

## Bereavement guidance

The loss of somebody close can have devastating emotional physical and practical effects. Whilst every effort is being made to reduce the number of deaths, the current situation means that there is an increased chance of a bereavement occurring. This document provides practical advice and guidance for people who are dealing with bereavement during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Information in this guidance:

- Talking about death and dying
- Emotional support
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Practical Support

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- Coping with the death of a colleague
- Registering a death
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- Remembrance and the sharing of grief
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Useful links and contacts

**Remember:** The situation around the spread of Coronavirus is changing rapidly so it is important that all staff keep up to date via reference to (insert intranet link)

### Talking about death and dying

Coronavirus is changing the way we deal with death and dying. Whilst the majority of people who get coronavirus experience mild symptoms, the prospect of dying is frightening, especially when we are confronted with regular news reports about people dying alone surrounded by medical staff wearing masks.

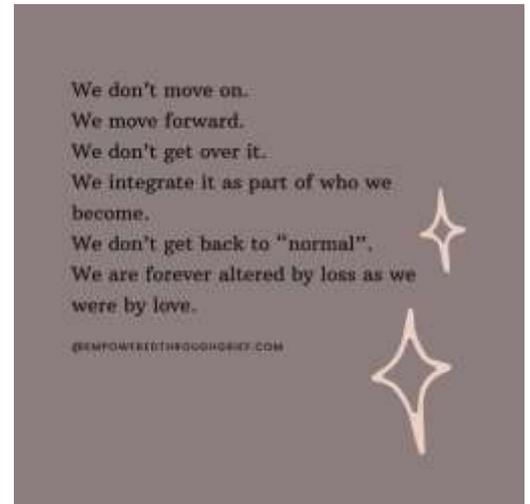
Whilst none of us relishes the prospect of discussing our own or our loved one's potential death, now - more than ever - this should be an open topic of conversation to avoid distress further down the line – we have the opportunity now to change the way we talk about death and dying. If you have not already done so, you may wish to think about any end of life care arrangements, power of attorney and funeral arrangements – just in case. Have you written a will (only 35% of adults have) and do your family know where to locate it and other important information such as life insurance policies, bank accounts, pension, etc? A useful website to record end of life wishes is <https://mydecisions.org.uk/> or phone 0800 999 2434.

You may also like to have a look at this [video](#) from Dr. Justin Amery who talks compassionately and sensitively about discussing 3 things: what needs to be arranged if I die, what will happen to my loved ones and will I suffer?

### Emotional support



No one can predict how much support they will need – we are all living through and navigating unprecedented times. Being bereaved can be an extremely lonely time. Talking with friends and family can be one of the most helpful ways to cope after someone close to us dies. However, we are now in a situation where increasing numbers of people are being told to self-isolate and cut all but essential physical contact with others. This can make feelings of loneliness and grief more intense and relies even more on other methods of support.



Bereavement, grief and loss can cause many different symptoms and they affect people in different ways. There's no right or wrong way to feel. You can help yourself by reaching out to others and talking things through. Ensure you get sufficient rest and sleep, and look after your physical self by eating and drinking well.

Support can be offered via other organisations - please visit <https://www.cruse.org.uk/> or <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/?wlfrom=%2Fbereavement-loss%2F> for more information.

### **Support for those who support the bereaved**

If you are in a role where you are supporting others who are bereaved, or you are dealing directly with deaths of clients or colleagues then please read on for some methods you can use to help.

Self-compassion and self-care: when you are dealing with the bereaved you are practicing compassion and being caring every time you are with them, but too often we neglect ourselves. Self-care is one of the most important things you can do – it acknowledges that your own physical and mental well-being is vital for you to be able to support others. You won't be able to support others effectively unless you look after yourself too.

Lean on others: all too often, those in caring roles don't share their pain as they don't wish to burden others. It's ok to lean on your loved ones, please don't isolate yourself emotionally from others or you will risk burn out. You can share your feelings without compromising confidentiality.

Be honest: no one has all the answers at the moment, and it's ok to admit you're not superhuman. Showing those you support that you are human will help them to better connect with you and it doesn't diminish the care you are providing. Acknowledge the limits of what you can achieve – over the next few months all our limits and boundaries will be severely tested so please speak up if you need help and support.

### **Practical support**

#### *Absence from work*

The manager (or another appropriate colleague) should speak with the employee as soon as possible to offer condolences, sympathy and find out what can be done to help in the immediate future.

Communication is key here so that all parties know what is happening and what needs to be done. The last thing an employee needs is to be worried about work at such a stressful time.

How much time off someone needs will be very personal – some may only need a few days, others will need much longer. Managers should consider how an employee's absence will be covered both in the short and long term – and also ensure the bereaved employee knows that their work will not be building up whilst they are away, which will provide additional comfort during a difficult time. Please refer to the leave policy and guidance, which offers a range of options to cover an employee's absence.

#### *Coping with the death of a colleague*

Managers and colleagues may have to deal with the death of an employee during this. There are practical steps that need to take place and (these can be found here – insert link).

