

Advice following a death in the Intensive Care Unit

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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 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, Senior Staff Nurse Stephen Meunier, Senior Staff Nurse Marianne O'Grady and Staff Nurse Ellie Harrison), or leave a message for them to contact you. Alternatively you can email <u>ICU.BereavementTeam@royalberkshire.nhs.uk</u>.

You will receive a letter in a few weeks time 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). They will then provide you with a **six-digit reference number** that you can use to contact the Reading Registration Service (details on page 4), in order to register the death. 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 (in some circumstances, 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 6. 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 doctor working at the hospital. They are there to ensure that the information that is written on the medical certificate of cause of death is correct and that any referrals that need to go to the Coroner are done so in a timely fashion to avoid any delays. They will scrutinise the clinical notes and meet with the treating doctor to discuss the deceased's care and the cause of death.

You should expect a call from the medical examiner in the coming days; they will help you understand the cause of death that has been written on the medical certificate of cause of death. You will then have a chance to ask the medical examiner any questions you may have regarding the care of the deceased or their last illness.

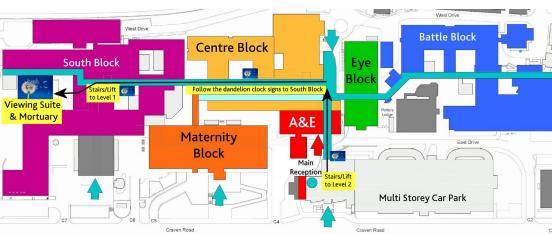
The medical examiner may not be able to answer all questions but will give you all the information needed to be able to do so.

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Location of the Bereavement Office and Viewing Suite

The Bereavement Office and Viewing Suite (refer to page 6) 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 the signs to look for.



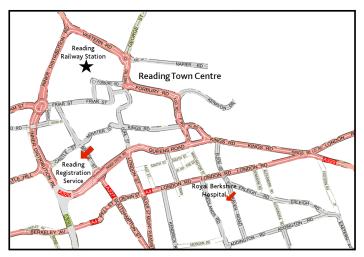
Location map

What do I need to do with the Medical Certificate?

You need to take the 6-digit reference number to the Register Office within five working days of receiving it. The Reading Registration Service (Registration of births, marriages and deaths) is located at: Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU.

You will need to make an appointment to see the Registrar by telephoning 0118 937 3533 or online by visiting www.reading.gov.uk/deaths. It is not open at the weekend.

Registrations by prior appointment only and once the six digit reference number has been given to you by the Hospital Bereavement Office.



Reading Register Office opening hours:

Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri: 9am-4.30pm Wed: 9.30am to 4.30pm

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.

If your relative did not live in the Reading area, you still need to register the death in Reading. In difficult circumstances it is possible to do this from your local office. You would need to discuss this with the Registrar.

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What do I need to do to register the death?

When you go to the Registrar you should take the following with you:

• The 6-digit reference number from the Hospital Bereavement Office.

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 <u>www.gov.uk/tell-us-once</u> 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 9.00am and 1.00pm and 2.00pm and 3.00pm, for 30 minutes by appointment only. To make an appointment, call the Bereavement Office on 0118 322 8066 / 7059.

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.

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

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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 <u>www.humanism.org.uk</u>.

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 – Friday 9.00am–5.00pm.

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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 we hold 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 time together.

Organ and tissue donation

Some people wish to help others after their death by becoming organ and/or tissue donors. Many people associate transplantation with the donation of organs such as heart, lungs, liver and kidneys. Few are aware that donation of tissues can also dramatically improve the quality of life for recipients and even save lives in some cases. Tissues that can be donated include corneas, heart valves, skin, bone, tendons and cartilage. Tissue donation is almost always an option even if organ donation is not possible due to the circumstances of the death. Tissues should be retrieved as soon as possible after death, ideally within 24 hours.

If you know or believe that your relative would have wanted to be a donor, or would like to make a decision about donation on behalf of your relative, we will contact the Tissue Donor Co-ordinator. These are specially trained nurses who will then contact you by telephone to discuss the donation process and answer any questions you may have, to ensure you have all the information to make an informed decision about donation. If you wish to proceed, they will take consent for donation from you over the phone. They will ask some questions about your relative's medical, social and behavioural history. This is similar to the questions asked when donating blood. They will also contact the patient's GP to obtain further medical, social and behavioural information. This is to ensure that donated tissues are as safe as possible and to minimise the risks of disease transmission.

If the Coroner is involved, the Tissue Donor Co-ordinator will liaise with him and obtain permission for donation to proceed. The donation will then be organised by the Tissue Donor Co-ordinator who will arrange for a specialist team to retrieve the tissues. Only the agreed tissues will be retrieved, in the mortuary or at the funeral directors. Donation will not delay the funeral. The donor is always treated with respect and dignity and the body is restored to normal appearance after donation.

Up to 40 people may benefit from tissue 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
- Lifestyle questions

- The donation process
- Possible donation options

You will have the opportunity to ask as many questions as you feel are necessary.

