

# Helping you through Grief and Bereavement

## Bereavement Support Booklet

Please accept our condolences at this painful and private time. We are aware that this is a very difficult period and we hope that this booklet will help you in dealing with the necessary practical arrangements. Please ask any member of staff for guidance if any of the information you have been given is unclear.

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## **Section 1**

### **Practical information**

#### **What do I need to do next?**

You will need to collect the death certificate and any personal items from the hospital. In order to help you and make sure that there are no delays, when you arrive, it is advisable to telephone first. Normally, you will be directed to the General Office – if you would prefer to return to the ward to do this please let the person you speak to know when you ring.

Please telephone the General Office of the Hospital where the patient died. On pages 8 – 10 you can find out the telephone number and opening hours of the hospital where the patient was being cared for.

#### **When can I contact a funeral director?**

You can contact a funeral director immediately for help and guidance; however, no formal arrangements can be made until you register the death. ( See heading, registering a death )

Funeral costs can be significant and it is therefore advisable to ask several funeral directors for estimates before you commit yourself. You can ask for a breakdown of costs which may help you decide what to have. Advice and guidance is available from the hospital support services department or from local organization such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

#### **What will happen if the death of my relative involves the Coroner?**

In some circumstances it is not possible for the hospital doctor to issue a death certificate. There are several reasons why this cannot be done but in general it is when a death is sudden, unexpected or due to an accident. The doctor will be able to tell you if the death has been referred to the Coroner. If this is the case there will be a delay in issuing the death certificate which may take several weeks.

The local Coroner's Office will be able to tell you about what happens and advise you about how and when you are able to instruct the funeral directors to proceed with funeral arrangements.

#### **About Post Mortem Examinations**

The doctor who has written the death certificate may want to ask your permission for post mortem examination in order to assist in the treatment of other patients in future.

You can decline.

If the Coroner orders a post mortem examination this is a legal requirement and you will not be able to decline.

If you have any worries about the Coroner's involvement or post mortem examination, it is very important that you discuss these at the time, either with the doctor or the Coroner's Officer.

**Gwent Coroner's Office Telephone: 01633 240961**

### **Who can register a death?**

- A relative of the deceased
- Someone who was present at the death
- A representative of the establishment where the death happened
- The person instructing the funeral director

If you can't get to the Registrar's Office in the district where your relative died, you can go to your local office. They will note the information needed and send it to the appropriate Registrar for you. You will need to go to the Registrar's Office in your area. If you are unsure where to go, ask the person giving you the death certificate.

Remember to ring first and book an appointment.

### **How do I register the death?**

Once you have the Death Certificate you can go to the Registrar's Office for Births, Marriages and Deaths. Please telephone the Registrar's office first, as some offices run an appointments only system. You will find telephone numbers for Registrar's Office further into this document.

### **What do I need to take with me?**

To ensure that you don't need to make more than one trip to the Registrar's Office, please make sure that you have all of the following when you go:

The Death Certificate or Medical Certificate of Cause of Death issued by the hospital, the GP or the Coroner. If you have the deceased's NHS Medical Card you should take this along with you.

You will need to tell the Registrar the following information about the deceased:

- Full name (maiden name if applicable), address, date and place of birth.
- Occupation and occupation of the partner (if married or in a civil partnership).
- Any Pensions the deceased claimed.
- The full name and date of birth of the surviving spouse or surviving civil partner. –

You will need extra copies of the Death Certificate to give various authorities (Department for Work and Pensions, Bank etc.) There is a small fee for these, so please make sure you take cash with you.

### **What do I need to get from the Registrar?**

You will be given:

- A Green Form – this authorizes burial or lets you make an application for cremation. Give this form to the funeral director.
- A White Form – this is used by the Department for Work and Pensions.

### **Who needs to be told about the death?**

You will probably want to let the family, friends and neighbour know of the death right away. There are several other people who may also need to know.

You can use this list as a check list:

Funeral Director

Priest, Minister or Faith Leader

The Benefits Agency (pensions, benefit)

The Bank, Credit Cards, Building Society

Social Services (home helps, home care)

Schools, College or University attended (if applicable)

Place of work (occupational pension)

Executors of the Estate (Will)

Passports

Solicitors

Insurance Companies

Library Service

Inland Revenue

Residential or Nursing Home

Landlord, Housing Association, Mortgage provider

Council Tax Office

Electricity, Gas, Telephone, Water Companies

Post Office (redirect mail)

DVLC Swansea

Careline

Cancel any appointments – delivery of papers etc

Pets – make necessary arrangements for care

If the deceased was living alone 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.

