

This leaflet has been reviewed and revised
in conjunction with
the Yeovil District Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust,
Patient and Public Involvement User Group.

Help for the Bereaved

**If you would like this information
booklet in another format,
e.g. large print, please telephone:
01935 384256**

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www.yeovilhospital.nhs.uk

The staff at Yeovil District Hospital would like to express their sympathy and condolences to you and your family.

This booklet is not intended to replace personal help and advice, but aims to provide you with practical support and guidance during the early days of your bereavement.

Many of us, when we are bereaved, find that it helps to talk. The Hospital Bereavement Officer, the Hospital Chaplaincy and your GP are all available to listen.

In addition there are local and national organisation that specialise in bereavement support and details of these are available from the Hospital Bereavement Officer, Alan Green, or via the links to the 'Bereavement Officer' web page on the Yeovil District Hospital web site – www.yeovilhospital.nhs.uk.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is available to investigate concerns or problems you may have about the levels of care or standards of service you have experienced at the hospital.

The PALS Office is situated on Level 3 in the hospital and they can be contacted by telephoning **01935 384706** or email on pals@ydh.nhs.uk.

Contents

	Page
Introduction	4
What to do first	4
Viewing arrangements	4
Chaplaincy Services	5
Book of Remembrance	5
How a death is registered	5
Registrar of Births and Deaths Offices in Somerset	6
The Coroner	7
Inquest	8
Organ and Tissue Donation	8
Body Donation	9
Arranging the funeral	10
After the funeral	11
Looking to the future	13
Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)	14

Introduction – the first few days after death

There is no normal or right way to feel following bereavement and most people experience a whole range of emotions. The information in this booklet is intended to make the early days as straightforward as possible.

Take all the time you need and do not hesitate to contact the Hospital Bereavement Service or the Hospital Chaplain if you need assistance or information.

What to do first

Please telephone the Hospital Bereavement Service on **01935 384746** or **07990671855** (9.00am – 4.30pm) on the next working day to arrange the collection of the Medical Certificate of Death. When you visit the hospital you will also be given any property and valuables of the deceased together with a release form for the Funeral Director.

The Bereavement Office is situated on Level 3 near the main entrance to the Hospital, adjacent to the General Office.

Viewing Arrangements

Relatives and friends may wish to visit the deceased at the hospital to pay their last respects. You will need an appointment to view and this will be arranged as soon as possible for you. Please ask the ward staff to make arrangements or telephone the Hospital Switchboard on **01935 475122** or the Mortuary on **01935 384283** to make an appointment before you visit.

Should you want a chaplain to accompany you when you visit, please mention this when you make the appointment.

Looking to the future

We are all individuals, and each of us will react in our own unique way to being bereaved. There is no right or wrong way to go through bereavement and it is important you allow yourself time to grieve and come to terms with your loss in which ever way you feel is right.

At first, you may feel numb and in a state of shock, unable to believe that this person has died. You might feel upset because other people don't seem to understand what you are going through, or even that some people may seem to be avoiding you. You may even feel angry with the person who has died, as if they have, in some way, let you down.

You might feel unable to concentrate on tasks which normally you have always found so easy. You will probably feel that being very busy, perhaps arranging the funeral, is helpful but you might also feel afraid about how you are going to cope.

It may feel odd that some of your feelings are opposite to each other and you might feel in one moment very sad, and then happy, and then quite indifferent; this too is natural. You may have friends and family who are eager to help and yet you still feel very lonely at times.

You may feel that your body, as well as your emotions, are affected. Getting to sleep at night may be difficult. You may be disturbed by dreams and you may become very tired. Grieving is almost always a very tiring process.

You might have been spending a lot of time and energy looking after your loved one and it is now important to look after yourself.

Applying for Probate or Letters of Administration can be complicated and time consuming and you may simply feel too upset and unable to deal with all the paperwork. If this is the case then it may be advisable to seek professional advice from a solicitor or accountant.

If the estate and account balances of the deceased are relatively small, and the estate is not complex or contentious, then some organisations will release funds to the executors or next of kin without Probate or Letters of Administration. Contact the organisations where the deceased maintained accounts to establish their requirements.

