

The Dudley Group



NHS Foundation Trust

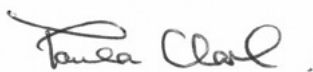
# *For you in your loss*

Information and advice  
following your bereavement



We would like to express our sympathy and sincere condolences to you and your family at this sad time.

In the first weeks of bereavement we know that it is a particularly difficult time and you will need to deal with several practical matters. This booklet aims to provide some useful help and advice during the early days of your bereavement.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Paula Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

**Paula Clark**

Chief Executive

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

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## **First 24 hours – community**

When the death occurs at home, in a care home or elsewhere in the community, the GP who was caring for your loved one will be contacted. Following verification, a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will be issued and you will be advised whether to collect it from the care home or GP practice.

If you wish to view your loved one, you will need to contact your funeral director who will be able to arrange this for you.

## **First 24 hours – hospital**

### **May I see my relative/friend?**

- When a death has occurred within the hospital you can either view your loved one at the hospital or you may wish to wait until they are transferred to the funeral directors.
- The viewing room in the bereavement suite is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 3.30pm. You can make an appointment to view your loved one by telephoning:

01384 244198

- If you need to see your loved one outside these hours, please contact the ward or department where the death occurred.

## **Tissue donation**

Tissue donation can dramatically improve the quality of life for some individuals who are desperately in need. Most people can donate some tissue for transplant. Age and medical condition are not necessarily a barrier to donation.

Tissue donation is possible if your relative or friend has died within the last 24 hours. Our aim is to support the individual's wishes to be a tissue donor following death. They may have expressed a wish during their lifetime by joining the Organ Donor Register, carrying a donor card or have stated a desire to help others following their death.

There is a national number available 24 hours a day for advice:

**0300 123 2323**

## **Do I contact the funeral director now?**

You can begin to make funeral arrangements as soon as you feel ready to do so. You do not have to wait until you have the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death issued by a doctor, or registered the death.

## **Practical arrangements**

### **Practical arrangements if your loved one dies in hospital**

A member of the bereavement team either Diane Reynolds or Beverley Astley will contact you when the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death has been completed by the hospital doctor.

Arrangements will then be made for you to collect the certificate from the hospital during the next working day. You may find it helpful to bring the following items with you:

- Glasses if you wear them
- Hearing aid if you use one

At this time we can also arrange for you to see your loved one in the viewing room.

Please feel free to bring someone with you for support if you wish or if you would like to contact us on:

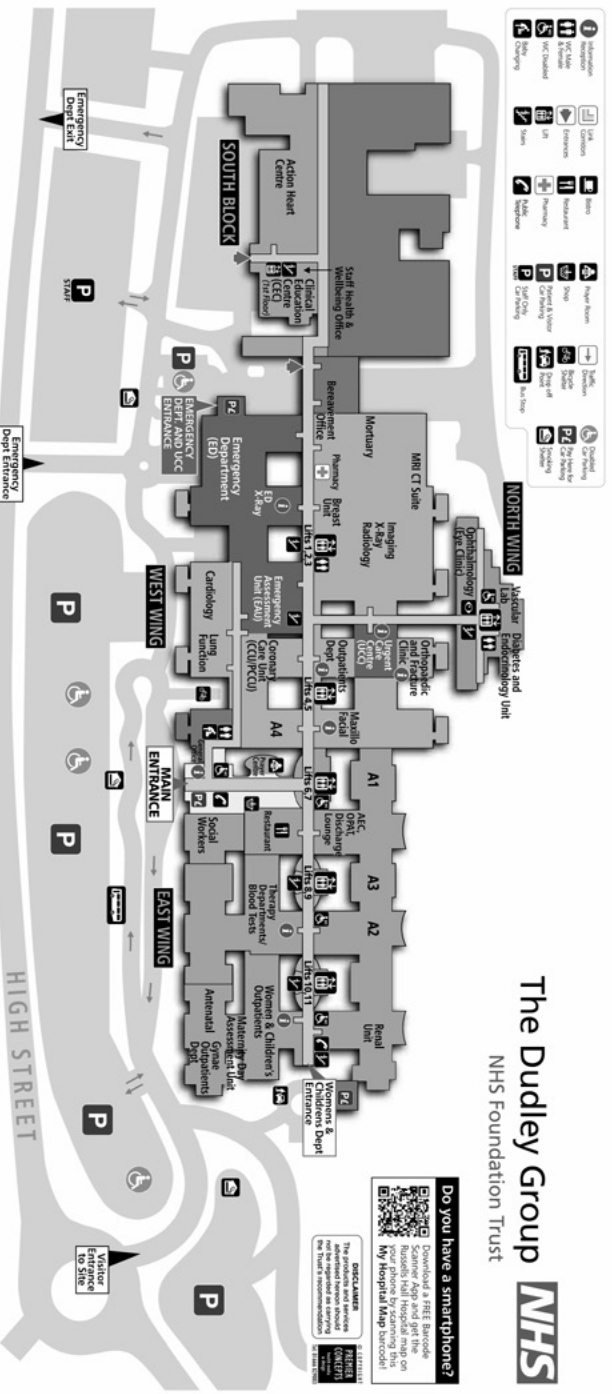
01384 244198 (24 hour answerphone available).

