

# Bereavement Care Services

## Care After Death

- What to do when someone dies in hospital
- Practical help for bereaved relatives and friends



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***Memories are the loveliest thing***

***They last from day to day***

***They can't get lost***

***They don't wear out***

***And can't be given away***

**(Anonymous)**

## **What Happens Next?**

At this difficult time there are many things which the relative or friend has to do.

This booklet provides you with the information you will need in order to make funeral arrangements. Information regarding tissue donation is also available within this booklet.

When someone dies in hospital, the ward staff will explain what will happen next. Great care and respect is given to a deceased patient, and is focused on fulfilling any religious and cultural beliefs.

## **Bereavement Care Services**

The Bereavement Care Service's staff will advise you when the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will be ready. They will also be able to advise you and answer any questions you may have, and direct you to other services and information.

However, in some cases, the doctor is required to inform the Coroner's Office and a Post Mortem examination may be necessary. Wherever possible we will endeavour to issue the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death in a timely manner, although if the Coroner is involved there may be an unavoidable delay.

If you or any members of your family or friends wish to see the deceased viewings can be arranged via an appointment system within the mortuary (please contact the mortuary staff on 01254 732067). However you may prefer to wait to see the deceased once they have been taken to the funeral home.

## **Medical Examiners**

We are introducing the Medical Examiners role, so your case may be reviewed.

A Medical Examiner is a senior doctor who was not involved in the care of the patient but who is employed by the hospital to look at the circumstances surrounding the death of patients who have died in hospital.

The Medical Examiner will ensure that the information contained on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), is correct and that referrals to the Coroner are made, (if necessary), in a timely and appropriate manner to avoid delays.

A particular purpose of the Medical Examiner is to make it easier for the bereaved to understand the wording on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (which explains the cause of death) and also raise any concerns about the quality of care provided prior to the patient's death, these concerns may lead to a Structured Judgement Review (see page 12). This means that during phone calls with the Bereavement Team you will be informed of the cause of death which is written on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and given the option of raising any concerns to the Medical Examiner prior to the issue of the Medical Certificate.

## **Obtaining the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death**

The Bereavement Team will endeavour to telephone you within 24 hours of being notified of the death, except public holidays and weekend when you will be contacted the next working day. If you have any concerns / queries please feel free to contact the Bereavement Team sooner on the numbers below. During this call you will be given an appointment within two working days to collect the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.

**To ensure you are not unnecessarily delayed, please do not attend the hospital until you have been informed that the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and associated paperwork has been completed.**

### **Teaching Hospitals**

#### **Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital**

Hours of availability - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Monday-Friday

Bereavement Care Services 01254 734500  
01254 732861

#### **Burnley General Teaching Hospital**

Hours of availability - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Monday-Friday

Bereavement Care Services 01282 804486

## Community Hospitals

### **Accrington Victoria Hospital**

Hours of availability - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Monday-Friday

Ward 2 01254 359206

### **Clitheroe Community Hospital**

Hours of availability - 9.00am to 5.00pm  
Monday-Friday

Ribblesdale Ward 01200 449010

### **Pendle Community Hospital**

Hours of availability: - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Monday-Friday

Reedyford Ward: 01282 804974

Marsden Ward: 01282 804976

Hartley Ward: 01282 804971

## Registration of Death

Deaths can only be registered with the Local Authority in which the death took place.

After obtaining the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death from the hospital, an appointment must be made with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

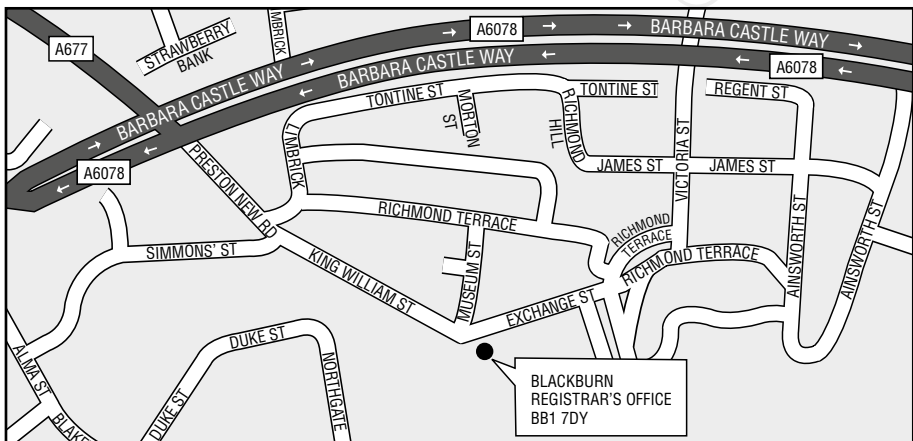
For deaths occurring at Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital, the registration will be at:

