

Service: Palliative & End of life

What to do after someone has died in hospital



The staff at North Bristol NHS Trust offers their condolences to you at this time.

We understand that you may have important personal and cultural requests about the care of your loved one; please let a member of staff know and we will do our best to help in any way that we are able.

This leaflet provides you with the information you need to register the death of your loved one and includes the following sections:

1. How to contact the bereavement office

After someone has died, you will need a Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death from the hospital. This will be delivered to the registrars and an appointment made on your behalf by the bereavement office.

The death certificate is needed in order to register the death and allow the funeral to take place. You may wish to contact a funeral director before the death is registered to start discussing your arrangements.

On the next working day after the death of your loved one please telephone the bereavement office on the following numbers 0117 414 0180, 414 0181, 414 0182, in order to discuss the next part of the process. If you get through to an answerphone, do not worry; please leave your name and telephone number and the bereavement officers will get back to you as soon as they are available or on the next working day if your call is out of hours.

**Bereavement office hours: Monday to Friday 8am - 4pm.
Phones are answered between 10am and 3.30pm**

Please note: the office is not open Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays.

The bereavement officers will guide you through the necessary steps for obtaining the paperwork required to register a person's death, enabling funeral arrangements to be made. If necessary, they can also explain what happens when someone's death needs to be reported to the Coroner - see section 5 below.

The bereavement office is located in the Sanctuary, Level 1, Gate 30 of the Brunel Building, Southmead Hospital.

One of the doctors from the team who was treating your loved one will arrange for the issue of a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and complete any other necessary paperwork.

The bereavement officers will arrange an appointment with the registrars on site if you so wish. All deaths must be registered by law within five working days following a death.

Please do not come to the bereavement office without making an appointment. We want to ensure that everything is ready for you. If you arrive unexpectedly you may find you have a lengthy wait and this may cause additional distress at such a difficult time.

2. How to register the death

When the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death has been issued by the doctor and given to you, the death must be registered within five working days.

The Office of the Registrar of Births and Deaths is located in the Brunel building, Level 1, Gate 12, Southmead Hospital.

Bristol City Council Registrars also have offices in The Old Council House, Corn Street, Bristol, BS1 1JG.

You will need an appointment to register a death which the bereavement officers will make for you. This appointment will take about 30 minutes.

Who can register the death?

You can register the death if you are:

- A relative.
- Someone present at the death.
- An administrator from the hospital.
- The person making arrangements with the funeral directors.

What you need to do

Take the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death with you. If available (but don't worry if not), also take the person's:

- Birth Certificate.
- Marriage or Civil Partnership Certificate (if possible).
- NHS Medical Card.

You will need to tell the registrar:

- The person's full name at the time of death.
- Any names previously used e.g. maiden name.
- The person's date and place of birth.
- Their last address.
- Their occupation.
- The full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving or late spouse or civil partner.
- Whether they were getting a State Pension or any other benefits.

You should also take supporting documents that show your name and address (e.g. a utility bill) but you can still register a death without them.

Documents you will receive

When you register a death you will receive the following:

- A Certificate for Burial or Cremation (the 'green form'), this gives permission for burial or an application for cremation.
- A Certificate for the Department of Work and Pensions Benefit (form BD8) - you may need to fill this out and return it if the person was getting a State Pension or benefits.
- There is an opportunity to buy death certificates - these will be needed for sorting out the person's affairs with the bank, insurance companies, private pensions etc.

Some councils are registered with the scheme "Tell Us Once". This is a service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. The registrar will let you know if the service is available in your area and if it is how to access it.

Once you have registered the death you can inform your chosen funeral director that the death is registered so that arrangements can now proceed.

If the death has been referred to the coroner you will not be able to register the death until the registrar has received a notification from the coroner's office. For further information regarding referral the coroner see section 5 below.

