

# Useful information following the death of a loved one



**dovehouse**  
hospice

caring for people with a life limiting illness

## The whole team here at Dove House Hospice would like to offer our condolences to you on your recent bereavement.

We know that the death of a loved one is an incredibly difficult time and the contents of this booklet have been compiled to help you with the practical matters which you will need to consider. Some arrangements will need to be made very soon, at a time when you may be feeling particularly vulnerable. With this in mind we have tried to simplify the next steps to help support you over the coming days and weeks.

We hope the information we have included is useful to you but if you need assistance at all our Family Support Team are here for you, please contact them Monday to Friday on:

☎ 01482 784343

✉ [family.support@dovehouse.org.uk](mailto:family.support@dovehouse.org.uk)

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# 1.

## Looking after yourself

When someone dies the loss is unique to you and grief will affect you individually. How someone else experiences loss may not be the same as how you do, and the grief you have felt after a different bereavement might feel different to this one. Bereavement is highly personal, with people going through a range of emotions when someone close to them dies; it may be an extremely difficult and traumatic time for you. Some people are shocked and upset by how loss impacts them, we hope our suggestions are of some help.

Our key piece of advice is to experience this loss as you need to, it is a very individual experience, no one knows exactly how you feel. Also, we urge you to be gentle on yourself, allow yourself time and don't "feel bad" for anything you are experiencing, or for what you need at this time.

It is often hard to think about yourself when you have lost someone and you are hurting, even if you have expected the death it can still be a shock and be hard to deal with.

### During this time:

- Try to take care of yourself
  - eat and drink properly and try to rest.
- Don't rush to make decisions until you are ready and don't make financial decisions you don't fully understand.
- Worried family members may want to make decisions about finances or your living arrangements, whilst you can't avoid these forever give yourself time to consider everything carefully.
- Remember that those around you will be experiencing this bereavement differently, give each other space, time and understanding.
- Talk if you need to, to family, friends, colleagues, neighbours – sometimes people struggle to know what to say when someone is grieving but they are usually happy to listen and be there for you, be open about how you feel.
- It's ok to look towards the future and make realistic plans if you feel able, but there is no rush.
- Remember your GP is there for you. Loss can cause a range of physical and mental symptoms, from sleeplessness and headaches to digestive problems and breathlessness. You may feel forgetful, have mood swings or be aggressive. These are normal reactions to loss, if you feel you have any concerns about your physical or mental health you should contact your GP.

## 2. Registering the death

One of the first steps to take after your loved one has died is to register their death with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. You need to register the death in order to obtain the documents which will be needed to plan the funeral and for dealing with any money or property belonging to the deceased. Deaths must be registered within five days unless the death has been referred to the coroner.

Before the death can be registered a Medical Certificate stating the Cause of Death (MCCD) needs to be produced by the hospice doctors who send it to the Medical Examiners. The next of kin or other named contact will receive a call from the Medical Examiner's office to ask a few questions about the patient and their care. Once we have received notification from the Medical Examiner we securely send a copy of the MCCD directly to the Registrar and we will then contact the deceased's next of kin to inform them that they can make an appointment to register the death.

A death must be registered in the district it occurred, as Dove House is in Hull the death must be registered in Hull in person at the Wilson Centre (Alfred Gelder St, Hull, HU1 2AG). You can register a death by declaration in another district, however this may delay the registration and the receipt of paperwork.

**To book an appoint to register the death in Hull contact:**

 01482 300300

 [www.hull.gov.uk/communities-and-living/births-and-deaths/death-registration](http://www.hull.gov.uk/communities-and-living/births-and-deaths/death-registration)

**A death should be registered by a relative of the deceased where possible or if there are no relatives available, someone who was present at the death.**

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## What do you need to register the death?

The Registrar will have the Medical Certificate that states the Cause of Death (MCCD) when you arrive but you will need to take the following information:

- The person's full name at the time of death
- Any names previously used (e.g. maiden name)
- The person's date and place of birth
- Their usual address
- Their occupation and whether they were retired
- The full name, date of birth and occupations of a surviving or late spouse or civil partner
- Whether they were getting a State Pension or other benefits

It is helpful to take the deceased's birth certificate, marriage or civil partnership certificate (if applicable) and their NHS medical card. Taking supporting documents (e.g. a utility bill) which show your own name and address would be helpful too.

## What will you receive?

At the end of your appointment you will receive:

- A Death Certificate (this currently costs £11). It is advisable to buy additional Death Certificates as it is often the case that these are needed later to notify other organisations about the death
- A certificate for burial or cremation (known as the Green Form)
- A certificate of the registration of death (form BD8)

## What happens if the death is referred to the coroner?

In some circumstances it may be necessary to refer the death to the coroner, the reasons why this has happened will be explained to you by the hospice team. There are also certain cases where a Post Mortem is necessary, we will make sure you are fully informed of this and are supported through this process. In these cases the hospice cannot issue the Medical Certificate that states the Cause of Death (MCCD) immediately. The length of time it takes the coroner to review the situation varies.