## **Wills and Probate**

If you have any queries about the deceased person's Will or regarding the absence of a will you can contact your local Probate Registry.

### **What is Probate?**

When a person dies somebody has to deal with their estate (the money, property and possessions left) by collecting in all the money, paying any debts and distributing what is left to those people entitled to it. In order to get authority to do this the designated person usually needs to obtain a legal document called a "Grant of Representation" for the Probate Registry. There are three types of Grant of Representation.

**Probate** – Issued to one or more executors named in the deceased's Will.

**Note:** Executors are people named in the Will to deal with the estate.

**Letters of Administration (With Will)** – Issued when there is a Will but there is no executor named or when the executors are unable or willing to apply for the grant.

**Letters of Administration** – Issued when the deceased has not made a Will, or any Will made is not valid.

If the deceased left a Will, Probate will generally need to be obtained. If there is no Will, Probate cannot be obtained and instead you will generally need to apply for Letters of Administration, before you can administer the Estate. In both cases, the processes involved are very similar and the Form PA1 can be used. This needs to be completed and sent or taken to the Probate Registry. You can obtain this form from your local Probate Registry or download it for the website.

## **Collecting the Death Certificate and Personal Property**

## Useful information

- Weekends & Bank Holidays will delay in writing and issuing of the death certificate. Phone the ward or general office on the next working day.
- Ring the hospital first, before you come and check everything is ready. (Remember to bring proof of identity photographic such as a bus pass, driving license, passport and proof of address).
- If you are unsure about anything ask a member for staff for help.
- Get a receipt for the personal property you are collecting.
- Check the receipt carefully before you leave the hospital. (Ask the person handing you the certificate to double check that it has been completed before you take it to the Registrar's Office)
- If anything appears to be mislaid, please tell a member of staff and ask for help.

### Information and contact details of hospitals in this Board

#### **CHEPSTOW COMMUNITY HOSPITAL Tel: 01291 – 616640**

Next of Kin are requested to collect Death Certificate and Personal property from the ward where the patient died, between 2:30pm and 5:00pm the following day.

#### **COUNTY HOSPITAL (Panteg) Tel: 01495 – 768708**

Death Certificates are collected from the ward where the patient died.

#### **MONNOW VALE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE FACILITY Tel: 01600 – 773061**

Death certificates may be collected from the ward or Doctor's surgery, please check where the death certificate will be first. Personal property can be collected from the ward.

#### **REDWOOD HOSPITAL Tel: 01685 – 840314**

Death certificates and Personal property are collected from the ward where the patient died.

#### **ROYAL GWENT HOSPITAL Tel: 01633 – 234080**

Due to the size of the hospital death certificates & Patient's property may not always be on the ward where the Patient died, please check with the ward where the patient died before coming to the hospital.

#### **ST. CADOC'S HOSPITAL Tel: 01633 – 436774**

Death Certificates are dealt with in the 'Health Records' Department. Personal property is collected from General Office.

**ST. WOOLOS HOSPITAL Tel: 01633 234234**

Stow Hill, Newport NP20 4SZ

Death certificates and Personal property may not always be on the ward where the patient died, please check with the ward where the patient died before coming to the hospital.

**TALYGARN (Psychiatric Unit) Tel: 01495 – 765725**

Contact the Unit to make arrangements

**YSBYTY ANEURIN BEVAN (YAB) EBBW VALE Tel: 01495 – 363636**

Please contact the ward to arrange the collection of patient's property and death certificates. The wards of general office will provide advice and guidance.

**YSBYTYR TRI CWM Tel: 01495 – 353200** Death Certificates are collected from the Ward where the patient died. Personal property is collected from the Administration Block.

**YSBYTY YSTRAD FAWR Tel: 01443 – 802200**

Ysbyty Fawr Way, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed CF82 7GP

**Newport**

**The Mansion House**

**4 Stow Park Circle**

**Newport NP20 4HE**

**01633 235510 (Registrar)**

**[www.newport.gov.uk](http://www.newport.gov.uk)**

**Pontypool Registrar's Office**

**Civic Centre**

**Pontypool**

**NP4 6YB**

**01495 742132**

**Ystrad Mynach Registrar's Office**

**Penallta House**

**Tredomen Park**

**Ystrad Mynach**

**Hengoed**

**CF82 7PG**

**01443 863478**

**Section 2**

**Personal Reactions to Grief**

Everyone reacts to the death of a loved one differently - this section guides you through seeking help and understanding what feelings you may experience.

## **Who can help and advise me?**

You may feel that you want further advice and that you want to talk with someone outside of your immediate family or with other people who have been through a similar experience.