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Checklist of people you will need to notify:

Probate Office

Solicitor

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

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This is an impartial, confidential and friendly service that can guide you through different services in the Trust. They can be contacted on 0118 322 8338 Monday - Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) from 9.00am-4.30pm or email: PALS@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

	West Berkshire Branch	Tel: 01635 523 573
Cruce Bergevement Care	Thames Valley Berkshire Area	Tel: 01344 411 919
Cruse Bereavement Care	National helpline	Tel: 0808 808 1677
Cruse offers face to face,	Young People's helpline	Tel: 0808 808 1677
telephone, email and website	<u>www.cruse.org.uk</u>	
support.	www.hopeagain.org.uk (website	e for young people).
	Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk	

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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 <u>www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk</u>	
Daisy's Dream For children up to the age of 19 years who have had a bereavement.	Tel: 0118 934 2604 <u>www.daisysdream.org.uk</u> Email: <u>info@daisysdream.org.uk</u>	
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) <u>www.griefencounter.org.uk</u> Email:grieftalk@griefencounter.org.uk	
The Lullaby Trust Foundation for Study of Infant Deaths. Telephone, e-mail and befriending service.	Tel: 0808 802 6868 (free helpline) <u>www.lullabytrust.org.uk</u> Email: <u>support@lullabytrust.org.uk</u>	
Institute of Family Therapy Counselling for couples and families dealing with a variety of issues, including bereavement.	Tel: 020 7391 9150 <u>www.ift.org.uk</u>	
Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project Offers support and advice to lesbians and gay men bereaved by death of a same sex life partner.	Tel: 020 7833 1674 <u>www.londonfriend.org.uk</u>	
Macmillan Cancer Support	Tel: 0118 322 8700 / 0808 8010 388 www.macmillan.org.uk Email: <u>Macmillan.information@royalberks</u>	shire.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	

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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 <u>www.tcf.org.uk</u> Email: <u>helpline@tcf.org.uk</u>
Thames Hospice Co- Connect Free of charge counselling bereavement support service for adults whose bereavement has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Anyone who has been bereaved since January 2020 is eligible to access Co-Connect.	Tel: 01753 847300 (9am-5pm, 7 days a week) <u>www.thameshospice.org.uk/co-connect</u>
Terence Higgins Trust Charity providing practical support, help, counselling and advice for anyone concerned about HIV or AIDS.	Tel: 0808 802 1221 (advice line) <u>www.tht.org.uk</u> Email: info@tht.org.uk
who die suddenly. Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide	Tel: 0300 111 5065 <u>www.uk-sobs.org.uk</u> Email: <u>sobs.support@hotmail.com</u>
Sudden Death For friends and relatives of people	www.suddendeath.org
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society	Tel: 0808 164 3332 <u>www.uk-sands.org</u> Email: <u>helpline@uk-sands.org</u>
SAMM Support After Murder and Manslaughter A self-help group for those bereaved by murder or manslaughter.	Tel. 0845 872 3440 <u>www.samm.org.uk</u> Email: <u>info@samm.org.uk</u>
Samaritans	Tel: 116 123 <u>www.samaritans.org.uk</u> Email: j <u>o@samaritans.org.uk</u>
Roadpeace Practical and emotional support for road traffic victims and bereaved families.	Tel: 0845 4500 355 <u>www.roadpeace.org</u> Email: <u>info@roadpeace.org</u>

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Winston's Wish	Tel: 0808 802 0021 (helpline)
Individual and group counselling and support as well as information	<u>www.winstonswish.org</u> Tel. 01242 515 157 (general enquiries)
and advice for bereaved children	Email: <u>info@winstonswish.org</u> (general)
and their families.	Email@ <u>ask@winstonswish.org</u> (support)

Other useful telephone numbers

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· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Tel: 0800 6781602
Age UK Free Helpline	www.ageuk.org.uk
Fact sheets and advice	Reading: 0118 950 2480
regarding funerals benefits etc	Email: <u>info@ageukreading.org.uk</u> or
	<u>contact@ageuk.org.uk</u>
Citizens Advice Bureau	Tel: 03444 111 306
(Reading)	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
(Reading)	www.rcab.org.uk
Reading Borough	
Council	www.reading.gov.uk
Reading Services Guide.	
Reading Registrar of	
Births, Deaths and	Tel: 0118 937 3533
Marriages	
SSAFA Forces Help	
National charity providing	
practical, financial and	Tel: 0800 731 4880 / 0118 95 73393
emotional help for serving and	www.ssafa.org.uk/berkshire
ex-service men, women and	
their families	
NHE Organ Danation	Tel: 0300 123 23 23
NHS Organ Donation	www.organdonation.nhs.uk
Intensive Care Society	www.ics.ac.uk
Patients and relatives section.	
Reading Coroner's	Tel: 0118 937 2300
Office	
Reading Town Hall, Blagrave	<u>www.reading.gov.uk/coroners</u> E-mail: <u>Coroner@reading.gov.uk</u>
Street, Reading RG1 1QH	
Royal Berkshire NHS	Tel: 0118 322 8066 / 7059 (Bereavement)
Foundation Trust	www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk
Bereavement Office	E-mail: rbft.bereavementoffice@nhs.net

RBFT Intensive Care Unit, November 2022. Next review due: November 2024

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