

Information following a bereavement

Information for relatives and carers

We are very sorry for your loss. We know this can be a difficult and distressing time. It can feel overwhelming, and you may not know what to do next.

We want to help you while practical arrangements are put in place, and to ensure that those important to you are treated with dignity and respect. We will do everything we can to support the needs of different religions, cultures and beliefs.

In the case of short notice burials or cremations, for example, where the burial is arranged quickly in accordance with religious tradition, please let us know and we will try to facilitate this. However, all legal requirements must be satisfied, and, in some circumstances, where referral to the Coroner is required, this can delay the release of the deceased; please see page 2. Our Patient Affairs Team will liaise with and support you during this process. Our Chaplaincy Team are also here to support.

This leaflet aims to give you information about what happens next. There is further information on our Trust website: www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-and-support/bereavement-services

What happens next

The Patient Affairs Office will call the person recorded in the hospital records as next of kin on the first working day after bereavement. You do not need to come to the hospital. They will explain the process and what will happen next. They will be your main point of contact.

The **Patient Affairs Office is open from 10.00 until 16.00, Monday to Friday** (excluding bank holidays). Outside these hours, if you need urgent support, for example with religious or legal concerns, please speak to our ward staff and they will contact one of the site nurse practitioners for advice.

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is an important legal document, showing the cause of death. The MCCD is required to register the death. It must be signed by a doctor who was involved in the medical care of the person while they were in hospital.

Doctors are not always able to complete the paperwork immediately, so it may be several days before the certificate is ready. In some cases, they may need to contact the Coroner's Office before the MCCD can be issued.

Medical Examiner Service

Every death in our hospitals must be reviewed by the Imperial Medical Examiner Service, it is a legal requirement. Medical Examiners are senior doctors who have specific training for this position, they are supported by a team of specially trained Medical Examiner Officers.

The Medical Examiner is an independent doctor who has not met or looked after the person who has died. Their role is to review the person's clinical notes, to speak to the doctors who look after the person and to agree the cause of death to be written on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).

After this, either the Medical Examiner or one of the Medical Examiner Officers will contact the next of kin to explain the cause of death, and to ask them if they have any questions, concerns or feedback. If questions or concerns are raised, they will try to help address these or will pass them on to the relevant department.

The **Medical Examiner Service operates seven days a week** (except Christmas day). They can review urgent cases over the weekend if, for example there is a religious need for urgent registration.

His Majesty's Coroner

Sometimes, we are legally required to refer the death to the Coroner. For example, all deaths felt to be due to injury, deaths where a procedure or treatment may have contributed, or where the cause of death is unknown or cannot be agreed. In this situation, the Coroner's approval must be waited for before the MCCD can be written; if this is possible. We will inform you if this needs to happen, explain why this is necessary and what happens next.

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) will not be issued, and the death cannot be registered until the case has been reviewed by the Medical Examiner Service or the Coroner.

Registration of Death

Once the MCCD has been issued by the doctor, it will be scanned and emailed to the Council's Register Office, along with your contact details. There is no need to collect the MCCD.

The death should be registered in the borough where the death took place. You are required to register the death within five working days of the Registry Office receiving the MCCD. You should wait to hear from the Patient Affairs Office, and, or, the Coroner before booking an appointment with the Registry Office.

At the death registration appointment, the Registrar will issue the **death certificate(s)**. Please ask for as many copies of the death certificate as you need (extra copies are the same price). They will also issue a form (sometimes called "the Green Form") for burial or cremation, or alternatively they will email the form to your chosen funeral director or burial society.

If the person is being taken outside of England and Wales for the funeral (this includes Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland), additional certificates and forms are required. Your funeral director will be able to advise and help you with arrangements.

Information you need to register a death:

- Date and place of death
- Full name at the time of death
- Any names previously used, e.g. Maiden name
- Date and place of birth
- Last (usual) address
- Occupation (job) and whether they were retired
- The full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving or late spouse or civil partner
- Whether they were getting a State Pension or any other benefits

Appointing a funeral director

It is recommended that you appoint a funeral director as soon as possible after the person has died. This information is helpful when registering the death as it enables the Registrar to send the legal paperwork directly to your funeral director.

Your funeral director will be able to advise you on the funeral options available, including repatriation overseas if applicable. If you do not have a funeral director, you can find an industry-inspected one via the following websites:

- The National Association of Funeral Directors: www.funeral-directory.co.uk
- The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors: <https://saif.org.uk/members-search/>

It is not always possible to facilitate viewings in the hospital mortuary. Viewings should be discussed with your funeral director once they have taken the person into their care.

Information and support

Chaplaincy Team

Hospital chaplains are available to offer prayer, advice, or pastoral support at any time of the day or night in the event of a bereavement. Ward staff can contact a chaplain directly when the need is urgent. Alternatively, you can call 0203312 1508, or email imperial.chaplains@nhs.net.

Interpreting services

Discussions and decisions about care after death can be challenging, especially if English is not your first language or if you don't have a support network. If you need a foreign language or British Sign Language interpreter, please let us know and we will organise this for you.

This leaflet can also be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

External organisations

- **Bereavement Advice Centre**
Telephone: 0800 634 9494
www.bereavementadvice.org
- **Black, African and Asian Therapy Network** www.baatn.org.uk
- **Cruse Bereavement Care**
Helpline: 0808 8081677 (for bereaved adults & 12–18-year-olds)
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- **Garden of Peace, Muslim Bereavement Support Service** www.gardens-of-peace.org.uk/bereavement-support/
- **Good Grief Trust**
www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/contact-us/
- **Support After Suicide Partnership**
<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>
- **Young Minds Bereavement Support for Young People**
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/grief-and-loss/>

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

If you have any suggestions or comments about the care received and you would like a response from the hospital, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on:

020 3312 7777. Opening times are 10.00 to 16.00, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) or via email at imperial.pals@nhs.net

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our Complaints Office at:

Complaints Department,
Fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital,
Praed Street, London, W2 1NY
Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**