



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust



Bereavement Support

Information and guidance to support
you after a bereavement

Useful contact details:

Bereavement Office

Telephone: 0118 322 8066, Option 1

Email: rbft.bereavementoffice@nhs.net

Telephone lines open: Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm

Office opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm by appointment only (excluding weekends and bank holidays)

Medical Examiner Service

Telephone: 0118 322 8066, Option 2

Email: rbft.medexaminers@nhs.net

Telephone lines open: Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm

Office opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm (excluding weekends and bank holidays)

Mortuary Team

Telephone: 0118 322 7743

Email: rbft.mortuaryrbh@nhs.net

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

Hospital Switchboard

Telephone: 0118 322 5111

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone: 0118 322 8338

Email: PALS@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

Our condolences

Firstly, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to you at this time.

This booklet aims to help and guide you with the formalities of dealing with your loss.

If there is anything you would like to discuss please contact the Bereavement Team. They will be happy to offer you support and assistance.

Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Blythe', with a stylized, cursive script.

James Blythe

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1. What to do next

Please contact the Bereavement Team on the next working day following the death of your relative or friend.

Bereavement Team

Telephone: 0118 322 8066, Option 1

Telephone lines open: Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm
(excluding weekends and bank holidays)

When you call, we will explain what happens next and guide you through each step.

If you are planning to take your relative or friend out of the country, please let us know as soon as possible. We can advise you of any additional steps and documents you may need.

If you wish to, you can start making arrangements with a funeral director. However, we recommend waiting until the death has been registered before confirming a funeral date. If you plan to arrange the funeral yourself please inform the Bereavement Team, who can arrange for you to speak to the Mortuary Team who can guide you further on how to do this.

2. How the Bereavement Team can help

We provide advice, support, and assistance to bereaved relatives, friends and carers following the death of a patient at the hospital.

A doctor will complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD). This is needed so that the death can be registered and funeral date booked.

The Bereavement Team will ensure that the practical arrangements are completed in a timely, professional, and caring manner. We can also help you with:

- The next steps of the process
- Any additional paperwork required
- Seeing your relative or friend

- Collection of personal belongings
- Registering the death
- Funeral arrangements
- The Medical Examiner Service
- Tissue donation
- The Coroner's Service

Please contact us if you need help or are unsure about anything.

3. The Medical Examiner Service

The Medical Examiner (ME) is an independent senior doctor. They scrutinise the medical records of your relative or friend and speak to the doctor who cared for them. Together, they agree on the wording for the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), or the reason for a Coroner referral (if required).

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

During the call, they will explain to you the cause of death in clear terms, or the reason why 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 while they were in hospital.

If you have questions or concerns about the care your relative or friend received, the Medical Examiner service will be able to advise on how to raise those concerns. They 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 Medical Examiner service will release the completed paperwork and any other legal documents to the Bereavement Team.

4. Registering the death

The death should usually be registered within 5 days from the date the Register Office receive the signed Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) (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. If you live outside the district in which the death occurred, you can register at your local office, which is a process called “declaration”. The Bereavement Team can explain this process, if required.

After the call with the Medical Examiner Office, the Bereavement Team will send the MCCD to the Reading Register Office. If you have consented for us to share your contact number with Reading Register Office, they will call you to book you an appointment to register the death. Alternatively, you can book an appointment yourself over the telephone or via Reading Borough Council's website. Please wait until we confirm the MCCD has been sent to the Registrar before attempting to book an appointment.

Location of the Reading Register Office



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.

Reading Register Office

**Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading, RG1 2LU**

Telephone: 0118 937 3533

Website: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/life-events/deaths/>

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm (excluding weekends and bank holidays)

Who can register the death?

A death can be registered by a relative, a partner, a representative, by someone who was present at the death, the occupier or manager of the premises where they died, or by the person responsible for making the funeral arrangements.

During the appointment

The appointment with the registrar takes approximately 30 minutes. During the appointment the registrar will ask you for the deceased person's:

- Full name and any previous names
- Last occupation
- Last address
- Date and place of birth
- Date and place of death
- Full name, occupation and date of birth of their spouse or partner, if they were married or in a Civil Partnership
- Your (the 'informant's') name and address.

The Registrar can help with the official '**Tell us once**' service that informs all central and local government agencies of the death. The

Registrar can provide you with the details of the service and your unique reference number.

