

# Grieving in exceptional times



## Information for those who have been bereaved

During the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic we are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances. If you lose a relative at this time, the restrictions on travel and social distancing may well have an additional impact on you, your family and friends, even if the death of your loved one is not directly linked to coronavirus. For example family and friends may not be able to be with their loved ones in their last hours and days.

The information that follows covers some practical steps about what needs to happen next and how to register a death. It also provides details of some of the support that is available for you.

### What happens next?

The law says you must register a death within five days. Whenever possible, this needs to be done by a relative; the person making the funeral arrangements (but not the funeral director) can also do this. A doctor will arrange the required medical certificate for you and email it to the Register Office.

#### How do I register a death within Gloucestershire?

Because of Coronavirus, all deaths now need to be registered by a scheduled telephone appointment. For more information and to make an appointment, visit [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths-and-civil-partnerships/](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths-and-civil-partnerships/) or telephone **01452 425060** (Monday–Friday, 8.30am–4.30pm).

The 'green form' (certificate for burial/cremation) will be emailed by the Registrar to the crematorium or cemetery. By registering the death, you will be able to use the free Tell Us Once service to notify government and local council departments and services, and purchase death certificates which will be posted to you.

#### Funeral arrangements

The current guidance on social distancing means changes have been made to the way funerals are organised. You may have to wait longer to hold a funeral, services may be shorter and very few people may be able to attend. Your funeral director will be able to advise you, or find out more at:

- National Association of Funeral Directors  
[www.nafd.org.uk/funeral-advice/](http://www.nafd.org.uk/funeral-advice/)
- National Bereavement Alliance  
[www.nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/covid-19/](http://www.nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/covid-19/)

## Support for you, your family and friends

Grief is a normal response to a death. There is no right or wrong way to feel or cope when a loved one dies; how we feel and cope will depend on our beliefs and changes over time.

A death in your family or in your circle of friends is always difficult. You may feel shocked, upset, tearful or distressed. You may find it difficult to concentrate and to realise what has happened. You may be angry or frightened. These experiences are particularly confusing and intense in the early days and weeks of bereavement.

The current pandemic means the usual things associated with a death, such as arranging a funeral, paying tribute to the person who has died or meeting with family and friends cannot happen in the same way. But there are some things you can do:

### Ways to support yourself when you are grieving:

- Try not to become emotionally isolated. Even if people cannot visit you, allow them to offer their condolences and support by telephone, video calls, emails and other social media.
- Try to allow yourself to feel and react in a way that is natural to you.
- Keeping routine can be helpful and mealtimes play an important part in this. So too, does bed-time and getting-up time. Try to stick to your normal routine as much as possible. Try getting out in the garden, where possible.
- Try to limit time looking at news and social media - when you are feeling very sad, regular news can be distressing.

### Supporting others who are grieving:

- If there are children in your family, check-in with them often. Answer their questions honestly. Children may appear sad and happy in the space of minutes - let children set their own pace.
- Stay in touch with those who are grieving, sharing photos online or offering practical help with shopping or meals. Make yourself available not just in the short term, but in the weeks and months to come.
- Think about how you might send your condolences, write a card, send a text or telephone. You might share photos or drop food and little gifts at a person's door to offer comfort.
- Ask your friend how they are doing, ask what might help, listen carefully.
- Offer practical help, for example with meals, shopping etc.
- Offer to help with technology, for example with setting up video calls, WhatsApp conversations, or other ways of keeping in touch.

## Where can I get help?

Sometimes people need extra help to cope with their loss and this may be especially true whilst you are also social distancing. The people and services that helped care for your relative are able to advise you about the support that is available locally. You can also find support online:

- **Every name is a person:** [www.onegloucestershire.net/enap](http://www.onegloucestershire.net/enap)
- **Cruse:** [www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief](http://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief) or contact **01242 252518** between 10am-12.30pm for a local response, or **0808 808 1677** (National helpline)
- **Winston's Wish:** [www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus](http://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus)  
Helpline: **08088 020 021**
- **The National Bereavement service:**  
[www.nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk](http://www.nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk)
- For questions/concerns of a religious or spiritual nature please contact your local faith representative/healthcare chaplain or contact the GH NHS Trust Chaplains on **0300 422 4286/6200** to signpost you to an appropriate source of support.

For further advice please contact:

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service,**  
Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group,  
**FREEPOST RRYY-KSGT-AGBR,**  
Sanger House, 5220 Valiant Court,  
Gloucester Business Park, GL3 4FE  
Telephone: **01452 566698** Email: [glccg.pals@nhs.net](mailto:glccg.pals@nhs.net)

To discuss receiving this information in large print or Braille please ring **0800 015 1548**.

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**0800 015 1548**