The government leaflet DWP 1027 – ‘What to do after death in England and Wales’ also provides guidance and copies of the leaflet are available from the Hospital Bereavement Service or the local ‘Job Centre Plus’ Office.

Chaplaincy Services

Hospital Chaplains are available to offer support and can be contacted 24 hours a day via the Hospital Switchboard on **01935 475122**.

The Hospital Chapel is on Level 4 and is open from early morning until the evening for personal reflection and prayer.

Visitors from all religions are welcome to pray in the Chapel and may use the sacred texts, prayer mats and other resources kept in the Chapel. The Hospital Chaplains have links with most local churches and faith groups and can help put you in contact if you wish.

Book of Remembrance

The Hospital Book of Remembrance is in the Hospital Chapel and friends and relatives may wish to have an inscription inserted in the book in memory of their loved one. A modest charge is made to cover the cost of inscribing the entry in the book.

If you wish to remember somebody in this way, please contact the Hospital Chaplain or the Hospital Bereavement Service.

How a death is registered

A death must be registered at the Registrar of Births and Deaths Office within 5 days. In Somerset, details can be registered at any Registrar’s Office within the County.

Most deaths are registered at the local office covering the area where the death has occurred and a list of the Registrar Offices is given on the next page. Alternatively, you can obtain details from the Somerset County Council web site at **www.somerset.gov.uk**

The Registrar’s Office will also give you details of all Somerset outstation offices which may be more convenient to where you live.

It is important that you telephone the Registrar's office to arrange an appointment before you attend to ensure that they are expecting you.

If it is more convenient, you can also register outside the County. The Registrar at your local office will be able to give you more information about this process.

Registrar of Births and Deaths Offices in Somerset

South Somerset Registrars Office

Maltravers House
Petters Way
Yeovil
BA20 1SP
01935 411230

Outstations at Wincanton and Chard

Taunton Registrars Office

The Old Municipal Buildings
Corporation Street
Taunton
TA1 2AQ
01823 282251

Mendip Registration Office

19b Commercial Road
Shepton Mallet
BA4 5BU
01749 343928

Sedgemoor Registrars Office

Morgan House
Mount Street
Bridgwater
TA6 3ER
01278 422527

West Somerset Registrars Office

2 Long Street
Williton
Somerset
TA4 4QN
01984 63316

After the funeral

The assets of the deceased have to be administered by collecting in any money and transferring property to new ownership. In addition, organisations such as pension providers and the Inland Revenue will have to be informed.

This can be attended to after the funeral and normally there is no need to make this a priority in the first few days after death.

If there is a Will, then this should confirm who has been appointed as executors to administer the estate. The executors may have to apply to the Court for Probate to distribute the estate in accordance with the deceased's wishes. Probate confirms who has authority to administer the deceased's estate and many financial organisations normally expect to see Probate before they release significant funds to the beneficiaries of a Will.

The Probate Office Help Line on **0845 302 0900** will assist you or you may wish to visit Her Majesty's Court Service web page at **www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk** and follow the links to the Wills and Probate section. Regional Probate offices are located at Bristol on **0117 927 3915** and Winchester on **01962 897029**

If there is no Will, or the appointed executors do not wish to act, then it is still possible to administer and distribute the estate and guidance is available from the Probate Office Help Line telephone number or their web site. You will be given details on how to apply for Letters of Administration, which will confirm who has authority to act for the deceased.

Arranging the funeral

Unless there are religious or cultural reasons for holding a funeral quickly there is no need to hurry. You can take the time you need to make sure the funeral is arranged in a way that will be special to you.

There is no need to wait for hospital documentation before contacting a Funeral Director. They can begin formalities as soon as you contact them and will provide information and support to you and your family.

Check if a Will has been made by the deceased as soon as possible as it may include special requests about the funeral arrangements.

Costs of funerals do vary and you may wish to contact several Funeral Directors in order to compare prices before you make a decision.

Also check whether the deceased has contributed to schemes to pay for the funeral with a specific Funeral Director or if there are insurance policies in place.