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# 3. Arranging the Funeral

Arranging a funeral can often be a challenging time and it can sometimes feel overwhelming. Families have often shared with us that it is helpful to start by thinking about what the person who died would have wanted – they may have left instructions for their funeral in their will or within a letter of wishes, or they may have purchased a funeral package before they died.

If the person left no clear wishes, the executor of the will or nearest relative will usually decide if the body is to be buried or cremated and what type of funeral will take place. Try to keep your loved one at the heart of the planning and consider what they may have preferred even if they didn't record this. Remember that you are doing the best that you can in difficult circumstances.

## Choosing a funeral director:

Although it is not a legal requirement many people choose to use a professional funeral director to manage funeral arrangements. Families often find recommendations of funeral directors from family and friends useful. You may also find it helpful to consider the location of the funeral director, if it is close to home for example it may be more practical for you.

Please bear in mind that the cost of a funeral can vary between funeral directors. Some funeral directors do have a transparent pricing policy on their website.

We are unable to recommend particular funeral directors, however, we would always suggest to use a funeral director who is member of:

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National Association  
of Funeral Directors  
[www.nafd.org.uk](http://www.nafd.org.uk)

National Federation  
of Funeral Directors  
[www.nffd.org.uk](http://www.nffd.org.uk)

Society of Allied  
and Independent  
Funeral Directors  
[www.saif.org.uk](http://www.saif.org.uk)

## Arranging the funeral yourself:

Some people prefer to arrange a direct cremation as they feel this is more personal and can save costs. If you are thinking of doing this we recommend you contact the Cemeteries and Crematorium Department of the local council:

East Riding of  
Yorkshire Council:  
☎ 01482 395880

Hull City Council:  
☎ 01482 614976  
✉ [bereavement.services@hullcc.gov.uk](mailto:bereavement.services@hullcc.gov.uk)

## Paying for a funeral:

As well as being stressful to organise funerals are expensive and we recognise that, for some people, affording a funeral can cause concern.

Funeral Directors are for the most part understanding of being in this difficult predicament. However it is usual practice for a funeral director to ask for a deposit (this is usually around £1000).

Funerals can be paid for by:

- you or another family member
- a lump sum from the deceased's life insurance or pension scheme
- the deceased's estate (any money or assets they left). Funeral costs take precedence over other debts and banks must release funds for funeral expenses, however if there is a delay with this you may need to pay the cost in the meantime
- a pre-paid funeral plan arranged by the deceased

If you are unable to meet the funeral costs you may be able to get help if you have a low income and meet the criteria. Visit [www.gov.uk/funeral-payments](http://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments) for further information. In some circumstances, the hospice's Family Support Team are able to support families to access grants, mainly associated with the deceased's profession.

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## 4. The will and estate

When someone dies you will need to get the legal right to deal with their property, money and possessions (their estate), this is known as probate.

If the person who has died has left a will it will usually name one or more people to act as executors who will administer the estate as the deceased wished. If you are named as executor of a will you may need to apply for probate, this is the official document which is issued by the Probate Registry.

If there is no will (known as dying intestate) the closest living relative can apply to become the administrator of the estate.

We recommend you seek legal advice for guidance in this area. There is also lots of information on: [www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate](http://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate)

## 5. Getting support

Bereavement support is an essential part of Dove House care and our Family Support Team are here for anyone affected by this loss. We are here to listen to you and support you through this difficult time.

If you feel that you need our support, you can contact the Family Support Team on:

 01482 784343

 [family.support@dovehouse.org.uk](mailto:family.support@dovehouse.org.uk)

 [www.dovehouse.org.uk/refer](http://www.dovehouse.org.uk/refer)



Dove House  
Bereavement Café  
Welcome Wednesdays

As well as one to one support we also run a Bereavement Café, Welcome Wednesdays, on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 1pm-3pm in the Amy Johnson Community Hub at the hospice:

 01482 784343

 [dovehouse.org.uk/bereavement-café](http://dovehouse.org.uk/bereavement-café)



Children's Bereavement Groups

Our Children's Bereavement Groups are for young people struggling with their loss. Children from 6 to 17 years can access this service allowing them to share their feelings and develop strategies to cope in the future:

 01482 784343 / 07890630864

 [dovehouse.org.uk/children](http://dovehouse.org.uk/children)

 [children@dovehouse.org.uk](mailto:children@dovehouse.org.uk)

