



**Royal Papworth Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

An information booklet for the  
**Recently bereaved**

At this time of sadness, we would like to offer our sincere condolences. The death of someone close to you, whether expected or sudden, can be a distressing and confusing time.

This booklet aims to provide you with information and guide you through the necessary steps you will need to take following bereavement.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

We understand this can be a difficult time, not only emotionally but also in knowing what practical steps to take. We would like to offer you our help and guidance during this difficult time.

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service will be your main contact during this time and the PALS team will guide you further and offer support.

If the death occurred overnight or at the weekend, a member of the PALS team will contact you in the morning of the next working day. However, if you need to contact them they can be reached on 01223 638963.

The PALS office is open

Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00 and is located on the ground floor of the hospital. If you wish to see a member of the PALS team, then please call them first as during busy times the team may be elsewhere in the hospital.

Outside of this time the ward staff where your relative/friend passed away should be able to advise you.

### **Chapel of Rest**

If you are present when your relative or friend dies, the ward staff will allow you as much time as possible to say your goodbyes on the ward.

If your loved one is in the care of our mortuary team, to make arrangements for a viewing during normal working hours please call 01223 217106.

You are under no obligation to visit the body in the mortuary. Many people prefer to wait until their loved one's body has been taken to the funeral parlour.

If the death has been reported to the Coroner, permission must be obtained before a viewing can take place. A member of the PALS team can

obtain permission for you, but only during normal working hours. The role of the Coroner is explained in full further on in the booklet.

### **Personal belongings**

If you are in the hospital when your relative or friend dies, the nursing staff will try to return all personal belongings to the next-of-kin. If this is not possible, a member of the PALS team will undertake collection from the ward and discuss the best way to return the belongings.

### **The medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD)**

In order to register the death a medical certificate of cause of death is required, and if the death was not unexpected, this will be issued by a hospital doctor as soon as possible. A member of the PALS team will contact you once this has been completed and make arrangements with you for collection of the certificate. How to register a death is explained on page 4.

### **Reporting a death to the Coroner**

In certain circumstances the

hospital must inform the Coroner of a death, eg where the death is sudden and unexpected, occurs during or shortly after surgery or simply when the person has been ill but the doctor confirming the death is not certain why it happened at that particular time.

The Coroner is an official, rather like a Judge, whose job is to supervise the investigation of deaths under these circumstances. This process is there to protect both the deceased and their relatives and to ensure that accurate cause of death is recorded. Not all Coroners' referrals result in a post-mortem. In some circumstances the Coroner may decide that no further action needs to be taken. If this is the case, Royal Papworth Hospital will be able to issue you with the relevant documentation.

The Coroner's Officer helps the Coroner with the investigation into the cause of the death, and is responsible for contacting the nearest relative. While the enquiry is continuing, the Coroner's Officer provides help and advice and is the main point

of contact with the Coroner's Office for relatives.

In some cases, the Coroner may decide that a post-mortem examination must be carried out to establish the exact cause of death and in this case, a post-mortem is a legal requirement and does not require the permission of the next-of-kin.

If the Coroner takes legal responsibility for the body of the deceased person you will always be informed and this is known as a coronial post-mortem examination. The Coroner's Officer will also phone you to ensure you understand the action they are taking and will let you know when the funeral can take place; however, you should still contact a funeral director as soon as possible to let them know of the Coroner's involvement.

If a coronial post-mortem is required, you will not receive the MCCD and the Coroner will inform the Registrar of the cause of death.

During a Coroner's post-mortem examination, small tissue samples are taken

from the body and these are used to confirm the cause of death. Once the cause of death is known these samples are destroyed in a safe and lawful manner according to the rules set out in the Human Tissue Act (2004). Following the post-mortem, you may be asked if research staff from Royal Papworth Hospital can also look at the tissue samples to look for underlying disease and trends to help plan future care.

Tissue samples are not kept at Royal Papworth Hospital unless the next-of-kin gives permission to do so. You are under no obligation to provide consent for Royal Papworth Hospital to keep tissue samples, but if you do agree you will be asked to read an information booklet and sign a consent form.

### **Hospital post-mortem**

In certain circumstances, the doctor who certified the death may ask you for permission to carry out a post-mortem examination to help advance medical knowledge and teaching and will use this knowledge to plan future care of other patients with similar

conditions. Unlike a Coroner's post-mortem, you are under no obligation to agree to a hospital post-mortem and this cannot be done without the agreement of the next of kin and after completion of a signed and witnessed consent form.

### **Registration of death**

A death must be registered at the Registrar of Births and Deaths in Cambridgeshire within five working days of the death where possible.

The offices of The Registrar of Births and Deaths in Cambridgeshire are in Huntingdon, Cambridge, Wisbech and Ely.

An appointment for registration can be made once the MCCD has been completed by the doctor or issued by the Coroner's Office. To register, you will need to book an appointment online at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk).

You may prefer to register the death at your local Registrar of Births and Deaths and this can be done by declaration. However, please note that this may delay funeral arrangements, as all required

certificates will be issued by the Cambridge Registrar and posted to the family.

*The following people can register a death:*

- A relative of the deceased.
- The person who is arranging the funeral.
- A person present at the death.

The death certificate is a certified copy of the entry in the death register and has to be paid for.

