



# When someone has died

Practical advice and support for adult relatives and friends

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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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# When someone has died: Practical advice and support for relatives and friends

When someone dies it can cause painful feelings of loss. 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.

This booklet offers some practical guidance on what to do after someone has died. We hope that you will find it helpful.

## IMPORTANT NOTE

There have been some important changes to the information contained in this document as a result of Coronavirus and physical distancing, and we would recommend reading our **Coronavirus – Bereavement, Funerals and Grief** information sheet so you are aware of current requirements and restrictions.

The Scottish Government also produces a more detailed booklet called What to do after a death in Scotland – practical advice for times of bereavement. We may have a print copy of this booklet available to give to you if you would like or it can be downloaded from the Scottish Government website: [www.mygov.scot/when-someone-dies](http://www.mygov.scot/when-someone-dies).

## WHEN SOMEONE DIES AT THE HOSPICE

When someone dies at St Columba's Hospice, you may be asked to return the next day. A nurse will meet with you to give you the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (which you will need to register the death – see information later in this information sheet), and to discuss the next steps you will have to take.

If you have any questions then please do ask. If the nurse is not able to answer them immediately they will be able to arrange an appointment where you will be able to go over any questions you may have.

## WHEN SOMEONE DIES AT HOME

When someone dies at home you will need to phone the relevant GP surgery. It is not necessary to phone immediately – often people will need some quiet time alone with their loved one first, and this is fine.

A doctor will visit the house to confirm that the person has died. If the death happens at night then it might not be

the normal GP who visits.

The doctor will then write the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.

Once the doctor has visited you should contact a Funeral Director, who will help with making arrangements for the funeral. Please ask staff for a copy of our leaflet 'Funeral Directors and Celebrants' if you need information on local providers. The Funeral Director will remove the person who died to their premises, where they will prepare the body. Once prepared, the body can either stay at the Funeral Director's premises, and relatives and friends will be able to visit to view the body there, or if you would prefer, the body can be returned home until the funeral takes place. If your faith has specific procedures which will need to be followed after the death then please make sure that people involved in caring for the patient and dealing with the body are aware of these.

People dealing with registering deaths and organising funerals understand that it is a difficult time. If you feel uncertain about what to do, or would like more information, do not be afraid to ask.

You will need to register the death before burial or cremation can take place. If the person who has died is to be cremated then a second doctor, from another GP practice, will need to see them first – either at home or at the

Funeral Director.

## REGISTERING A DEATH

You will have to inform the Registrars Office that the person has died before burial or cremation can take place.

## WHEN?

The death must be registered within eight days.

## BY WHOM?

The death can be registered by:

- a relative (including the spouse or civil partner of the person who died, a blood relative, or a relative by marriage – for example, a sister-in-law)
- anybody who was present at the death
- the person's executor or legal representative
- the occupier of the premises where the death took place

If there is nobody who meets these criteria then any other person who has the required information may register the death.

## WHERE?

All deaths which happen in Scotland must be registered in Scotland, even if the person who died usually lived elsewhere or if the body is to be taken outside the country for burial.

Any registrar in Scotland can register

the death, regardless of where you or the person lived. Most will operate an appointment system, so you should check in advance when the registrar is available.

#### REMEMBER TO TAKE:

- The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death
- The Birth and, if appropriate, Marriage Certificates of the person who has died, if available
- The NHS Card (Medical Card), if available
- Any documents about the person's pension, benefits or any allowances they were receiving, if available

Do not worry if you cannot find all the certificates: contact the Registrar who will work with you from the information you have.

Tell the registrar the person's full name, occupation and postal address, as well as his or her date and country of birth. It is also helpful to tell the registrar whether they were married or in a civil partnership, if they were widowed, or if they were divorced or had had their marriage or civil partnership annulled or dissolved.

#### THE REGISTRAR WILL GIVE YOU:

- A Certificate of Registration of Death (Form 14). The Funeral Director will need this certificate before the funeral can go ahead.
- A form for National Insurance or benefits purposes (form 334/SI).

The two certificates above are provided free of charge. Duplicate extract certificates of the entry recorded in the Register of Death can also be ordered at a standard charge, if needed for insurance, banking or other reasons.

Registrars will normally operate on an appointment only system. You will have to telephone or email to arrange an appointment to register the death.

#### REGISTRAR'S OFFICES IN THE EDINBURGH AREA

##### City Chambers Registrar's Office

The Quadrangle, 253 High Street, Edinburgh

**0131 529 2600**

[registrars.city@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:registrars.city@edinburgh.gov.uk)

##### Leith Registrar's Office

30 Ferry Road, Edinburgh

**0131 529 5520**

[registrars.leith@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:registrars.leith@edinburgh.gov.uk)

##### South Queensferry Registrar's Office

53 High Street, South Queensferry EH30 9HP

**0131 331 1590**

[registrars.sq@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:registrars.sq@edinburgh.gov.uk)

#### REGISTRAR'S OFFICES IN EAST LOTHIAN AREA

##### Haddington Registration Office

John Gray Centre, 15 Lodge Street, Haddington, EH41 3DX

**01620 827 308**

##### Musselburgh Registration Office

Brunton Hall, Ladywell Way, Musselburgh, EH21 6AF

**0131 653 5225**

## PLANNING A FUNERAL

Take time to think about the type of funeral that would be appropriate. It may be that the person who died left instructions so you should check with whoever holds their will and/or their legal executor, where possible.