### **Personal property and valuables**

Any personal property that has been left on the ward/unit will be available for you to collect from the bereavement office when you collect the medical certificate. This is in line with hospital/Trust policy.

**Bereavement office**  
**Russells Hall Hospital**

**The Dudley Group**  
NHS Foundation Trust





## **Practical arrangements if your loved one dies at home**

If the death is expected and your loved one has been seen by a GP in the last 14 days:

A suitably qualified nurse or doctor can verify their death and you can then contact your preferred funeral director and they will come and collect your loved one.

If a nurse has verified the death he or she will inform the GP or the out of hours service.

The GP will then make arrangements to complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. You can collect this from the surgery on the next working day but ring first to confirm it has been done.

If the death is unexpected and a doctor has not seen your loved one within the last 14 days:

In this instance a nurse cannot verify the death and so the GP or out of hours service must be contacted.

Other considerations:

You may wish to remove any personal property or valuables before the undertakers arrive.

Any medical equipment will be removed by the visiting nurses.

Collection of larger items or equipment will be arranged by the nurse. Alternatively, they will give you a telephone number for you to arrange this yourself when it is convenient.

Inform the nurse or doctor if you are aware that your loved one has a pacemaker, defibrillator, artificial joints or radioactive implants as the funeral directors will need to know this.

## **Coroners and post mortem examinations**

### **Coroner**

A death sometimes has to be reported to the coroner for legal reasons and you will be advised if this has to happen. It is usually when a doctor is unable to issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. The coroner is appointed to investigate certain types of death which may include:

- No precise cause can be established
- It follows an operation, or if it is possible that it could be due to a complication of surgery or anaesthetic
- It is not thought to be from natural causes
- It is due to an injury or a fall, however it happened, or if an accident or negligence is alleged
- It takes place within 24 hours of admission to hospital

**Please Note:** As the death for legal reasons will need to be reported to the Coroner there may be a significant time delay before a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death can be issued.

### **Coroner's post mortem**

The coroner may order a post mortem examination to determine the exact cause of death, **but** not all referrals result in an examination. If the coroner orders a post mortem examination, it becomes a legal obligation; therefore permission from relatives/next-of-kin is not needed.

Once the results of the examination are known, if an inquest is not required, a certificate to register the cause of death will be issued by the coroner's office.

**Black Country Coroner's Office**  
**Smethwick Council House**  
**High Street**  
**Smethwick**  
**B66 3NT**

**Tel: 0845 352 7483**  
**Fax: 0121 569 5384**

## **Hospital post mortem**

Hospital post mortems are **not** needed by law but may be requested by doctors or the next-of-kin when they need more information regarding the death. This can help families and doctors understand the cause of death and may help others with a similar illness in the future. The doctors have to ask your permission to perform a hospital post mortem and you will be asked to sign a consent form, if you agree.

## **When and how to register a death**

Once the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death has been issued, you must register the death with the Registrar of Births and Deaths within five working days.

It would be helpful if you can take along the following information if possible:

- The birth certificate of the person who has died
- The medical card of the person who has died

When you register the death, the Registrar will ask you for the Medical Certificate which gives the cause of death, unless the coroner has carried out a post mortem.

### **The registrar will need the following information:**

- The date and place of death
- The date and place of birth
- The full names and any other names used of the person who has died (and maiden surname if this applies)
- Their occupation
- The usual address of the person who has died
- Whether the deceased was in receipt of a pension or allowance from public funds

- The full names of his/her husband/wife/civil partner and their occupation
- If the deceased was married or in a civil partnership, the date of birth of the surviving spouse or civil partner

### **The registrar will give you:**

**A certificate for burial or cremation** (known as the Green Form). This is for you to take to the funeral director so that the funeral can take place.