The Registrar will produce a certificate of burial or cremation (**green form**) and email this to your chosen funeral director. It confirms that the registration has taken place and the funeral arrangements can go ahead.

You will need to get official certified copies of the death certificate for several official purposes. For example, private pensions, insurances, premium bonds and bank accounts.

There is a fee for providing official certified copies of the death certificate and the Registrar can advise you of the current charges.

Note

There is a charge for any amendments / corrections to registration entries. Please check the completed details very carefully before signing to say that you agree with the death certificate and before it is printed.

5. The Coroner

Under certain circumstances it is a legal requirement to inform the Coroner of a person's death. If this is thought to be necessary, the Medical Examiner Office will talk you through the process, and a Coroner's Officer will contact you once a referral has been made.

In this situation the Coroner will decide if the treating doctor can issue the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), or whether further investigations are needed (such as a post-mortem and/or inquest). If the Coroner requests a post-mortem, your consent is not needed, but this will be explained at the time.

If a post-mortem shows that the death was due to natural causes, the Coroner will issue a notification to the Registrar. This gives the cause of death so that the death can be registered. If you are organising a cremation, the Coroner will give your chosen funeral director a certificate for cremation so you will not need the green

form. If there is to be an inquest, the Coroner may issue an interim certificate of fact of death. This confirms the person has died and can be used to help with practical matters, such as contacting banks or insurance companies, while the investigation is ongoing. If the Coroner decides that the doctor can issue the MCCD the Bereavement Team will contact you and the registration process will resume as detailed on page 6.

The Coroner's Office can be contacted for further advice and information if needed. The telephone number is voicemail only, but please be reassured that if you leave a message a Coroner's Officer will call you as soon as possible.

Berkshire Coroners' Office

Telephone: 0118 937 2300

Email: coroner@reading.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/life-events/>

Monday to Friday, 8am-4pm (excluding weekends and bank holidays)

6. Hospital post-mortem consent

The hospital doctor issuing the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) may ask whether you would like to consider a hospital post-mortem. They will discuss this with you and explain the reasons why. These are sometimes important for further learning about the cause of death and improving treatments. You will be under no pressure to consent (agree) and it will not delay the registration process. The doctor can still issue the MCCD and you can register in the usual way as detailed on page 6.

If you do agree to a hospital post-mortem, you will be invited to a meeting which involves the completion of a consent form. A doctor from the treating team, a trained consent taker and a member of the Mortuary or Bereavement Team will be there to guide you through the process. You will have 24 hours after signing the consent form to

change your decision. Please call the Bereavement Office as soon as possible during this time, if you wish to withdraw your consent. The results of a hospital post-mortem usually take around 6 to 8 weeks and you can arrange to meet with the treating doctors to discuss the results.

7. Tissue donation

After death, it may be possible for your loved one to help others through tissue donation. Donated tissues can make a life-changing difference. For example, corneas can restore sight. Most people can be considered for tissue donation, and many families take comfort in knowing that something positive can come from their loss.

There are only a small number of medical reasons why donation may not be possible. A specialist nurse from NHS Blood and Transplant may contact you by phone to talk through tissue donation and answer any questions you may have, so that you can decide what feels right for you and your family. If you wish to find out more information or to speak to a specialist nurse, please contact NHS blood and transport.

NHS Blood and Transplant
Telephone 0800 432 0559

8. Donation to medical science

Some people may have decided that they would like their body to be donated to medical science for anatomical examination, education, training, and research. This must be a written consent form direct from the chosen organisation, signed when the person was still alive or specific wording in a living will. If your relative or friend had made this choice, you should contact the chosen organisation and also inform the Bereavement Team.

The closest centre for donation to the Royal Berkshire Hospital is the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. There are restrictions relating to body donation, so please speak to the centre directly for further information.

John Radcliffe Hospital, Bereavement Office

Telephone: 01865 220 110

Bequest Office

Telephone: 01865 272181

Department of Physiology, Anatomy & Genetics,

Opening hours, Monday – Friday, 8.30am-2pm

Please note, there is a 5-day period from the date of death and the office being able to accept.

They would be unable to accept during the Christmas and Easter periods as the department is closed.

Please note, if there is Coroner involvement no medical school can accept.