The Funeral Director can offer you specific help and advice on organising the funeral. Some things you may wish to consider include:

- Who else should be involved in the planning of the funeral?
- Will a minister, priest or faith community leader be involved?  
There is no legal requirement for a minister of religion to take the funeral service, if you do not want this.
- Where will the cremation or burial take place?
- Has the person who died left money for funeral expenses, through savings or a life insurance policy, for example? If not, the cost of the funeral becomes the responsibility of the next-of-kin.

Funeral Directors' charges will vary. They should explain the costs to you and give you this in writing. Help with funeral expenses is sometimes available if the person who is paying is receiving specific benefits. For more details of benefits and entitlements contact your local JobCentre Plus or check the government website: [www.mygov.scot/](http://www.mygov.scot/)

**bereavement-benefits.** If you are concerned about the financial aspects of arranging a funeral, our Social Worker may be able to help.

You should tell the Funeral Director if you intend to rely on a Grant before finalising the funeral arrangements.

If there is no one who can be identified to take responsibility for a funeral, the hospice can arrange for the local authority to do so.

Remember, you do not have to do this alone. Our chaplains are available to offer advice and support, and can liaise with other people for you, whether you want a religious ceremony or not. Our Social Workers can help with financial information and advice. We also have a Children and Family Support Worker, who can help you to explain death to children and to think about how they could be supported to attend the funeral, if appropriate.

If you would like to speak to a member of the St Columba's Hospice team then you can ask any member of staff on the ward or call our Access Team on **0131 551 7751** and they will put you through to the most appropriate person to meet your needs.

## OTHER ACTIONS

There are often a number of additional tasks which will need to be completed after the person dies. For example:

- If the person who died was receiving benefits, telling the local JobCentre Plus
- If the person was receiving home help or a package of care, telling the Social Work department
- Returning the person's Blue Badge, if they had one
- Returning the person's passport to the Passport Service and their driving license to the DVLA

Tell Us Once is a service which lets you tell most government organisations about the death in one go. They will notify: HMRC, Department of Work and Pensions, Passport Office, DVLA, the local council, Veterans UK and some public sector pension schemes. The registrar will be able to give you a reference number to use for this service if you are registering the death in Edinburgh or East Lothian. More information about Tell Us Once is available on the government website: [www.gov.uk/after-a-death](http://www.gov.uk/after-a-death).

There may be some further tasks you will have to undertake in due course, for example:

- Dealing with the person's estate
- Returning all medicines to a community pharmacist for destruction
- Telling the person's bank, mortgage provider, pension and/or insurance providers
- Returning any library books and cancelling subscriptions or memberships
- If there are children or young people affected by the death, telling their teacher so the school can think about how to support them

The death might also cause some changes in your financial circumstances. You can check the government website: [www.mygov.scot/bereavement-benefits](http://www.mygov.scot/bereavement-benefits) to see whether you might qualify for any relevant benefits such as Funeral Support Payments, Bereavement Allowance, Bereavement Payment, Widowed Parent's Allowance or Guardian's Allowance. Your local Citizen's Advice Bureau will be able to assist with making any claims.

## BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

It is important to remember is that everyone's experience of loss is different. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and no right or wrong time for grieving to begin. However we experience loss, it can sometimes feel overwhelming and confusing. Allowing ourselves some time and space for how we are feeling is important in helping us to adjust to life after loss. Being kind and patient towards ourselves, taking physical exercise, eating well and having support from friends and family can help.

St. Columba's Hospice Care can also offer a range of bereavement support services, including:

- Information on grief and bereavement
- Help to access resources
- Help to explain death and funerals to children or young people
- Individual bereavement support
- Bereavement support groups (e.g. our Next Steps walking group and our Coffee and Connect social group)
- Bereavement counselling
- Remembrance days and events

If you feel you could benefit from some support for yourself, and/or would like some support for your child or children, contact us on **0131 551 7751** or email **[access@stcolumbashospice.org.uk](mailto:access@stcolumbashospice.org.uk)** and the Access Team will direct you to the right services to meet your needs just now.

## Some Useful Contacts

### The Bereavement Support Team

St. Columba's Hospice Care

**0131 551 7751**

**[access@stcolumbashospice.org.uk](mailto:access@stcolumbashospice.org.uk)**

**[www.stcolumbashospice.org.uk](http://www.stcolumbashospice.org.uk)**

Bereavement information, support and counselling for adults, children and young people

### Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

**0845 600 2227**

**[www.crusescotland.org.uk](http://www.crusescotland.org.uk)**

Bereavement support services across Scotland

### Widowed and Young

**[www.widowedandyoung.org.uk](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk)**

For people aged 50 and under whose partner or spouse has died. Also have a group called WAY Up for people aged 50+

### The Compassionate Friends

**[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)**

For bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents

### Richmond's Hope

**0131 661 6818**

**[www.richmondshope.org.uk](http://www.richmondshope.org.uk)**

Bereavement support for children and young people aged 4-18 years

### Breathing Space

**0800 83 85 87**

Telephone helpline offering information and listening support for any issue which is causing you distress

### Citizens Advice Bureau

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

Information and support with benefits, work, budgeting, debt, housing etc.

### National Bereavement Service

**0800 0246 121**

Practical and emotional support

### Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief

**[www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk](http://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk)**

Information and resources on death, dying and bereavement in Scotland

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