**A certificate of registration of death** (form BD8). This is for social security purposes only.

**Certified copies of the death certificate.** You may also need to purchase extra copies of the death certificate. A death certificate is a certified entry of death in the register. You may need these for banks, building societies, solicitors or for pension/insurance claims. The register office will be able to advise on the possible number of copies required, but there will be a charge for each copy.

Certificates issued at the time of registration are £4.00 each.

### **Arranging an appointment**

Please contact Dudley Council's registration service on:

Telephone: 0300 555 2345

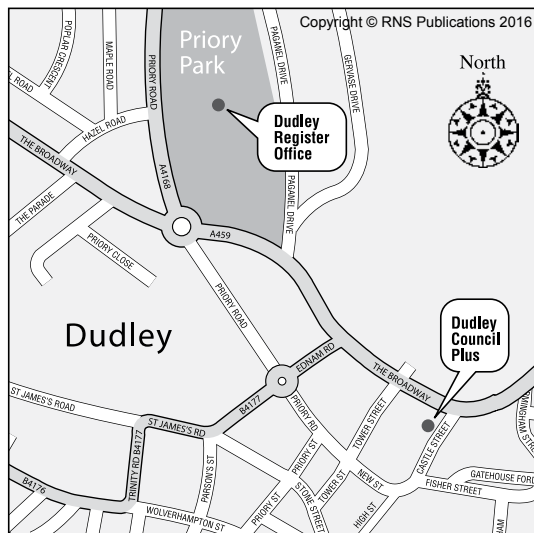
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Time:.....

Reference number:.....

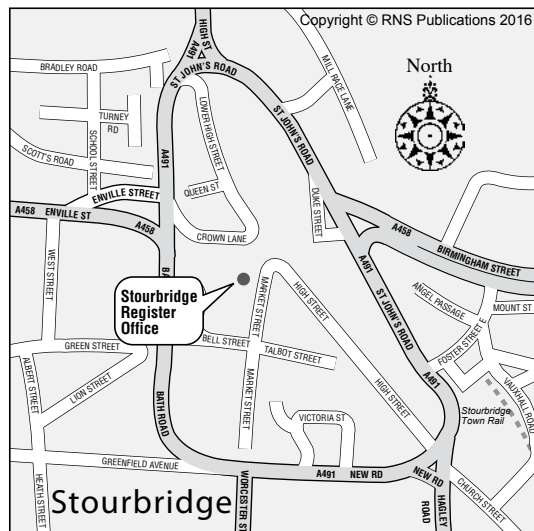
## Hours of opening and map of Register Offices

By appointment	<b>0300 555 2345</b>
Monday to Friday	8.30am to 5pm
Saturday	9am to 12noon



**Dudley Register Office,**  
Priory Hall, Priory Park,  
Dudley, West Midlands  
DY1 4EU

**Dudley Council Plus**  
Office, Council Offices,  
259 Castle Street,  
Dudley DY1 1LQ



**Stourbridge Register  
Office,  
1st Floor  
Stourbridge Town Hall  
and Library  
Crown Centre  
Crown Lane  
Stourbridge  
DY8 1YE**

## **Tell us once service**

Dudley Council Registration Service also provides the National 'Tell us once' service when you register a death within the borough. On your behalf they can notify all central and local government and council departments that need to be informed of the death.

### **Which organisations will be notified?**

If you decide to use the 'Tell us once' service, the following departments and organisations will be notified.

#### **Council services**

- Council housing
- Housing and council tax benefit
- Council tax
- Libraries
- Blue badges
- Adult social care (including attendance allowance)
- Collection of payments for council services
- Electoral services

#### **Government organisations**

- Department for Work and Pensions
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Identity and passport service
- Driver and vehicle licensing agency
- Ministry of Defence, Service Personnel and Veterans Agency

When you make an appointment to register a death you will be asked if you wish to use the 'Tell us once' service. If you do, you will be informed of the extra information required to bring to the appointment and there is no charge to use this service.

The information that is given will be treated securely and confidentially. The organisations that are contacted will use the information to update records, to end services, benefits and credits provided, as appropriate, or to start up services. They may use the information in other ways, but only as the law allows.

Further details can be obtained by:

Telephone: 0300 555 2345

or visit [www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk)

## Who do I need to tell?

When someone dies there will be many organisations to contact.

