



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

A close-up photograph of a dandelion seed head against a solid blue background. The seed head is in the process of blowing away, with many white, feathery seeds floating in the air around the central green and brown seed pod. The stem of the dandelion is visible at the bottom.

Advice following a death in the Intensive Care Unit

Useful contact details:

Bereavement Office (for guidance on the death certificate)

Tel: 0118 322 8066, Option 1

Email: rbft.bereavementoffice@nhs.net

**Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am-4pm by appointment only
(excluding weekends and bank holidays)**

The ICU Bereavement Team

Tel: 0118 322 7251

Email: ICU.BereavementTeam@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

**Opening hours: 9am-2pm; the service is not staffed every day; please
leave a message and we will get back to you.**

Medical Examiner Service

Tel: 0118 322 8066, Option 2

Email: rbft.medexaminers@nhs.net

**Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding weekends and
bank holidays)**

The Mortuary Team

Tel: 0118 322 7743

Email: rbft.mortuaryrbh@nhs.net

**Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8am-4pm (excluding weekends and
bank holidays)**

Royal Berkshire Hospital Switchboard

Tel: 0118 322 5111

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 0118 322 8338

Email: PALS@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

**Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am-4.30pm (excluding weekends and
bank holidays)**

We offer our deepest sympathy to you in your bereavement

Although you may find making decisions hard at this difficult time, there are several practical things to be done. This booklet is designed to guide you through the arrangements that need to be made and the options you have.

Many people facing bereavement experience a bewildering mixture of feelings and emotions, together with physical symptoms. You may feel shocked and find it hard to believe the death has happened. It may be difficult to concentrate; you may feel tired, physically run down and unwell. Try to eat and drink normally although you may not feel like it. Also try to rest even if you are having difficulty sleeping. As well as grief and sadness, you may feel guilt, anger, panic or relief. Many people cry, which can leave you feeling exhausted but may bring some relief. Putting on a brave face can be equally exhausting but we all manage our emotions in different ways. Try to share your feelings with a sympathetic listener and as time progresses if you feel you need more help, do consider contacting one of the support groups listed.

If there are issues and questions that remain, please contact the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) on 0118 322 7257 or 0118 322 7251 and either speak to one of the ICU Bereavement Care Team – (Sister Jodi Carpenter and Senior Staff Nurse Marianne O’Grady), or leave a message for them to contact you. Alternatively you can email ICU.BereavementTeam@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

You will receive a letter in a few months, offering a follow-up appointment so that if you have any new or unanswered questions about your loved one’s illness and death, we can arrange a meeting with one of the consultants and the Bereavement Care Team to discuss them. It is also helpful for us to have feedback about your experience in ICU. However, everyone has different needs in bereavement and you may feel you do not need this service.

The Intensive Care Unit Team
Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Property

We will try to return the property of your relative or friend straight away. If you think there may be property in other parts of the hospital, please tell us and we can arrange for it all to be gathered together. Please also remind us if you think there are valuables in our safe.

If you were not present when your friend or relative died, please arrange to collect the property within 28 days. After that time, the Trust will dispose of any uncollected belongings.

Registering the death

What do I do now?

The Hospital Bereavement Office will aim to contact you **within two working days** following the death of your relative or loved one (this can be longer in busy periods). You can contact the Hospital Bereavement Office on 0118 322 7059 / 8066 if you need to.

The Bereavement Team will:

- Ensure the completion of the cause of death certificate and cremation papers (if cremation papers are required).
- Advise you on how and when to register the death.
- Advise you what to do next.
- Arrange a viewing of the deceased (by appointment only).
- Be happy to answer any questions you may have.
- Advise when and where you can collect the cause of death certificate and any belongings or valuables.

In some circumstances the death needs to be reported to the Coroner; see page 7.

More information available at www.gov.uk/after-a-death – What to do after someone dies.

The Medical Examiner

The Medical Examiner is an independent senior doctor. Their role is to scrutinise the medical records, speak to the treating doctor, and together they will agree on the wording for the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD). They will also ask if you have any concerns about care.

Within a few days of the death, you will be contacted by telephone by a Medical Examiner (ME) or a Medical Examiner Officer (MEO).