9. Arranging to see your friend or relative

The funeral director will arrange to collect your relative or friend from the hospital when the death has been registered. You can make arrangements with the appointed funeral director to see your relative or friend at the funeral home.

If you wish to see your relative or friend while they are still at the hospital the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) must be issued to confirm there is no Coroner involvement. Authorisation from the Coroner maybe required if the death has been referred to them. Authorisation must also be given from the patient's next of kin (NoK) or other authorised representative.

When booking a viewing, the bereavement officer will ask you to confirm the full name, date of birth, date of death, address, name of the hospital ward they were on and the NHS Number (if known) of the person you are coming to see.

We need this information to confirm the booking and pass on to the mortuary staff. When attending the viewing you will be asked to confirm three of these identifiers again and sign paper work to confirm the details.

The Bereavement Team can advise you further on this.

Please bring a form of official identification with you, such as a driving licence or passport.

Bereavement Team

Telephone: 0118 322 8066, Option 1

Telephone lines open: Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm

By appointment only Monday to Friday, 10am-3pm (30-minute appointments) (excluding weekends and bank holidays)

10. Collecting property and valuables

Property is usually returned to the person recorded by the hospital as the patient's next of kin (NoK) or other authorised representative. If you are with your relative or friend in hospital when they die and are recorded as their main contact, nursing staff may be able to return their property and valuables to you before you leave.

If you were not present, ward staff will send any property to the Bereavement Office. Valuable items may remain on the ward in a secure safe. Money greater than £50 may be securely deposited by the ward in the Cashiers Office.

The Bereavement Team can advise you on what items have been sent to the Bereavement Office and if any items remain on the ward or Cashiers Office.

The Bereavement Team will advise you how items can be collected or returned to you. Collection of property is by appointment only.

Please note that after 28 days, the department will usually dispose of any uncollected property.

Valuables will normally be retained for one year from the date of death before being disposed of or donated to charity where appropriate, in line with departmental policy.

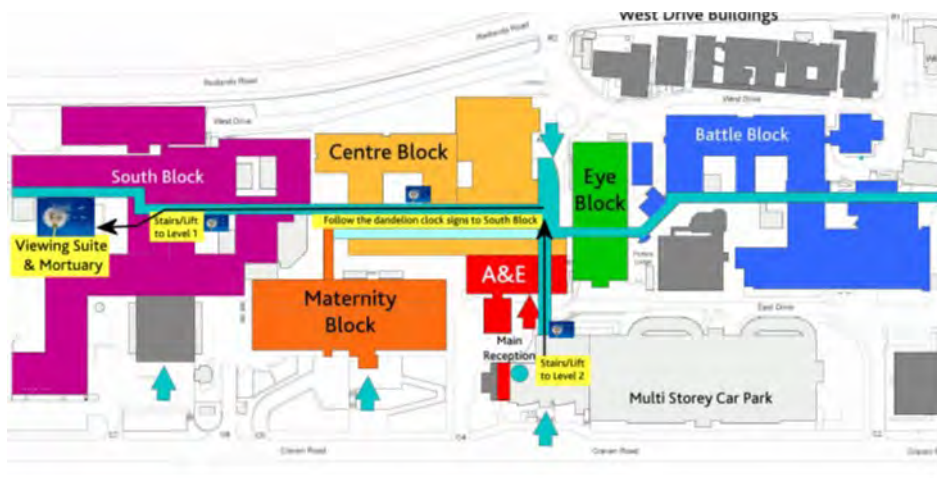
11. How to find us

The Bereavement Office and Medical Examiner Service are located on Level 1 of the South Block. Follow the dandelion signs from the Craven Road main entrance to the office. The offices are located next to the Viewing Suite and Mortuary.



Main reception staff can help to show you the signs to look for and provide directions if you need further assistance.

Visits to the office are by appointment only. Please contact the Bereavement Office to arrange a visit. Please bring a form of official identification with you, such as a passport or driving licence.



12. Getting to the Royal Berkshire Hospital

If you are travelling by car

If required, the Bereavement Team can organise free parking but, this needs to be pre-arranged when booking your appointment to visit the Bereavement Office.

Parking at the hospital is often difficult, with limited spaces. There are some pay and display parking bays (parking restrictions apply) in streets nearby to the hospital, if you are unable to find one in the hospital multi storey car park on Craven Road.