Please use the following as guidance to see if you have contacted everyone you need.

Bank, Giro, Credit Cards, Building Society	
Dept. Works & Pensions (Benefits, Pensions etc)	
Social Services (Home helps, Home care)	
Place of work (Occupational Pension)	
Family Doctor	
Executors of the estate (Will)	
Solicitor	
Insurance companies	
Landlord, Housing Department	
Council Tax offices	
Passport office	
Inland Revenue	
Electricity, Gas, Telephone, Water companies	
Royal mail, newsagent and milk deliveries	
Driving Licence centre (D.V.L.A)	
Priest, Vicar, Minister or Faith Leader	
Schools, College or University attended	
Residential or Nursing Home	
Library Service	
Careline (personal alarm service)	
Cancel any appointments	
Community Equipment Service (CES)	



## Sample letter

Here is an example of a letter that you may find useful when informing people about a death:

[Your Name]  
[Your Address]  
[Your Postal Code]  
[Your Telephone Number]

Date:

[address to whom you are writing:]  
[Name]  
[Department]  
[Company]  
[Road]  
[City]  
[Postal Code]

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to inform you of the death of [name of deceased and date of birth].

Please find enclosed with this letter the documentation/papers which need to be returned to you.

[Name of Deceased] died at [hospital name or home address] on [date].

If you require any further information, please contact me at the above address.

Yours faithfully

[Your name]  
Encs

# **Arranging the funeral**

## **When can I start to arrange the funeral?**

You can begin to make funeral arrangements as soon as you feel ready to do so. You do not have to wait until the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death has been issued by a doctor, or registered the death.

Funeral directors are open during office hours and some are open on Saturday mornings. Although they do have an on call arrangement, this is generally for them to attend when someone dies at home. If your loved one died at home you will have already had to do this.

Your chosen funeral director can make all the necessary arrangements and can also advise you on all the procedures and documents you will need, as well as the timing of the funeral service. They may come to your house if you prefer.

Your own Minister, Priest or religious leader and the Hospital Chaplains may also be of great help during this difficult time.

## **How do I find a funeral director?**

Most funeral directors belong to the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) Telephone: 0845 230 1343 and/or National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) Telephone: 0345 230 6777.

These associations have their own codes of practice that must be followed to ensure consistent levels of service and standards.

## **Some advice you may find helpful**

### **Funeral costs**

Funerals are expensive although basic costs tend to be similar. However, the final cost can vary considerably. Do not be afraid to mention your budget or obtain estimates from several undertakers.

Financial help may be available if you receive benefits or if the person who has died has no next-of-kin. Contact the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) before making any arrangements.

Telephone: 0345 606 0265

[www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages](http://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages)

### **Burials abroad**

If the person is to be buried in a country other than England or Wales a funeral director will be able to assist you with this. When you register the death, you will need to obtain at least two certified copies of the death certificate (some consulates and embassies require more). You need to give the copies to your funeral director who will then obtain an 'Out of England Certificate'. Information for weekends/bank holidays will also be given in order to hasten the normal process.

### **Probate**

You should try to find out if the deceased had made a Will and whether it is held by their solicitors. This may contain information regarding the deceased's wishes for the funeral. It will also enclose the names of the executors or persons legally entitled to deal with the deceased's estate. Your solicitors will assist you with the administration of the estate and any questions relating to taxation that may arise, for further information:

Bereavement Advice Centre Telephone: 0800 634 9494

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

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

## Grieving

We grieve after any sort of loss, but most powerfully after the death of someone we love. It is not just one feeling, but a whole succession of feelings, which take a while to work through and which cannot be hurried.

In the few hours or days following the death of somebody you are close to, most people feel simply stunned, as though they cannot believe it has actually happened. It may feel like this even if the death has been expected. This sense of emotional numbness can be a help in getting through all the important practical arrangements that have to be made, such as getting in touch with relatives and organising the funeral. For many people, the funeral or memorial service is an occasion when the reality of what has happened really starts to sink in. It may be distressing to see the body or attend the funeral, but these are ways of saying goodbye to those we love.

As the numbness disappears, it may be replaced by a sense of agitation or yearning for the deceased person. There is a feeling of wanting somehow to find them, even though this is clearly impossible. This makes it difficult to relax or concentrate and it may be difficult to sleep properly. Dreams can be very upsetting. This agitation can sometimes amount to panic, and feelings of anxiety can be present.