Purchasing additional copies can be useful as they are often required for sorting out financial affairs such as insurance policies, pension claims or bank accounts. You may qualify for the free 'Tell Us Once' service which could reduce the number of copies you will need to purchase. The Registration Officer will advise you during your appointment.

When you register a death, the Registrar will ask you for some information and this is listed below. It would be helpful if you could ensure that you have as much of this information as possible before you go to register and the appointment

will take approximately 20 to 40 minutes.

If you have any queries concerning the registering of a death, a member of the PALS team will be able to assist you.

*What the Registrar will give you:*

- A green certificate for notification of burial or cremation. You will need to give this certificate to the funeral director so that the funeral can take place.
- A death certificate. You may need extra copies of this certificate for pension and insurance purposes. There is a charge for each certificate.

*Information required to register a death:*

1. Correct date and place of death.
2. Full name of deceased including any other names used by deceased. You will also be given the opportunity to provide a nickname. For example a person's name was William but he liked to be known as 'Bill'.
3. Date and place of birth.
4. Home address including

postcode.

5. Marital state at time of death.
6. Occupation - think about how the deceased person would like to be remembered. The last job they had before they retired/passed away may not reflect what occupation they had for the majority of their working life.
7. Full name of spouse. This is still required even if their spouse has already passed away. This information is not required however if they were legally divorced.
8. Date of birth of spouse.
9. Occupation of spouse.
10. Name address and phone number of funeral director.
11. Burial or cremation, and where it is going to take place.
12. NHS number.
13. Was deceased in charge of staff when employed. If yes how many?
14. How long was the deceased in hospital? Was it over or under six months?

## **Funeral arrangements**

We recommend that a family member or close friend contact a funeral director as soon as possible and it is a personal decision as to which funeral director's services they use. Most people use a local company as you will need to arrange an appointment to discuss the type of funeral you want.

Funeral directors are very experienced in dealing with bereavement issues and they will do their best to guide you through this very difficult process. They will advise, assist and support you through the early stages of your bereavement and will deal with matters such as liaising with the hospital, cemetery or crematorium, minister of religion and all other funeral arrangements. They will also inform you about funeral costs.

One of the first and most important decisions you will need to make is whether to choose a burial or cremation. You should check whether a Will exists and whether any requests are in the Will regarding burial or cremation. This enables the correct type of

documentation to be issued.

When you have chosen a funeral director please inform a member of the PALS team at Royal Papworth Hospital.

## **Assistance and advice**

Sometimes relatives and close friends have outstanding questions about the final care their loved one received at the end of life, especially if the death happened quickly, was unexpected or when a family member was not present at the time of death.

If you would like to speak to a member of the medical team or ward manager, then this can be arranged for you via the PALS office at a time when you feel able to discuss events.

## **Pastoral and spiritual care**

The hospital chaplains are available to provide spiritual, religious and pastoral care to everyone in the hospital, including bereaved relatives and friends. This service is available to anyone, whether they follow a faith or not. The multifaith area is located on the ground floor of the hospital.

The chaplains can provide a

listening ear, without prejudice and in confidence. They can also put you in touch with other faith representatives.

The Chaplaincy Service can be contacted by telephone on 01223 639121 and you can leave a message on the answering machine. For urgent matters please contact the switchboard on 01223 638000 and they will do their best to contact the chaplain for you.

Please note that the chaplaincy building and mortuary are located in different parts of the hospital.

### **Follow-up Service**

Six to eight weeks after the death of your loved one, the PALS team will send the next of kin or named contact a letter providing information for accessing the Royal Papworth Hospital follow-up service.

If you decide that you would like to access the follow-up service, you can call the number on the letter or complete the reply slip at the bottom of the letter. The PALS team will then make contact with you.



## **Contact details and other organisations that may be able to help**

### **Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

Main switchboard: 01223 638000

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Tel: 01223 638963 or 01223 638896

Email: [papworth.pals@nhs.net](mailto:papworth.pals@nhs.net)

### **Royal Papworth Hospital Chaplaincy**

Tel: 01223 639121

### **Ashley Jolly SAD Trust UK**

Provides support and information for those who have lost a loved one suddenly and unexpectedly as a result of a cardiac condition. This may appear on the MCCD as sudden arrhythmia death syndrome.

Helpline: 01277 230 642

Email: [info@sadsuk.org](mailto:info@sadsuk.org)

[www.sadsuk.org](http://www.sadsuk.org)

### **Citizens' Advice Bureau**

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) for your local office.

If you do not have internet access, the PALS team will find out the contact details for you.

### **Samaritans**

Helpline: 08457 909090

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Cambridge

Tel: 01223 633536

Norwich

Tel: 01603 219977

West Suffolk

Tel: 01284 767674

Ipswich

Tel: 01473 230888

### **Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project**

Support and advice, including arranging funerals (sympathetic clergy and secular officials).

Tel: 0208 200 0511

### **Compassionate Friends**

Support for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings

Tel: 0845 123 2304

### **Age UK**

Cambridgeshire

Tel: 0300 666 9860

Norfolk

Tel: 01603 787111

Suffolk

Tel: 01473 351234



**Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**  
Papworth Road  
Cambridge Biomedical Campus  
Cambridge  
CB2 0AY

Tel: 01223 638000

[www.royalpapworth.nhs.uk](http://www.royalpapworth.nhs.uk)

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners

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Department: PALS  
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