During the telephone conversation, the ME or MEO will explain to you what the cause of death will be recorded as, or if a Coroner referral is required. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions about the cause of death or about any aspect of the care received during their admission.

If you have concerns about care, the ME or MEO will be able to advise on the best way to raise those and may request the Trust to undertake a case review. If a case review is requested, you will have the option to discuss the outcome of this with the Trust's mortality team. Following the call, if the MCCD can be issued, the ME or MEO will release the completed MCCD and any other legal documents to the Bereavement Team.

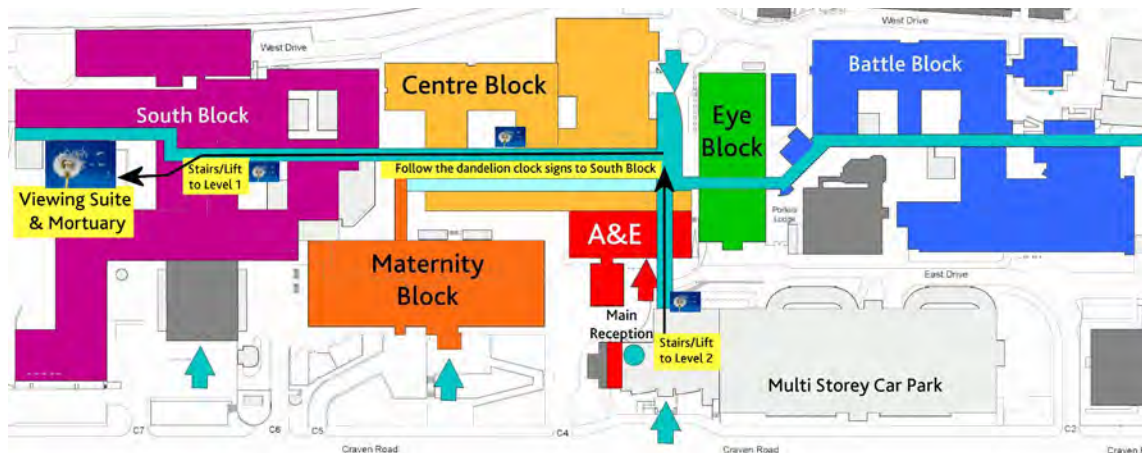
Location of the Bereavement Office and Viewing Suite

The Bereavement Office and Viewing Suite (refer to page 7) are located in South Block, on level one.

Signs can be found from Craven Road main entrance by following the dandelion clock picture (see right). If you are uncertain, the main reception staff will be more than happy to show you the signs to look for.



Location map



Registering the death

The death should be registered within five days from the date the Medical Examiner signs the certificate, (unless there has been involvement of the Coroner). The death should be registered at the Register Office in the district where the death occurred. This is the Reading Register Office. It is possible to register outside the district by declaration, but this could cause a delay. The Bereavement Team can explain the process if required.

After the call with the Medical Examiner's Office, the Bereavement Team will send the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) to the Reading Register Office. You can then book an appointment with Reading Register Office, over the telephone or via the website. Please do not book an appointment until you have been notified that the MCCD has been sent to the Registrar.



Reading Register Office opening hours:

Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri: 9am-5pm

Wed: 10.15am to 5pm

Tel: 0118 937 3533

Please note that there is no parking at the Civic Offices. The nearest car parks are at the Oracle, Holy Brook or Broad Street Mall.

What do I need to do to register the death?

It will be helpful if the person who goes to the Register Office also takes the following information with them, if available:

- The date and place of death.
- The usual address of the deceased.
- The full names and surnames of the deceased and the maiden name if applicable.
- The date and place of birth of the deceased (town and county or country if abroad).
- The occupation of the deceased and the full name and occupation of their spouse, if widowed or married. If under 16 years of age, the full names and occupations of mother and father.
- Whether the deceased was receiving a pension or any type of allowance from public funds.
- The date of birth of the surviving widow or widower if the deceased was married.
- The date of admission to hospital of the deceased.
- Any information regarding pensions.

If you cannot find or do not have any of the above information, you should still go to the Registrar as soon as possible.

What will happen at the Register Office?