**Blackburn with Darwen  
Register Office  
Blackburn Sub District  
Town Hall  
King William Street  
Blackburn  
BB1 7DY**

**Telephone Number:  
01254 588660  
By appointment**

**The opening hours are:  
Monday to Friday  
9.00am to 4.30pm**

It may be possible for deaths that have occurred at Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital to be registered on site, further information will be available when you are contacted by the Bereavement Care Services.





For deaths occurring in other East Lancashire Hospitals:-

Burnley General Teaching Hospital

Accrington Victoria Hospital

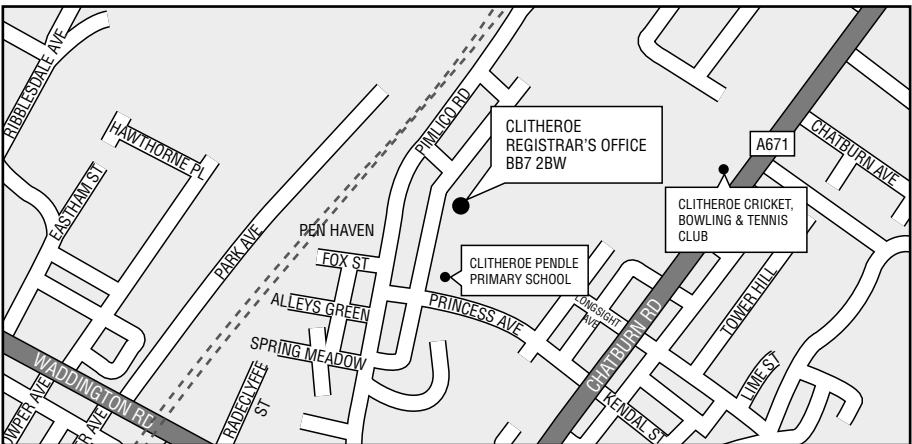
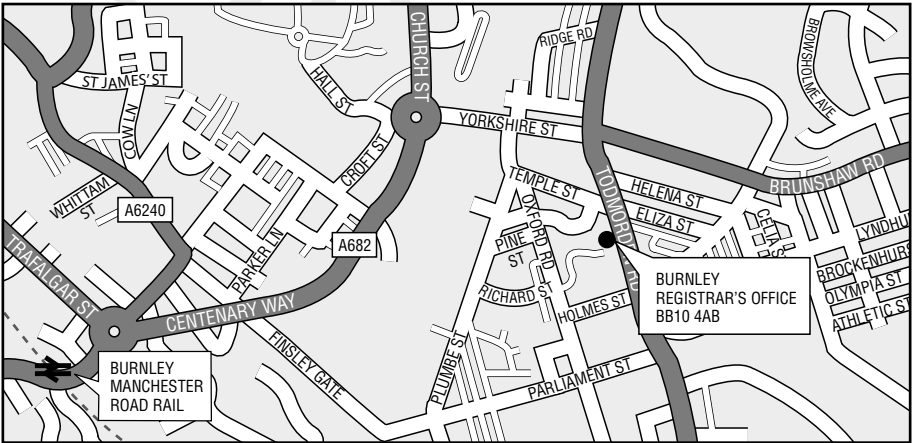
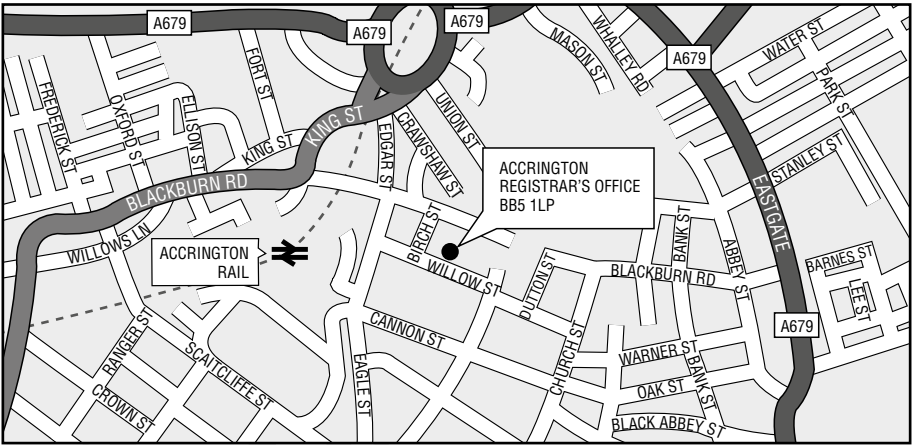
Clitheroe Community Hospital