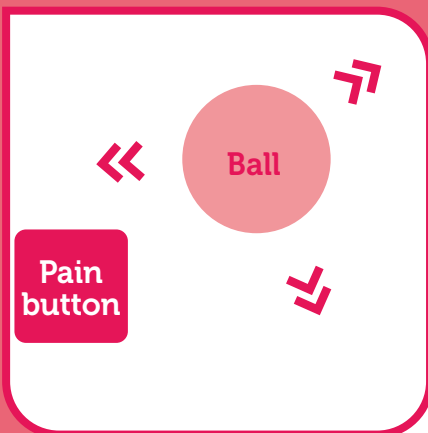
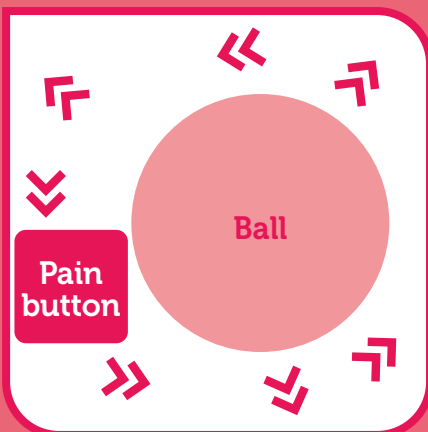
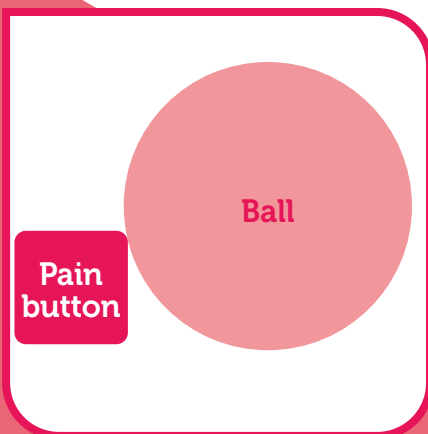
## 5. The Ball in a Box

The Ball in a Box analogy of grief represents how the pain of grief can feel, however it is important to remember that there is no timeline for grieving and everyone experiences it differently.

Your life is represented by the square box, to begin with your grief (the ball) takes up all the space, you cannot move the box very much without the pain button being hit – you have no control over it.

As time goes by the ball gets smaller although it never disappears completely, it still hits the pain button – sometimes unexpectedly – and the pain is still as intense, but it is generally easier to get through the days without it being hit.

Sometimes it will feel like the ball has got suddenly bigger again and is hitting the button a lot. On other days you might not feel the pain at all.



## 6. Who needs to know?

When someone dies there are many organisations who need to know. Below we have compiled a list which we hope will help, however, there may be other people who need to know too:

- The deceased's employer
- The bank – mortgage, accounts including joint accounts
- Insurance companies
- Pension provider
- Department of Work and Pensions\*
- Local Authority – council tax, social services
- HM Revenue and Customs\*
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)\*
- Passport Office\*
- Private care providers

\* These organisations can be notified using the Tell us Once service. This is a government service which informs many local and central government departments about the death. It is a free service which you can opt for when you register the death.

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# 6.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How long can I stay at Dove House after my loved one has died?**

*There is no rush to leave, we know you may be experiencing lots of emotions and this time with your loved one is very important.*

**Where does my loved one go from the room they die in at Dove House?**

*We have a special mortuary facility where your loved one will rest with us until your appointed funeral director arranges with us to take them into their care within 72 hours.*

**Can I view my loved one at Dove House again following their death?**

*Yes, to book an appointment to see your loved one in our dedicated viewing room please contact the Inpatient Unit on 01482 784343.*

**What if my loved one has chosen to donate their body to medical science?**

*We can contact the relevant research centre who will make an assessment on whether your loved one's body can be accepted based on research needs.*

**Are patients able to donate organs?**

*Some patients express a desire to donate organs following their death. This is dependent on their underlying condition.*

*We advise you speak to the Nurse in Charge to discuss this further as soon as possible.*

**Why does the Medical Examiner need to see the Medical Certificate stating the Cause of Death (MCCD)?**

*In line with statutory guidelines all deaths not dealt with by the Coroner have to be scrutinised by the Medical Examiners.*

*This is a routine procedure to ensure no malpractice has taken place.*

**Do Funeral Directors all charge the same for a funeral?**

*No. We recommend you speak to a couple of different Funeral Directors to compare costs. There is more information on page 9.*

**Should children attend a funeral?**

*Children can attend funerals and we recommend talking to them about it and giving them the choice. If you need help supporting a bereaved child please contact us.*

### Notes...

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**Don't tell me that you understand.  
Don't tell me that you know.**

**Don't tell me that I will survive,  
how I will surely grow.**

**Don't come to me with answers,  
that can only come from me.**

**Don't tell me how my grief will pass,  
that I will soon be free.**

**Accept me in my ups and downs,  
I need someone to share.**

**Just hold my hand and let me cry,  
to show me that you care.**