The registrar will provide you with:

- A green certificate (for burial or cremation), which you should give to the funeral director as soon as possible. It is free of charge.
- A certificate of registration of death for use in connection with Department of Social Security benefits. This is also free.
- You may need certified copies of the Entry of Death for such things as insurance purposes, premium bonds, bank or building society accounts, private pensions and the solicitor. The copies are known as the 'Death Certificate' and a fee is payable for each one. The Registrar will be able to advise you as to how many copies you need. Photocopies may be acceptable, many building societies, banks and companies will copy the original. Also solicitors will copy the certificate and stamp it as a certified copy.

'Tell us Once' service offered by the Register Office

- When someone has died there are lots of things that need to be done at a time when you probably least feel like doing them. One of the things is contacting the government departments and local council services that need to be told.
- Once the death has been registered, the Registrar will add the details of your relative or friend to the 'Tell us Once' database. The Registrar will then give you the 'Tell us Once' service number which you can use to inform a range of government departments all in one go. Once you have the 'Tell us Once' service number either visit www.gov.uk/tell-us-once or call 0800 085 7308.

What if family or friends wish to see the deceased again?

Once the funeral directors of your choice have collected the deceased from the hospital mortuary, you will be able to make arrangements for viewing directly with them.

Prior to this, it is possible to make arrangements to view the deceased in the Viewing Suite of the hospital mortuary. This is only available Monday to Friday between 9am and 3pm, for 30 minutes by appointment only. To make an appointment, call The Bereavement Office on 0118 322 8066 and select option 1.

The Coroner

There are certain circumstances when the doctor has to refer the death to the Coroner before they are able to write the death certificate. This may cause a slight delay in issuing the certificate. The Coroner may have to arrange a Coroner's post mortem examination if a cause of death has not been established by the doctors treating your relative or friend. The Coroner's Office will contact you directly to discuss the process if this is needed.

If the post mortem shows the death is due to natural causes, the Coroner will issue a notification to the Registrar which gives the cause of death so the death can be registered. If there is to be an Inquest, an interim certificate of fact of death can be issued by the Coroner.

The Coroner's Office can be contacted on 0118 987 2300 Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays, 7.30am–3.30pm. Out of hours there is an answer phone for you to leave a message.

Hospital post mortem examination

Sometimes, the hospital team caring for your relative or friend may ask for your permission to carry out a post mortem examination. This can help the doctors to understand more clearly why the person died and it may provide information which helps in treating other patients in the future. If you do agree to this a meeting will be arranged to explain everything to you and for you to give signed consent. This should not delay the funeral arrangements by more than a few days and the death certificate will be issued so that you can register the death and continue with funeral arrangements.

The results of the post mortem usually take 6-8 weeks and then you can arrange to meet with the doctors to discuss the results.

Tissue donation

Every year, hundreds of lives are saved with the help of donated organs. However, what you may not realise is that donated tissue such as skin, bone, tendon, corneas, and heart valves, also dramatically improves the quality of life for recipients and can even save lives.

Most people can be considered for tissue donation after death but there is only a short period of time for this to happen. All adults in England will be considered to have agreed to be a donor when they die unless they have opted out of the system. Donation will not delay the funeral arrangements.

The ward can arrange for a specialist nurse from the national referral centre at NHS Blood and Transplant to contact you by phone to discuss tissue donation and answer any questions you may have.

The donor is always treated with respect and dignity and the body is restored to normal appearance after donation. Afterwards you can receive acknowledgement and a small amount of information about recipients in the form of a letter.

If you decide to proceed with donation the above phone call will then become a recorded interview that will take approximately 30 minutes.

During the conversation the following points will be discussed:

- Medical history
- The donation process
- Lifestyle questions
- Possible donation options

NHS Blood and Transplant Service

Tel: 0800 432 0559

A word about funerals

Can I contact a funeral director?

You can contact the funeral director of your choice as soon as you wish but you will not be able to proceed with definite arrangements until you have registered the death by taking the Medical Certificate to the Register Office.

What should I do first?

First and foremost is to contact a reputable funeral director. If you have no experience in this it might be a good idea to ask relatives or friends whom they have used in the past and if they have been satisfied. In any event, the funeral director you choose should be a member of one of three national bodies: National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) or the Society of Allied Independent Funeral Directors (SAIFD).

