



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust



Bereavement Support

Information and guidance to help
you following a bereavement

Useful contact details:

Bereavement Office

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)

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)

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)

This booklet will provide you with the information and guidance you will need following your bereavement.

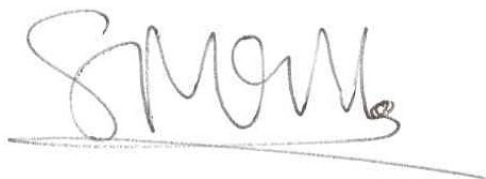
Our condolences

Firstly, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to you and your family at this difficult 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 who will be happy to offer you support and assistance.

Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve McManus". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a long horizontal stroke.

Steve McManus

Contents

1. The Bereavement Team and how we can help	Page 4
2. What to do next	Page 5
3. The Medical Examiner Service	Page 6
4. Registering the death	Page 7
5. The Coroner	Page 9
6. Hospital consent post-mortem	Page 10
7. Tissue donation	Page 11
8. Donation to medical science	Page 12
9. Arranging to see your relative or friend	Page 12
10. Collecting property and valuables	Page 14
11. How to find us	Page 14
12. Getting to the Royal Berkshire Hospital	Page 15
13. The Hospital Spiritual Healthcare Team	Page 16
14. Patient Advice and Liaison Service	Page 16
15. Making a formal complaint	Page 17
16. Quality Survey for Bereaved People	Page 18
17. Ongoing help and support	Page 18

1. The Bereavement Team and how we can help

We provide advice, support, and assistance to bereaved relatives, friends and carers following the death of a patient at the hospital. In order for you to legally register the death a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) must be completed by a Qualified Attending Practitioner (QAP). This is a doctor who attended during the last illness/admission and is qualified to complete the MCCD. The Bereavement Team will ensure that the practical arrangements are completed in a timely, professional, and caring manner. We can also provide advice on the following:

- The next steps of the process
- Any additional paperwork required
- Viewings
- Collection of property and valuables
- How to register the death
- Making funeral arrangements
- The Medical Examiner Service
- Tissue donation
- The Coroners' Service

2. What to do next

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

The Bereavement Team

Telephone 0118 322 8066, Option 1

Opening Hours Monday to Friday 9am-4pm (excluding weekends and bank holidays)

When you call, we will talk you through the next steps of the process.

If you are planning on taking your deceased relative or friend out of the country, please let us know and we can advise you of any additional paperwork required.

You can if you wish make preliminary arrangements with a funeral director but we recommend that you DO NOT book a date until the death has been registered. If you intend to arrange and conduct your own funeral arrangements, please inform the Bereavement Team, who can advise you further on how to do this.

3. The Medical Examiner Service

The Medical Examiner is an independent senior doctor. Their role is to scrutinise the medical records, speak to the treating doctor, and together 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.

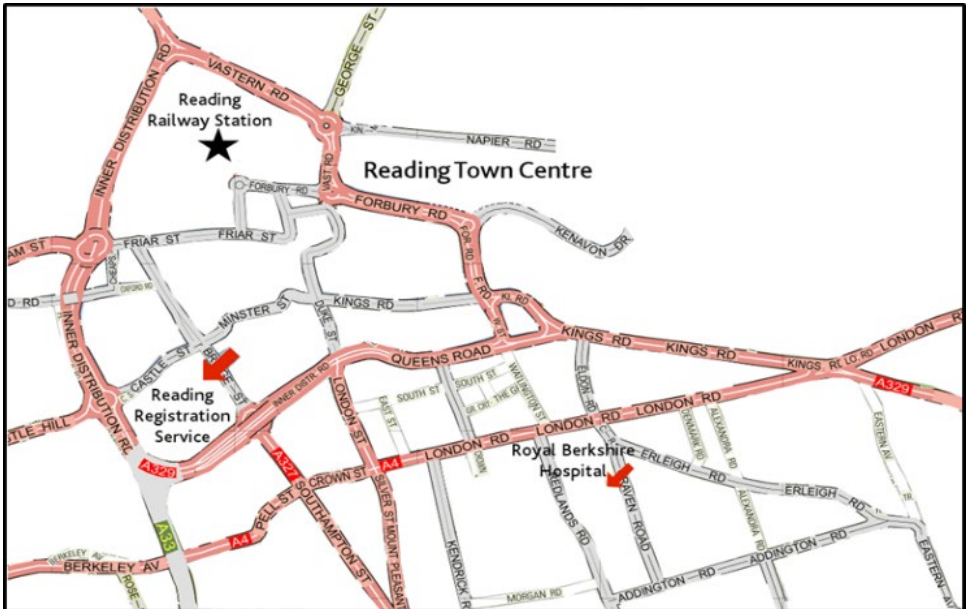
If you have concerns about care, the ME or MEO will be able to advise on the best way to raise those and may request the Trust to undertake a case review. If a case review is requested, you will have the option to discuss the outcome of this with the Trust's mortality team. Following the call, if the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

4. 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.