All hospital visitor car parks have dedicated blue badge bays with extra blue badge bays on West Drive (off Redlands Road), Craven Road (outside the TEC Centre, next to St Andrews Church) and Craven Road (opposite Maternity building). To validate your parking, register your blue badge on the APCOA Blue Badge portal or take the ID section of your blue badge to main reception on Craven Road.

Due to parking restrictions, please allow plenty of time to arrive and get parked if you have a pre-arranged appointment.

If you are travelling by public transport

The hospital is close to Reading town centre. Local bus services stop outside the main entrance of the hospital, on Craven Road.

For up to date bus service details call Reading Buses on 0118 959 4000 or visit: www.reading-buses.co.uk

13. Chaplaincy, Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team

The Trust has a team of experienced chaplains and non-religious pastoral carers drawn from a range of faiths and worldviews. They are available to offer support and guidance during this time.

Chaplaincy, Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team

Telephone: 0118 322 7105

Monday to Friday, 8am-4pm

Out of hours – call switchboard on 0118 322 5111

14. Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS is a hospital service that can liaise with wards and departments to provide an answer to your enquiries.

PALS aims to respond to your enquiry within 5 working days.

However, it may take longer than this, if they 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

Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm

15. Making a formal complaint

You may decide that PALS 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 have not 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.

Complaints Team

Telephone 0118 322 8338

Email: complaints@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm

16. Royal Berks Charity

The Royal Berks Charity supports patients, families and staff across all sites of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

We understand that this may be an incredibly difficult time. Some people find comfort in remembering someone special through a donation or dedication in their memory. Gifts made in memory of a loved one are a thoughtful way to honour their life, while helping to support the care of others across our hospitals.

If now or in the future, you would like to remember your loved one in this way, Royal Berks Charity can help you explore the options available. This includes making a donation, creating a Timeless Tribute page, or leaving a dedication on our Memory Wall.

There is no expectation to give, but we are always deeply grateful for any support given in memory of someone special.

Royal Berks Charity

Telephone: 0118 322 8860

Website: www.royalberkscharity.co.uk

17. Quality Survey for Bereaved People

This 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 helps us improve the care we provide.

At this time, as it is part of a national project, the survey can only collect feedback related to adults (18+) who died within hospital wards.

You can take part in the survey by scanning the QR code or by going to this website:

<https://surveys.nhsbenchmarking.nhs.uk/qsac/58487-768>



18. Ongoing help and support

Alongside the Bereavement Team, your family, friends or general practitioner (GP), you may feel that you need some extra support. You may wish to contact other services and organisations such as those listed below for ongoing help and support following your bereavement.

Down to Earth

Website: quakersocialaction.org.uk

Offers practical support on funeral costs.

Compassionate Friends

Telephone: 0345 123 2304

Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk

Website: www.tcf.org.uk/

Helpline run by bereaved parents and their families.

Cruse Bereavement Support

Telephone: 0808 808 1677 (National)

Telephone: 0134 441 1919 (Thames Valley Berkshire Branch)

Website: www.cruse.org.uk/

Bereavement support, information and campaigning for all.

Daisy's Dream

Telephone: 0118 934 2604

Website: www.daisysdream.org.uk

The charity supporting children through bereavement.

Samaritans Telephone: 0330 094 5717 (available every day, all hours) Website: Samaritans.org For those requiring a phone and online listening service
Sudden Death Association Telephone: 0808 8000 401 Website: www.suddendeath.org Organisation for relatives and friends of people who have died suddenly.
Child Bereavement UK Telephone: 0800 02 888 40 Website: www.childbereavementuk.org Supports bereaved children, young people, their families and the professionals who support them.
WAY Widowed and young Telephone: 0300 201 0051 Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk For people aged 50 or under when their partner died.
The Loss Foundation Telephone: 0300 200 4112 Website: thelossfoundation.org/ Free bereavement support for loss to cancer or COVID-19.
Sue Ryder – Palliative, neurological and bereavement support Website: www.sueryder.org/online-bereavement-counselling Online bereavement counselling support.
At a loss Website: AtaLoss.org: Offers practical support including a helpful tool to search for funeral directors based on postcode.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

Lisa Jane Richardson, Service Manager: Bereavement and Medical Examiner Service.

Reviewed: August 2026. Next review due: August 2028.