The Natural Death Centre helps friends and relatives to arrange funerals with or without undertakers. The Centre also produces advice on 'green' burial using cardboard coffins and nature reserve burial grounds. They can be contacted at:

The Natural Death Centre, In The Hill House, Watley Lane, Twyford, Winchester S021 1QX
Tel: 01962 712 690 www.naturaldeath.org.uk

What should I ask?

How much it will cost is the first thing you should discuss with your funeral director. However, no matter what type of funeral you choose or what you spend, funeral directors have the responsibility to provide a high standard of care and consideration to you and the deceased.

There are things that will affect the cost of the funeral such as flowers, materials for the coffin, transportation. You should think very carefully about how much money is available to spend and whether the person who has died would want you to spend excessive amounts. On the other hand, financial assistance may be available.

What kind of funeral?

- **Cremation:** Did the deceased leave any instructions or wishes in this area? Are there religious considerations?
- **Burial:** Many churchyards no longer have space available for burial. This may be discussed with your funeral director or clergyman/woman.
- **Religious service:** If you are not attached to a particular church, the funeral director will advise and contact the appropriate clergy. If you have a particular church, let the funeral director know and he/she will contact your minister, priest, rabbi, spiritual or religious leader. In either case the minister will assist you with planning the actual funeral service. Something you might wish to think about is any special hymns, readings or music that has been particularly meaningful to you or the person who has died.
- Other than Bible readings, there are readings and poems, both sacred and secular, which you might find appropriate, helpful and comforting. The Spiritual Healthcare Department has a small selection of these and would be happy to assist you in choosing something suitable.
- **Non-religious ceremony:** While churchgoers and others committed to a religious faith will normally want a minister or religious leader to officiate, there are people for whom religion is less important or who have decided to live their lives without it. There are many options available and your funeral director will be able to advise you.
The British Humanist Association has a national network of accredited officiants. They can be contacted at: The British Humanist Association, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB. Tel: 020 7324 3060 www.humanism.org.uk.

The Spiritual Healthcare (Chaplaincy) Team

The Hospital Chaplains are available to offer you support and guidance in your grief. You can contact them on Tel: 0118 322 7105 Monday to Friday 8am–4pm.
Out of hours – please ask ICU staff to phone the on-call chaplain.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS is a service that can liaise with wards and departments to provide an answer to your enquiry. PALS aim to provide a reply to your enquiry within five working days. Sometimes, it may take longer than this, because they simply need more time to find the answer or because the enquiry is more complex.

You can contact PALS using the details below:

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone 0118 322 8338

Email: PALS@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Main Entrance, Level 2

Royal Berkshire Hospital, Craven Road, Reading RG1 5AN

Opening Hours: 8.30am-4.30pm Monday to Friday

Making a formal complaint

You may decide that PALS or the ICU Bereavement Team is unable to help you on this occasion and that you would like to raise a formal complaint. Or PALS may suggest that your enquiry would be better addressed as a formal complaint.

To raise a formal complaint, you will need to put the concerns in writing (if you haven't already done so via PALS).

The Complaints Team will be in contact with you directly to acknowledge your complaint and explain what happens next. The Complaints Team aim to investigate formal complaints within 25 working days and you will receive a response to your complaint, either by letter or in a meeting.

You can contact The Complaints Team on the details below:

Complaints Team

Telephone 0118 322 8338

Email: complaints@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

**Main Entrance, Level 2, Royal Berkshire Hospital,
Craven Road, Reading, RG1 5AN**

Quality Survey for Bereaved People

The Quality Survey is a survey for the friends and family of someone who has died. The aim of the survey is to give those close to the person who died an opportunity to share their views on the care and support provided in hospital. This will help us improve the care we provide.

You can take part in the survey by scanning the QR code or by visiting:
<https://surveys.nhsbenchmarking.nhs.uk/qsac/58487-768>



Memorial Service

As time passes following bereavement there are many times when, for all sorts of reasons, we want to remember those who are special to us, who have died. Twice a year The ICU Team holds a Memorial Service. This enables staff from the Intensive Care Unit, the hospital chaplains and friends and relatives to remember those who have died whilst in the Unit. We invite you and your friends to join us if you wish. We will send you an invitation with details of the service in a few months' time. We understand that you may not wish to attend or feel it is too soon after your bereavement to do so. There is an opportunity to attend a later service if you wish. If you do choose to attend a service we will be very pleased to see you.