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/>

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

Who can register?

A death can be registered by a relative, a partner, a representative, by someone who was present at the death, 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:

- The deceased'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
- Whether they received a pension or any type of allowance from public funds
- Your (the 'informant's') name and address.

The Registrar can help with the official '**Tell us Once**' service that alerts other government agencies of the death at the same time.

The Registrar can provide you with the details of the service and your unique reference number which you will need.

The Registrar will produce a certificate of burial or cremation ('**green form**'). This is for your appointed funeral director. It confirms that the registration has taken place and the funeral arrangements can proceed.

You will need to get 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 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 very carefully before signing to say that you agree with the death certificate details before it goes to print.

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's Office will talk you through the process, and a Coroners' Officer will contact you once a referral has been made.

If there is a need to contact the Coroner, 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 permission is not required, but a Coroners' Officer will discuss this with you.

If a post-mortem shows that the death was due to natural causes, the Coroner will issue a notification to the Registrar, which 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. If there is to be an inquest, an

interim certificate of fact of death can be issued by the Coroner. 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 7.

The Coroners' Office can be contacted for further advice and information if needed. The telephone number is voicemail only, please leave a message and a Coroners' Officer will call you back within 1 working day.

Berkshire Coroners' Office

Telephone 0118 937 2300

Email coroner@reading.gov.uk

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

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

6. Hospital consent post-mortem

The hospital doctor issuing the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) may ask you 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. It will not delay the registration process. The doctor can issue the MCCD and you can register in the usual way as detailed on page 7.

If you do agree to a hospital post-mortem, you would 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 present to guide you through the process. You 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 consent.

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

7. 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.

NHS Blood and Transplant
Telephone 0800 432 0559

8. Donation to medical science

Some people have previously decided during life for 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 organisation, signed during life or specific wording in a living will. If this is the case you should contact the relevant organisation and also inform the Bereavement Team. The closest centre to the Royal Berkshire Hospital is John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. There are restrictions to body donation, so please speak to the centre directly for further information.

John Radcliffe Hospital Bereavement Office

Telephone 01865 220110

Bequest Office

Telephone 01865 272181

**Department of Physiology, Anatomy & Genetics
University of Oxford**

Sherrington Building, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PT

Opening hours 8.30am-2.00pm Monday-Friday

Please note there is a 5-day period between the day of a death and being able to accept.

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

Unfortunately, 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 once the death has been registered. You can make arrangements with your 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 must be issued to ensure there is no Coroner involvement. Authorisation must also be given from the primary documented next of kin as documented by the ward.

When booking a viewing, the bereavement officer will ask you to confirm the full name, date of birth, date of death, address, name of 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 this effect.

The Bereavement Team can advise you further on this.

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

If there is no Coroner involvement, please contact:

The Bereavement Team

Telephone 0118 322 8066, Option 1

By appointment only 9am-3pm Monday to Friday (excluding weekends and bank holidays) 30-minute appointments

If there is Coroner involvement, the Coroner will need to authorise your visit, please contact:

The Mortuary Team

Telephone 0118 322 7743

By appointment only 9am-1pm, 2pm-3pm Monday to Friday (excluding weekends and bank holidays) 30-minute appointments

10. Collecting property and valuables

If you are with your relative or friend in the hospital when they die please ask the nursing staff to return all property and valuables to you before you leave.

If you are not present the ward staff will send any property to the Bereavement Office. Any valuable items may remain on the ward in a secure safe.

The Bereavement Team can advise you on what items have been sent to the Bereavement Office and if any items remain on the ward. Any valuables that have been kept on the ward for safekeeping will remain on the ward for you to collect.

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

Please note that after 28 days, the Trust will dispose of any uncollected property and valuables in line with departmental policy.