Funeral Directors are very experienced and can provide you with suggestions and guidance concerning the funeral arrangements. A list of local Funeral Directors is available from the Hospital Bereavement Service.

If you may have trouble in paying for the funeral then you may be entitled to receive a payment from the Department of Work and Pensions Social Fund. To qualify, you or your partner must be receiving an eligible benefit. Contact the Hospital Bereavement Service or your local Social Security Office to check eligibility and ask for leaflet DWP 1027 – 'What to do after death in England and Wales'.

To register the death you will need the following information:

- The Medical Certificate of Death from the hospital
- The deceased person's full name, home address and occupation
- If the person was married, the full name of their spouse
- The date and place of birth of the deceased

The Registrar will give you a green form that authorises the burial or cremation and this should be given to the Funeral Director. The Registrar will also give you a Registration of Death form which is for pension purposes.

Certified copies of the Death Certificate which you may need for the bank and insurance companies are also available from the Registrar for which there is small charge.

The Coroner

The Coroner is an independent judicial officer who enquires into deaths which are sudden or of an unknown cause.

Sometimes it may be necessary for the hospital doctors to refer a hospital death to the Coroner; typically, if the death occurred within 24 hours of admission or surgery or if the cause of death is unknown or was related to an industrial disease. Doctors caring for your loved one will contact the Coroner's Office for guidance in these cases.

After this discussion, the Coroner may authorise a Medical Certificate of Death to be issued by the hospital doctor, or the Coroner may order a Post Mortem to establish the precise cause of death.

The Hospital Bereavement Service or hospital doctors will advise you if a Coroner's Post Mortem examination is necessary and will give any guidance you require.

The Post Mortem will be undertaken promptly at the hospital and the results will be made available by the Coroner as soon as possible.

The hospital is licensed by the Human Tissue Authority to undertake post mortem examinations and adheres to the conditions of the Human Tissue Act (2004). All post mortem examinations are undertaken by consultant pathologists trained to Royal College of Pathology standards.

The Coroner's Officer will advise you about how to register the death after the Post Mortem and obtain the paperwork that you will need for the Funeral Directors.

The Coroner's Office can be contacted on the following telephone numbers: **01935 402312** or **0117 973 4259**

More information on the work of the Coroner can be found by visiting the web site **www.justice.gov.uk**

Inquest

An inquest is an inquiry into the medical cause and circumstances of death. It is generally held in public and sometimes with a jury. It is up to the Coroner to decide how to organise the inquiry in a way to best serve the public interest and the interests of the relatives. The Coroner will tell you if an inquest is to be held.

Organ and Tissue Donation

Organ and Tissue Donation gives many families the option of making a difference to others. We would like to offer this choice to you.

- After death many people can be considered for tissue donation (such as heart valves or eyes). Your relative may have carried a donor card, be on the Organ Donor register or may have discussed donation with you during their lifetime.

- Eyes for corneal transplantation can be donated up to 24 hours after death and heart valves up to 48 hours after death. The deceased will be cared for with dignity and respect and their appearance will be restored. Tissue donation will not delay funeral plans.
- Vital Organs (such as heart and kidneys) can only be donated in certain circumstances and only when a patient is in the Intensive Care Unit or in the Emergency Department: advice can be obtained from hospital staff or from the Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation.

A specialist Tissue Donation Nurse may contact the family after a patient dies to offer information about tissue donation. The individual we contact would be the designated representative on the patient's records. The Tissue Donation Nurse will explain the options available for tissue donation and answer questions.

Please remember, tissue donation is entirely voluntary and dependent on the generosity of patients and families. If you would like further information please contact The Bristol Tissue Co-ordination Service - Tel: **07699704933** Alternatively you may ask a doctor, nurse or the Hospital Bereavement Service for guidance.

Body Donation

Instead of organ and tissue donation, your loved one may have wished to donate their entire body to Medical Science for medical research. Guidance on body donation is available from the Human Tissue Authority website: **www.hta.gov.uk** or by telephoning the medical school at the University of Bristol on **0117 928 8137**. Please also inform ward staff or the Hospital Bereavement Service.