hospice then we will arrange for the Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) to be sent directly to the Registry Office, so you will not need to return to the hospice to collect this.
- If the person died at home then the doctor who provides the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) will send a copy of the certificate directly to the registrar, copying in the person making funeral arrangements.
- Registry Offices are currently closed so it is no longer possible for you to register the death in person. Once the doctor has confirmed that the MCCD has been sent you will need to make contact with the registrar to begin the death registration process via telephone and/or email. See www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/registering-a-death for more information.

- If you are in Edinburgh you can email the registrar at: registrars.city@edinburgh.gov.uk, including a phone number on which they will be able to contact you. In East Lothian, can direct any questions to haddingtonregistrars@eastlothian.gov.uk or call **01620 827 308**.
- The list of people who can register a death has now been expanded to include Funeral Directors acting on the instructions of the family. If you think this might be necessary or helpful for you then please check whether your Funeral Director is willing to act as the informant.

ARRANGING FUNERALS

- Current restrictions on public gatherings and physical distancing measures mean that fewer people are able to attend funerals or cremations. You may want to be prepared for this so you can think about how you wish to manage it. You should also speak to your Funeral Director, who will be able to advise you.
- The government has recommended limiting funeral services to 'immediate family' only (e.g. members of the same household and close family members). Some exceptions may be allowed, such as allowing one or two close friend(s) if the person who died lived alone and had few or no immediate family members. Speak to the Funeral Director, who will advise you.
- Anybody who is self-isolating, who has symptoms, or who is in a high-risk group should not attend the funeral service.
- Funerals can now only go ahead at a crematorium or graveside, and not at places of worship.
- Funeral Directors may no longer be able to provide limousines because of risk of infection, or there may be restrictions in place, so family members may need to make their own way to the funeral service.
- The maximum number of people able to attend the funeral service will be smaller (perhaps 5-15 maximum) and the mourners will be encouraged to maintain physical distance, so chairs will be set out further apart than normal. It can feel very strange and very difficult not to offer people a hug but maintaining social distance is important in reducing the spread of the virus. Try to use words to express how you are feeling instead - you can even tell the person how much you wish you could reach out and give them a hug.
- Check with your Funeral Director whether live streaming is available - this can allow other people who can't attend in person to watch the service from home. People at home can still get dressed for the service and can perhaps find other ways to pay their respects, such as lighting a candle for the person who died, observing a minute's silence in front of a photograph of them, and/or toasting their memory.
- If you are not able to attend or to have a service, this document by Quaker Social Action offers some suggestions on how you can still mark the event and offers ideas for other ways to say goodbye: www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/coronavirus-organising-meaningful-funeral/if-you-cannot
- You could ask people who can't attend to send you memories of the person who died, which could be read out at the service. Or people could record messages to be played or read out at the funeral.
- You may want to consider recording the service, so that other people can watch

it later. Think about whether you can do this without placing too much of a burden on yourself at what is a difficult time – you may not want to be holding a phone or recording device throughout the service, for example.

- It is no longer possible to have a wake or gathering of people before or after the funeral service, but you could still arrange something online or by telephone. Consider using Zoom, Skype, FaceTime or another videoconferencing tool, so people can get together online to comfort one another and share memories.
- You may want to consider holding a memorial service at some point in the future, when people are once again able to get together in larger groups.

COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT

- Bereavement is often difficult, and the current situation may make some aspects even more distressing. It is important to try to look after yourself at this difficult time – stick to a routine if you can and try to get enough sleep, eat as healthily as possible, avoid drinking too much alcohol, and get some exercise. Spend some time outdoors if you can. If you don't have a garden then you could think about sticking to quieter roads or paths and going out early or late, when it is less likely to be busy.
- Reach out to other people. While others would normally offer comfort and support in person, physical distancing measures may make this more difficult. Stay in touch with family and friends by phone, text, social media and videoconferencing (e.g. Zoom, Skype, Facetime).
- Have a look at our '**Coping with COVID-19**' resource for more information.
- If you feel you could benefit from some support for yourself, and/or would like to access support for your child or children, contact us on **0131 551 7751** or by email at **access@stcolumbashospice.org.uk** and the Access Team will direct you to the right services to meet your needs just now. We offer a range of bereavement information and support services for children and for adults and will help you to consider the most appropriate type of help for you.
- Additional support and information can be found on the CRUSE Bereavement website: **www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief** and their telephone helpline is available for support.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON CORONAVIRUS AND BEREAVEMENT

National Association of Funeral Directors	www.nafd.org.uk/funeral-advice/
Cruse Bereavement Care	www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief
Quaker Social Action	www.quakersocialaction.org.uk
Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief	www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/support_with_covid19/
Age UK	www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/coronavirus/arranging-a-funeral--coronavirus-advice/

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