Pendle Community Hospital

The death may be registered at any Lancashire County Council Registration Office. Please contact Lancashire County Council Registration Service on **0300 123 6705**.

The Registrar will make a charge for each copy of the Death Certificate you may require. When you attend the Registrar's Office, if possible please take with you the following:

- **The Deceased's Medical Card.**
- **Birth Certificate (or have knowledge of date and place of birth).**
- **Full name, last known address, last occupation and maiden name if a married woman.**
- **If married, widowed or in a civil partnership the full name and last occupation of the spouse or partner.**



## Tissue and Organ Donations

Organ and tissue donation is the act of giving your organs and/or tissues to help save or improve the lives of others when you die. One organ donor can save or transform the lives of up to nine people. The possibility of organ donation will already have been discussed; however, tissue donation may still be possible. Tissue transplants significantly improve a person's quality of life. This might be a cornea to help someone see again, a replacement heart valve to treat a heart defect, or skin to treat severe burns. It may be possible for your relative/friend to donate tissues **24-48** hours after their death.

From 20 May 2020, all adults in England will be considered to have agreed to be an organ and tissue donor when they die unless they recorded a decision not to donate or are in one of the excluded groups. This is commonly referred to as an 'opt out' system. This means that if your relative/friend has not confirmed whether they want to be an organ donor – either by recording a decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register or by speaking to friends or family – it will be considered that they have agreed to donate their organs when they die.

Organ and Tissue donation remains an act of great generosity. However, you will always be consulted about donating your relative/friend's organs and tissues when they die and their faith, beliefs and culture will continue to be respected. This helps to make sure that any decision recorded on the NHS Organ Donor Register is your relative/friend's latest known decision. A specialist nurse will work with the family to help ensure this is supported.

Should you wish to discuss tissue donation with someone please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff or alternatively contact Tissue Services directly.

**NHS Blood and Transplant National  
Referral Centre - Freephone 0800 432 0559**

## **Arranging the Funeral and Your Rights and Choices**

The main requirements in England and Wales are that the death is certified by a doctor or Coroner, registered with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the local authority where the death occurred, and the body is either buried or cremated.

Please be aware that there is NO legal requirement to have a religious minister, you do not need to have a formal funeral service, you do not even need to use a Funeral Director (undertaker) if you do not wish to do so. Some people prefer to arrange the funeral themselves as this can be seen as more personal, and may be less expensive than a Funeral Director (undertaker). There are more options concerning the content of a funeral ceremony and its duration that many people realise. Woodland burial and other green options are increasingly available.

If you do prefer to use a Funeral Director you will find they have expertise in the types of services, facilities and resources that are currently available.

During the registration process, the Registrar will issue The Certificate for Burial or Cremation (*known as the Green Form*).

This should be handed to the Funeral Director (or, if doing the funeral yourself, to the cemetery manager or cremation authority) as soon as possible.

## **Bereavement Support**

The death of someone you love can be a devastating experience, awakening emotions and feelings that you might never have felt before. It is not uncommon for the bereaved to feel guilt, anger, emptiness and shock. All of these are natural reactions and need time, reflection and care. You may feel very mixed up and flitting between one emotion and another. You might even find yourself laughing and wanting to share that moment with the person who has died; forgetting reality for a moment and then feeling guilty again. This is normal and even healthy. But sometimes you get 'stuck' and that may not be healthy. Please do not feel that you have to face this grief alone.

Please be aware that East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust has a dedicated Bereavement Care Service and Team. This team is made up of a Bereavement Nurse Specialist working beside The Bereavement Care Service Staff, Mortuary Staff, Coroners Officers and Registrars to ensure a smooth process takes place as far as possible. We also rely on the ward staff, along with the hospital Chaplains, to be available to give support and advice.