There are so many agencies available who have special understanding of different types of death that it is not possible to list them all here. If you can't find one that applies to you do please contact a health professional or someone at your local Citizens Advice Bureau or library who should be able to help.

- Talk with your GP about health problems, or support groups
- It is important that the Health Board know if you have any comments or observations about the treatment or care of your loved one prior to your loss. You can find out who to contact by phoning the Contact Centre on: 01495 - 745656. Occasionally, families may have serious worries about treatment or care, if this applies to you, please ring the Putting Things Right Team on: 01633 623578 / 01633 623813 or the Administrator for the Patient Experience Lead Nurse on: 01633 238031. If you prefer to speak to someone independent then contact the Community Health Council on: 01633 838516
- Talk to the hospital chaplain about spiritual or religious matters or worries  
**Telephone: 01633 234263** Royal Gwent Hospital

Any of the people mentioned above can give you information about local voluntary bereavement support groups, or if you prefer, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. –

**Cruse Bereavement Care** promotes the well-being of bereaved people and enables anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. As well as providing free care to all bereaved people, the charity also offers information, support and training services to those who are looking after them. Contact details:

Cruse Bereavement Care ( Gwent )  
Orion Suite  
The Centre for Business Enterprise Way  
Newport  
NP20 2AQ  
Tel: 01633 251982  
Email: [gwent@cruse.org.uk](mailto:gwent@cruse.org.uk)  
Website: [www.crusebereavementcare.co.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.co.uk)  
Website for young people by young people: [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk)

## **Talking to Children about death**

Adults often feel the need to protect children from death. They may feel children will not understand or that they will be too upset. However, we can often underestimate a child's resources and ability to cope. Children often find it harder if they are not told what is happening, because they may be more frightened by imagined events. Children should be told the facts in a simple manner, using appropriate words, e.g. 'dead', 'death', rather than 'lost' or 'asleep'. Give them time to ask questions (which may be very direct) and offer plenty of reassurance.

It is helpful for adults to share feelings with children, such as feelings of sadness. By doing this they learn that it is natural to feel sad when someone dies. Children may like to draw pictures as part of their way of saying goodbye.

It is important to remember that children of different ages will express themselves differently. Younger children may appear unaffected by death or play grisly games or laugh; but their emotions will change all the time, for example a child may cry intensely and then just go off and play. Give children time to talk and lots of reassurance. If you need advice or guidance you can speak to nursing staff from the ward or contact a specialist advice centre.

## **When a child dies**

The death of a child at whatever age is one of the most painful experiences in life. The grief felt by families can leave them so numbed and distressed that it can be difficult to face even the simplest of tasks. There are agencies that can offer help, support and information to families following the death of a baby or child and listed below are just a few examples of these organizations.

The Child Bereavement Trust

Aston House

West Wycombe

High Wycombe

Buckinghamshire

HP14 3AG Tel:

01494 446648

[www.Childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.Childbereavement.org.uk) [www.HealingHeart.net](http://www.HealingHeart.net)

Child Death Helpline: 0800 282 986

[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

Nursing staff from the ward or unit can also offer support and provide information and guidance.

## **Personal Experiences**

This section of the book identifies some of the physical and emotional responses we sometimes experience following the death of someone we loved. You may not feel ready to read it at the moment, but it may help you later on as you grieve.

## **Be In Touch With Your Feelings**

By its very nature, a death is distressing to everyone. The emotional and physical reactions that follow are usually intense and they can confuse, frighten and shock. You may also be surprised by reactions in yourself and others that are unfamiliar and seemingly out of character.

Individuals may grieve in very different ways. Coping with this grief varies from person to person, but it may help you to express your feelings and emotions by talking to others or writing down on paper your personal thoughts.

## **What Might I Feel Like Now?**

It is important to understand that bereavement will temporarily change us; these are some of the feelings that some of us may experience but there are no rules. Everyone reacts to grief in different ways and at their own pace.

Anger	Living on Borrowed Time
Guilt	Tenseness and Restlessness
Fear	Forgetfulness
Sadness	Tiredness and Exhaustion
Helplessness	Muscle Tension
Re-living the Event	Heart Palpitations and other symptoms
Numbness	

## **Remember please.....**

You may experience none, some, or all of these reactions. If you do, it may be occasionally or all the time. Everyone is different. In all instances this is a natural progression, helping you through what has happened. Typically, reactions start to lessen over a few weeks, before fading away over a longer period of time. If they don't, it can help to talk to someone about them.

The following pages explain in a little more detail how these different emotions and feelings may express themselves.