11. How to find us

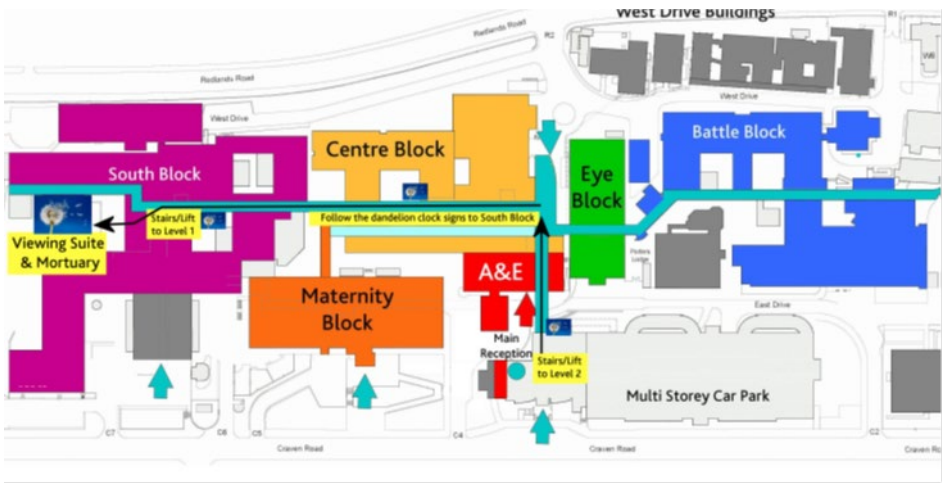
The Bereavement Office and Medical Examiner Service are located on Level 1 in South Block. Follow the dandelion signs from the Craven Road main entrance to the office.

The offices are located next to the Viewing Suite and Mortuary, as indicated.

Main reception staff will be more than happy to show you the signs to look for if you need further assistance.

Visits to the office are by appointment only. Please contact the Bereavement Office to arrange a visit if required. You will be asked to show a form of identification e.g., passport or driving licence on arrival.





12. Getting to the Royal Berkshire Hospital

If you are travelling by car

If required, the Bereavement Team can organise free parking however 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 adjacent to the hospital if you are unable to find one in the hospital multi storey car park on Craven Road. You can find designated Blue Badge parking spaces on levels 0 and 2 of the multi-storey car park, North Block car park, Endoscopy car park, Melrose House Car Park and West Drive (Redlands Road).

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

If you are travelling by bus

A number of buses travel between the hospital and Reading town centre. For up-to-date service details call Reading Buses on 0118 959 4000 or visit: www.reading-buses.co.uk

Some Thames Valley buses stop at the hospital; for service details call 0118 973 3486 or visit: <https://www.thamesvalleybuses.com/>

There is a 300 'hospital' park and ride service between Royal Berkshire Hospital and Mere oak and Thames Valley Park sites. For more information, visit www.reading-buses.co.uk/park-ride.

If you are travelling by train

There are frequent services by train to Reading town centre from outlying areas served by the hospital. For up to date information on train services call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 4849 50 or visit: <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk>. The hospital is a 25 minute walk from Reading railway station.

If you are travelling by bicycle

Bicycle racks are available near Maternity, Endoscopy, Battle Block, North Block, and South Block.

13. The Spiritual Healthcare Team

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

Hospital Spiritual Healthcare Team (Chaplaincy)

Telephone 0118 322 7105

8am-4pm Monday to Friday

Out of hours - please ask ward staff or ward receptionist to phone the on-call chaplain via switchboard on 0118 322 5111

14. 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

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. PALS is happy to discuss this further with you as detailed on page 16.

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

Complaints Team

Telephone 0118 322 8338

Email: complaints@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Main Entrance, Level 2, Royal Berkshire Hospital,

Craven Road, Reading, RG1 5AN

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.

16. 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 (above) or by visiting: <https://surveys.nhsbenchmarking.nhs.uk/qsac/58487-768>

17. 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.

Child Bereavement UK

Tel: 0800 02 888 40

Website: <https://childbereavementuk.org/>

Information for bereaved children and families.

Compassionate Friends

Tel: 0345 123 2304

Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk

Website: <https://www.tcf.org.uk/>

Helpline run by bereaved parents and their families.

Cruse Bereavement Support

Tel: 0808 808 1677 (National)

Tel: 0134 441 1919 (Berkshire & Borders)

Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Bereavement support, information and campaigning for all.

Daisy's Dream

Tel: 0118 934 2604

Website: www.daisysdream.org.uk

The charity supporting children through bereavement.

SOBS

Tel: 0300 111 5065

Website: <https://uksobs.org/>

Helpline for survivors of bereavement by suicide.

Sudden Death Association

Tel: 0118 988 9797

Website: www.suddendeath.org

For relatives and friends of people who have died suddenly.

Winston's wish

Tel: 0808 020 021

Website: <https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Supports bereaved children, young people, their families and the professionals who support them.

WAY Widowed and young

Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

For people aged 50 or under when their partner died.

The Loss Foundation

Website: <https://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.

4Louis – Miscarriage, stillbirth and child loss support

Website: <https://4louis.co.uk/>

Tel: 01915 144473

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

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

Lisa Jane Richardson, Service Manager: Bereavement and Medical Examiner Service. Reviewed: June 2024

Next review due: June 2026