Today we have a better understanding of the process of grieving and there are organisations and groups to offer long term help and support. You will find a list of contact numbers for some of them on the final page of this booklet. In the days immediately after your loss you may find it helpful to talk about your feelings with:-

- Your own Family Doctor or General Practitioner
- Your Spiritual Director
- Members of your family
- Close friends
- However, you may prefer to talk to someone outside of your family and friends. Please consider contacting the Bereavement Nurse Specialist: 01254 732825.

## **Remember**

- Don't suffer in silence
- Look after your feelings
- Don't be afraid to ask for help

## **Grieving Children and Adolescents**

Children can understand the meaning of death by the time they are three or four years old. They feel the loss of a close friend or relative in much the same way as adults. Even in infancy it is clear that children grieve and feel great distress.

Children experience the passage of time differently from adults and can therefore appear to overcome grief quite quickly.

However children in their early school years may need reassuring that they are not responsible for the death of a close relative as they often blame themselves for one reason or another.

It is important that the grief of a young person is not overlooked, and young people should be encouraged to talk about their feelings.

## **How to Raise Concerns**

When a patient has died we review a number of cases in accordance with national guidance, for example a structured judgment review. There are various reasons for these reviews. One reason for a review is when a family express concerns about the level of care and feel that it may have contributed to the patient's death. If you have this type of concern please make the Bereavement Team aware when they contact you regarding the completion of Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. Alternatively you may contact our Customer Relations Team on 01254 733703. You will receive a letter confirming that a review of care is being undertaken. You will also be offered the opportunity to discuss the findings of this investigation when it is completed.

## **Coroner's Charter**

Many deaths have to be referred via the Coroner, the Coroner has up to 5 working days to make their enquiries.

### **Coroner requests a Post Mortem without an Inquest**

Once the post mortem has taken place the Coroner will authorise the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death to be sent directly to the Registrars of Births, Death and Marriages.

### **Coroner requests a Post Mortem with an Inquest**

In the event of an Inquest taking place, the Coroner's Office will issue an Interim Certificate, as a cause of death will not be issued until the end of the Inquest.

### **Hospital Post Mortem Examination**

If you have any concerns about the cause of death, please raise them with the Bereavement Care Service Team who will arrange for a meeting with a doctor. A family member / next of kin of the deceased are able to request a hospital post mortem to find out more about the cause of death, this would be discussed at the meeting with the doctor.

## Useful Telephone Numbers

Age UK (freephone)	0800 1696565
Bereavement Advice Centre National Helpline (freephone)	0800 6349494
Bereavement Care Services (Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital)	01254 734500 or 01254 732861
Bereavement Care Services (Burnley General Teaching Hospital)	01282 804486
Cruse Bereavement Care National Helpline	0808 8081677
Compassionate Friends National Helpline	03451 232304
Citizens Advice Bureau (Blackburn)	0344 245 1294
Citizens Advice Bureau (Burnley)	0300 300 1176
Child Bereavement UK	0800 0288840
Coroners Officer's Office (Blackburn)	01254 734116
Coroners Officer's Office (Burnley)	01282 804508
Department of Work and Pensions (Bereavement Service)	0800 731 0469
Friends in Bereavement - Social group for the bereaved, Meetings held in Nelson	01282 537202 or 01282 450253
Mortuary	01254 732067
Samaritans National Helpline (freephone)	116 123 (24hrs)
Silverline freephone 24/7 helpline for older people	0800 470 8090
Switchboard	01254 263555
Ribblesdale Ward Clitheroe Hospital	01200 449010
Ward 2 Accrington Victoria Hospital	01254 359206



## **Stopping Junk Mail to the recently deceased.**

If someone you know has died, the amount of unwanted marketing post being sent to them can be greatly reduced which helps to stop painful daily reminders.

By registering with the free service **[www.stopmail.co.uk](http://www.stopmail.co.uk)** the names and addresses of the deceased are removed from mailing lists, stopping most advertising mail within as little as six weeks. If you cannot access the internet you can call 0808 168 9607, where you will be asked for very simple information that will take only a few minutes to complete. Alternatively, ask the bereavement team for a leaflet that can be returned in the post.

This free of charge service provided by the Bereavement Support Network will actively reduce the unwanted marketing mail but also can help reduce the likelihood of identity theft following the death of someone close. The information is not used for any other purpose and you only have to complete this once. Additionally to Stop Mail a comparable service can also be accessed from the Bereavement Register or Deceased Preference Service if you would prefer to use them.

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## Notes

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