3. How to arrange to view your loved one after death

You may wish to come to the hospital's viewing room to see your loved one. The viewing room is a separate room within the hospital mortuary. If this is something that you wish to do you can make an appointment with the **mortuary team by telephoning:**

Monday to Friday 8.30am - 3.45pm

**Please call
0117 414 1700
or
0117 414 1701**

Monday to Friday 4pm - 8pm

Saturday or Sunday 10am - 4pm

**Please call
0117 9505050
and ask for
the on-call
mortuary
technician**

On the rare occasions when the cause of death may be a criminal matter there will be restricted viewing. In these circumstances, the police will advise.

4. Tissue donation

After someone has died it may be possible for their tissues to be donated to help others. Your relative may have carried a donor card, be on the Organ Donor Register or may have discussed donation with you during their lifetime. Even if they did not, you may want to consider tissue donation at this time.

To ensure tissue transplants are as successful as possible, tissues can only be donated in certain circumstances.

- Eyes for corneal transplantation can be donated up to 24 hours after death.
- Heart valves can be donated up to 48 hours after death.

If you choose this for your loved one your relative will be cared for with dignity and respect and their appearance will be restored. Tissue donation will not delay funeral plans.

You may be contacted by a specialist tissue donation nurse after someone dies to offer information about tissue donation. The tissue donation nurse will explain the options available for tissue donation and answer any questions.

Please remember, tissue donation is entirely voluntary. If you would like further information, please contact: **NHS Blood and Transplant National Referral Centre Telephone number: 0800 432 0559**. Please leave your name and contact number and a tissue donation nurse will call you back promptly.

Alternatively you may ask a doctor, or nurse involved in the care of your relative to contact the appropriate person on your behalf.

5. When a death is reported to the coroner

In some instances, the hospital doctor is legally required to discuss the death with the coroner, for example, if the:

- Cause of death is unknown.
- Death was sudden, traumatic or unexplained.
- Death may be linked to medical treatment, surgery or anaesthetic.
- Person who died was not visited by a doctor during their final illness.
- Doctor has not seen the deceased within the 14 days before death.
- Death may be linked to the person's occupation, for example, if they have been exposed to asbestos.

The coroner may decide that:

1. The cause of death is clear. In this case:

- a) The doctor signs a Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death.
- b) You take the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death to the Registrar.
- c) The coroner issues a certificate to the Registrar stating a post mortem examination is not needed.

2. The cause of death is unclear. If this is the case:

The coroner may decide a post mortem examination is needed to find out how the person died. You will be told that this is happening but you do not have the right to withhold your consent to the examination.

a) If the post mortem examination shows that death was due to natural causes, the coroner will issue a notification to the Registrar, known as the Pink Form (Form 100B) which gives the cause of death so that the death can be registered. If the body is to be cremated, the coroner will give your chosen funeral director a Certificate for Cremation.

b) If there is to be an inquest, a Certificate of Fact of Death can be issued by the coroner (this is often referred to as an interim certificate). The coroner will give you further information if this decision is made.

3. An inquest is required. If this is the case:

The coroner will open the inquest in order to issue a burial or cremation certificate (if not already issued immediately after the post mortem examination).

The inquest will usually be adjourned to be resumed later.

As well as issuing permission for the funeral to go ahead, the coroner can issue a Certificate of Fact of Death which can be used to notify asset holders and other organisations of the death and to make an application for probate.

For further information and advice about a death which has been reported to the coroner, please contact the coroner's office at:

**Avon Coroner
Coroners Court
Old Weston Road
Flax Bourton
BS48 1UL**

Telephone: 01275 461 920

Email: avoncoronersteam@bristol.gov.uk

6. Where to find help and support

The time ahead may be a very difficult one for you. If you have any further questions, a member of the chaplaincy team (0117 414 3700) or your GP would be happy to help.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your loved one's care, please contact the ward to arrange an appointment with a member of the medical/nursing team.

Further information and bereavement support:

www.gov.uk/after-a-death/overview

www.ageuk.org.uk/money-matters/legal-issues/what-to-do-when-someone-dies/what-to-do-first-when-someone-dies/

www.bristol.gov.uk/births-deaths-marriages/bereavement-support

**PATIENT
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How to contact us:

Bereavement Office



0117 414 0180

0117 414 0181

0117 414 0182

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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