Refreshments are served after the service, which allows us to spend some time together.

Checklist of people you will need to notify:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Probate Office | ☐ Newsagent/Milkman etc |
| ☐ Bank/Building Society | ☐ Credit card companies |
| ☐ Employer | ☐ Department of Work & Pensions |
| ☐ Inland Revenue | ☐ Insurance companies |
| ☐ Solicitor | ☐ Vehicle licensing (DVLA) |
| ☐ Council Tax Office | ☐ TV Licensing |
| ☐ Rental companies | ☐ Household utilities (water, gas etc) |
| ☐ Pension providers | ☐ Mortgage providers |
| ☐ Social Services | ☐ Council Housing Office |
| ☐ Royal Mail deliveries | ☐ Trade Union Clubs/Associations |

Checklist of items that may need to be returned / cancelled:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Pension/benefits book | ☐ Driving license |
| ☐ Passport | ☐ Library books/tickets |
| ☐ Season tickets | ☐ National Insurance card |

Bereavement support groups

What help and support is available?

You are always welcome to contact the Intensive Care Unit (Tel: 0118 322 7257/ 7248) for help and advice. Support and guidance can come from family, friends, your GP, health/social worker, school and faith organisations. We have also compiled this list of various specialist organisations, which offer help, advice and support during this distressing and emotional time. These organisations offer various support including individual or family counselling, face-to-face counselling, telephone support, support groups meetings and information and advice.

Bereavement Advice Centre Suitable for those recently bereaved, who require practical advice on what to do after a loved one dies.	Website: bereavementadvice.org Phone: 0800 634 9494 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)														
Cruse Bereavement Care Cruse offers face to face, telephone, email and website support.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>West Berkshire Branch</td><td>Tel: 01635 523 573</td></tr> <tr> <td>Thames Valley Berkshire Area</td><td>Tel: 01344 411 919</td></tr> <tr> <td>National helpline</td><td>Tel: 0808 808 1677</td></tr> <tr> <td>Young People's helpline</td><td>Tel: 0808 808 1677</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">www.cruse.org.uk</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">www.hopeagain.org.uk (website for young people).</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk</td></tr> </table>	West Berkshire Branch	Tel: 01635 523 573	Thames Valley Berkshire Area	Tel: 01344 411 919	National helpline	Tel: 0808 808 1677	Young People's helpline	Tel: 0808 808 1677	www.cruse.org.uk		www.hopeagain.org.uk (website for young people).		Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk	
West Berkshire Branch	Tel: 01635 523 573														
Thames Valley Berkshire Area	Tel: 01344 411 919														
National helpline	Tel: 0808 808 1677														
Young People's helpline	Tel: 0808 808 1677														
www.cruse.org.uk															
www.hopeagain.org.uk (website for young people).															
Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk															
Bereavement Café Takes place on the 1st Friday of each month, 2.00 – 3.30 pm. The Bereavement Café is drop-in for anyone who has been bereaved, either recently or some time ago, to meet together for an informal chat and mutual support.	Website: www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/come-and-see/open-church/living-with-loss St Barnabas Parish Centre, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA. Phone: Gillian Wilson 0118 9478772														
Living with Loss Takes place on the 3rd Friday of each month, 2.00 – 3.30 pm. Living with Loss is a monthly group that provides the opportunity for anyone affected by any kind of loss to find support from others who understand from their own experience how overwhelming feelings of loss can be.	Website: www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/come-and-see/open-church/living-with-loss St Barnabas Parish Centre, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA. Phone: Gillian Wilson 0118 9478772														
Child Bereavement UK Information for bereaved children and families	Tel: 0800 0288840 www.childbereavementuk.org/														