### **Anger**

You may get very angry over seemingly minor things. Relatives, friends and colleagues may comment on changes in your character. You may feel a more constant anger because the death of the person you loved feels unjust or senseless. It may be that you feel angry towards people who appear to have caused or let the death happen.

### **Guilt**

You may feel that there is something that you did or did not do which led to the person you loved dying. You may ask yourself whether you deserve to still be alive rather than the person who has died. You may also find yourself thinking that other less deserving people should be dead and not the person who has died. For most of us these thoughts are uncomfortable and may make us feel guilty.

## **Fear**

New fears and worries may occur to you now. You may not want to go out, meet family, friends or colleagues, you may be afraid of leaving those you care for most or being left by them. Other fears can centre on breaking down – losing control, feeling unbearably intense or worrying that a similar thing could happen again.

## **Relationships**

Following a death, stresses and strains previously coped with quite well can become intolerable and it can be tempting to cut ourselves off, making it difficult for people who care about us to help, leading to relationships becoming strained. Long standing relationships and friendships may suffer the most if we believe that no one can understand what we are going through.

Please remember that this view can become a major obstacle to seeking help and support when we need it most. Other people may be a main source of comfort during these difficult times.

## **Sadness**

Deep feelings of sadness are common, especially when someone has died a tragic death.

## **Helplessness**

A feature of such traumatic incidents is that they are overpowering. Such crises can draw out the best in us but they can also make us feel powerless or unable to help.

## **Re-living the event**

The impression left may be so strong that it is revisited long after it actually happened. This can be a helpful process as it may help to get this very distressing event more clearly set out in our mind.

Flashbacks and dreams are common, as well as feeling the same feelings over again.

You may suddenly start to feel as if the original event is about to happen to you again.

These re-livings can be distressing and frightening but they are not unusual.

## **Numbness**

The shock of bereavement can leave you feeling numb and emotionally exhausted. Feelings that you would usually have may be lost for a time and you may feel less able to deal with day-to-day life and pressures. You may want to have less contact with other people and give up things which you enjoy.

## **Living on borrowed time**

Bereavement can change your outlook on life in important ways. Hopes for a better future may change or be lost. Feeling deep disappointment may occur.

## **Tenseness and restlessness**

You may feel wound up, making it difficult to rest, fall asleep or have peace of mind.

### **Forgetfulness**

It is not unusual to become forgetful and you may find your memory does not seem good. Concentration may be difficult. You may find it difficult to remember what the person who died looked like – this is quite normal and will pass with time.

Our minds and bodies work in harmony and you may therefore experience physical changes as well as emotional ones.

You may feel physically very tired and emotionally fragile for some time after the bereavement. It is important to try and rest or you will become exhausted.

### **Muscle Tension**

The strain you may be feeling at the moment may be making your muscles tense. This can be felt as symptoms such as general stiffness and tension, or specific localized pains, headaches, stiffness in your throat or chest and dizziness.

### **Heart palpitations and other symptoms**

All emotional reactions are associated with short or longer term bodily responses, such as heart palpitations, excessive sweating, mild tremors that may cause you to shake from time to time, stomach pains and digestive problems.

If you have physical symptoms you should discuss these with your G.P. Medical treatments can provide some relief from these if they are reactive symptoms. Please remember though, that talking about how you are feeling is the most important step to finding long term relief.

### **Helping yourself**

The most important thing to do is avoid bottling up your feelings about what is happening to you at the moment however shocked or surprised you may be.

### **Accept that it is normal not to feel normal.**

Find out the facts of what happened – our perception of events can be distorted by grief.

Don't feel guilty about not having the person who died constantly in your thoughts, or as time goes by, planning the future.

Remember that healing takes time.

### **When you may need to ask for help**

If you continue to experience some or all of the emotions or symptoms we have already explored for a long time, you may wish to seek further help if:

- Intense feelings or body sensations continue to overwhelm you.

- Feelings are not beginning to lessen.
- Memories, dreams and images of the particular event continue to intrude, making you feel afraid and depriving you of rest.
- You continually feel tense, confused, empty or exhausted.
- Work performance is affected.
- You have to keep active to avoid becoming upset.
- Nightmares or poor sleep affect you.
- You have no-one with whom you can share your feelings.
- You get uncontrollably angry.
- Your relationships are suffering badly or people keep telling you how much you have changed.
- You are smoking, eating or drinking alcohol more than you usually do.
- You are relying on medication to help you through.
- You feel burnt out.
- The feelings we experience after the death of someone we love can be very traumatic; remember, if you are struggling for a long time, ask for help.

“With thanks to the Bereavement Co-ordinator at Lancashire Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for kind permission to use their framework for the feelings sections of this booklet”

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