It is an inevitable fact that sad news travels quickly, and it may be that colleagues discover the news of a colleague passing through informal channels such as social media. It is important to ensure news of this nature is communicated in a sensitive way, particularly as this cannot be done in a face to face manner. Colleagues can consider ways in which they can pay their respects, such as sending a message to the family (if appropriate and with permission), creating a 'virtual' book of remembrance or perhaps making a donation to charity in the colleagues' name.

#### *Registering a death and informing organisations*

You must register a death within 5 days (unless the death has been referred to the Coroner) at the register office in the area the death occurred. This can now be done over the telephone, with the death certificate being emailed by the doctor to the relevant register office. If the matter has been referred to HM Coroner, the coroner's officer will advise you what the next steps are.

Afterwards, the registrar will post you a copy of the formal death certificate you will need to handle the deceased estate. A copy of the form required by the undertaker / burial authority / crematorium will be either emailed or posted depending on circumstances.

<https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death>

[Tell Us Once](#) is a service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. When you register a death the registrar will let you know if the service is available in your area (NB: NYCC do provide this service). You will also need to tell banks, utility companies, and landlords or housing associations yourself.

### *Funeral arrangements*

Arranging or attending a funeral is a very emotional time. Guidance on planning a funeral has changed and will change again in the future as social distancing rules are increased or relaxed. Each crematorium and burial authority will have its own rules on how many may attend the service. Some crematoria are not allowing any persons to attend, others are limiting it to close family members. These restrictions change daily and you should speak to your undertaker and check the latest position. It will be hard to do so at such an occasion, but strict social distancing rules must still be adhered to. For more information visit

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/coronavirus/arranging-a-funeral--coronavirus-advice/>

Faith leaders have been consulted and worked with PHE to ensure that communities, the funeral industry and the NHS are protected. Emergency legislation to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic will now recognise the importance of ensuring faith communities are able to bury the deceased instead of cremating in the event of significant deaths due to Coronavirus. The legislation has now made clear that enforced cremation against the wishes of the individual, will not take place when there are burial facilities available.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-for-safe-funerals-after-discussions-with-faith-leaders>

<https://mcb.org.uk/community/covid-19-muslim-burial-resources/>

<https://www.shiva.com/learning-center/visiting-shiva/covid-19-coronavirus-social-distancing-and-jewish-mourning-shiva/>

### *Remembrance and the sharing of grief*

During this time, funerals will not be attended by as many mourners as usual and there may not even be a funeral in some circumstances. One possible activity to consider would be compiling condolences for the person. This could include collecting messages and creating an electronic 'book of condolence'. Other people might choose to send photos or drawings to remember them by. Once social distancing rules are lifted a memorial service could be arranged.

There is useful advice on ways to say goodbye without a funeral here: [www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes](http://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes)

### *Financial support*

Your tax, benefit claims and pension might change depending on your relationship with the person who died. Please see [here](#) for further information on benefits, tax and pension after the death of a spouse and [here](#) for further information on what is affected by the death of a child.

- You could get a Funeral Expenses Payment if you get certain benefits. Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments> for further details.
- You may be able to get Bereavement Support Payment if your husband, wife or civil partner died on or after 6 April 2017. Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment> for further details.
- You could get [Guardian's Allowance](#) if you're bringing up a child whose parents have died.

Bereaved residents of North Yorkshire can access services that will assess whether financial support is available. Information on the PDF document below can be shared to support staff and their families.



### *Dealing with an estate*

You might have to deal with the will, money and property of the person who's died if you're a close friend or relative, or the executor of the will. Applying for the legal right to deal with someone's property, money and possessions (their 'estate') when they die is called 'applying for probate'. If the person left a will, you'll get a 'grant of probate'. If the person did not leave a will, you'll get 'letters of administration'. Please see [here](#) for further guidance and advice on applying for probate.

### **Useful links and contacts**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Contact / link</b>
UK government advice - information to help bereaved families, friends or next of kin make important decisions.	Please see <a href="#">this link</a> .
UK government website providing information, advice and guidance on all aspects of dealing with a death.	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages/death">https://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages/death</a>
Age UK is the country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. They provide companionship, advice and support for older people who need it most.	<a href="https://www.ageuk.org.uk/">https://www.ageuk.org.uk/</a>
Child Bereavement UK supports families and educates professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement.	<a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/</a>
Cruse Bereavement Care is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and offers face-to-face, telephone, email and website support.	<a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/">https://www.cruse.org.uk/</a>
Health Assured	<a href="https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/?wfrom=%2Fbereavement-loss%2F">https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/?wfrom=%2Fbereavement-loss%2F</a>
HelloGrief very simply describes itself as 'a place to share and learn about grief and loss'. Their site was developed by Comfort Zone Camp, Inc. in an effort to promote a dialogue about loss and coping. Through HelloGrief you can participate in their online community, create interactive memorials, read about a diverse range of grief experiences, and find resources.	<a href="https://www.hellogrief.org/">https://www.hellogrief.org/</a>
Marie Curie provide specialist help and advice to those who are suffering from a terminal illness and their loved ones.	<a href="https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus">https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus</a>
MIND provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.	<a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/#.XiBBhY1LEqM">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/#.XiBBhY1LEqM</a>
NHS website – advice on coping with bereavement or loss	<a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/</a>