Child Death Helpline Helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age from pre-birth to adult, however recently or long ago.	Tel: 0800 282 986 / 0808 800 6019 www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk
Daisy's Dream For children up to the age of 19 years who have had a bereavement.	Tel: 0118 934 2604 www.daisysdream.org.uk Email: info@daisysdream.org.uk
Grief Encounter Supporting bereaved children and young people of all age groups. Weekdays 9am-9pm (call, live chat or email).	Tel: 0808 802 0111 (free helpline) www.griefencounter.org.uk Email: griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk
The Lullaby Trust Foundation for Study of Infant Deaths. Telephone, e-mail and befriending service.	Tel: 0808 802 6868 (free helpline) www.lullabytrust.org.uk Email: support@lullabytrust.org.uk
Institute of Family Therapy Counselling for couples and families dealing with a variety of issues, including bereavement.	Tel: 020 7391 9150 www.ift.org.uk
Mind Garden Therapy Offering: In person therapy. Couples therapy and meditation. Child and adolescent therapy. Workshops and courses.	Website: www.reading-counselling.co.uk Phone: 0118-907 0420
The Deaf Health Charity - Sign Health Free psychological therapy in British sign language 18 +.	Website: signhealth.org.uk/with-deaf-people/psychological-therapy/therapy-service Text: 07984 439473 Call: 07966 976747 Email: therapy@signhealth.org.uk
Macmillan Cancer Support	Tel: 0118 322 8700 / 0808 8010 388 www.macmillan.org.uk Email: Macmillan.information@royalberkshire.nhs.uk
Meningitis Now 24-hour nurse led helpline for bereavement support.	www.meningitisnow.org

National Bereavement Services National directory of bereavement and loss services.	Helpline Tel: 0800 0246121 www.nationalbereavementservice.org
Roadpeace Practical and emotional support for road traffic victims and bereaved families.	Tel: 0800 160 1069 www.roadpeace.org Email: info@roadpeace.org
Samaritans	Tel: 116 123 www.samaritans.org.uk Email: jo@samaritans.org.uk
SAMM Support After Murder and Manslaughter A self-help group for those bereaved by murder or manslaughter.	Tel. 01214722912 or Text. 07342888570 www.samm.org.uk Email: info@samm.org.uk
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society	Tel: 0808 164 3332 www.uk-sands.org Email: helpline@uk-sands.org
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide	Tel: 0300 111 5065 www.uk-sobs.org.uk Email: sobs.support@hotmail.com
Terence Higgins Trust Charity providing practical support, help, counselling and advice for anyone concerned about HIV or AIDS.	Tel: 0808 802 1221 (advice line) www.tht.org.uk Email: info@tht.org.uk
Thames Hospice Suitable for: People who live in East Berkshire or South Buckinghamshire. Those who have been bereaved in the last 12 months. They provide up to twelve individual counselling sessions. This team also supports bereaved children in our community when referred by local schools'.	Website: www.thameshospice.org.uk Phone: 01753 842121 and ask for Counselling Support Services.
WAY Widowed and young Suitable for people aged 50 or under when their partner dies.	Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk Phone: 0300 201 0051

The Compassionate Friends

Support for parents, grandparents and siblings after the death of a child of any age and from any cause. There are some local groups.

Tel: 0345 123 2304

www.tcf.org.uk

Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Individual and group counselling and support as well as information and advice for bereaved children and their families.

Tel: 0808 802 0021 (helpline)

www.winstonswish.org

Tel. 01242 515 157 (general enquiries)

Email: info@winstonswish.org (general)

Email@ ask@winstonswish.org (support)

Other useful telephone numbers

Age UK Free Helpline Fact sheets and advice regarding funerals benefits etc	Tel: 0800 6781602 www.ageuk.org.uk Reading: 0118 950 2480 Email: info@ageukreading.org.uk or contact@ageuk.org.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau (Reading)	Tel: 03444 111 306 www.citizensadvice.org.uk www.rcab.org.uk
Reading Borough Council Reading Services Guide.	www.reading.gov.uk
Reading Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages	Tel: 0118 937 3533
Bracknell/Finchampstead Register Office	Phone: 01344 352000
SSAFA Forces Help National charity providing practical, financial and emotional help for serving and ex-service men, women and their families	Tel: 0800 731 4880 / 0118 95 73393 www.ssafa.org.uk/berkshire
NHS Organ Donation	Tel: 0300 123 23 23 www.organdonation.nhs.uk
Intensive Care Society Patients and relatives section.	www.ics.ac.uk
Reading Coroner's Office Reading Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QH	Tel: 0118 937 2300 www.reading.gov.uk/coroners E-mail: Coroner@reading.gov.uk

RBFT Intensive Care Unit, September 2025. Next review due: September 2027.