People may feel they are “going mad” as they have such odd experiences including seeing, hearing, or feeling the deceased person near them or in the distance. None of these experiences are unusual and may alternate with weepiness, low mood, feeling tired or exhausted, withdrawal and silence.

People also often feel angry towards doctors and nurses who did not prevent the death, towards friends and relatives who did not do enough, or even towards the person who has, by dying, left them.

Another common feeling is guilt. They may wonder what they could have done differently which might have helped the situation or go over in their minds all the things they would have liked to have said or done. Guilt is also a very common experience when people feel relief at someone’s death after a prolonged or distressing illness. It is worth remembering that this response, when suffering ends, is understandable and natural.

Spasms of grief can occur at any time, sparked off by people, places or things that bring back memories of the deceased person. It may appear to others as though the bereaved person is spending a lot of time just sitting, doing nothing. In fact, they are usually thinking about the person they have lost, going over again and again both the good times and the bad times they had together. This is a quiet, but essential part of coming to terms with the death.

The sudden changes of emotion can be confusing to friends or relatives, but are part of the normal process of grief. It may be tempting to keep away from other people who do not fully understand or share the grief. However, it is usually best to start to return to one’s normal activities after a couple of weeks or so.

It may be difficult to accept the death of a loved one but still be possible to move on with life in spite of this. Grieving isn't about forgetting the person who has died. The sense of having lost a part of oneself never goes away entirely. It is about finding a permanent place for that person in your life, where it does not cause you too much pain. For many this is about their lives growing around the grief.

While no-one knows exactly how it feels for you at this sad time there are many people, such as friends and professionals who can empathise and want to help towards a sense of recovery where you learn to live with a loved one's death.

Bereavement turns our world upside-down and is one of the most painful experiences we endure. It can be strange, terrible and overwhelming. In spite of this, it is a part of life that we all go through and usually does not require medical attention. For those who do struggle, help is at hand, not only from doctors, but from many other professionals and organisations.

If someone is unable to resolve their grief, help can be arranged through their GP or one of the valuable voluntary or religious organisations. For some, it will be enough to meet people and talk with others who have been through the same experience. Others may need to see a bereavement counsellor, clinical psychologist or psychotherapist for a while.

## Stories of loss and grief

These are the experiences of some people who have suffered bereavement.

*“My husband is gone forever. I just feel so awful. I can’t stop crying. It’s been weeks now and I seem to feel worse and worse as the days go by. Everyone says it will get easier, but it just doesn’t seem like that will ever happen. I just can’t believe he’s gone forever I wish I would have gone first. Everything all over the house reminds me of him. I try to think of how he would want me to go on with my life, but I just find it very hard to go on without him. We were like one person and now half of me is gone”.*

*“Though I understand that she is not physically here, I simply keep myself busy with doing anything that I think she would approve of or something that I could tell her. I believe that she is still with me and all those she loves. I guess in the short term, anything that reminds me of her, is what I immerse myself in”.*

*“Time in my opinion really doesn’t seem to heal us, but it helps us learn to deal with our loss and continue to move forward. The tears will always continue to be shed, but we have the memories that will be forever locked in our minds and in our hearts”.*

*“For a while there was a steady stream of condolences and sympathy cards. But they eventually trickled to nothing. The shock was still there, but it was wearing off and the raw pain of grief began to take hold of me”.*

Following the death of a loved one, how people respond, make sense of, and cope with grief varies greatly. There is no standard; everyone’s grief journey will be unique. But grief is normal, and necessary.

## **How can your friends and relatives help?**

It is important that, if they want to, bereaved people can cry with somebody and talk about their feelings of pain and distress without being told to pull themselves together. In time, they will come to terms with their loss, but first they need to talk and to cry. Spending time with friends or relatives that are close to you may ease your pain and distress. More than words can comfort, they need to know that you will be with them during this time of pain and distress. A sympathetic arm around the shoulders will express care and support when words are not enough.

If you don't know what to say, or don't even know whether to talk about it or not, be honest and say so. This gives the bereaved person a chance to tell you what he or she wants. People often avoid mentioning the name of the person who has died for fear that it will be upsetting. However, to the bereaved person it may seem as though others have forgotten their loss, adding a sense of isolation to their painful feelings of grief.

Festive occasions and anniversaries (not only of the death, but also birthdays and weddings) are particularly painful times. Make a special effort to be around.

Practical help with cleaning, shopping or looking after children can ease the burden of being alone. Elderly bereaved partners may need help with the chores that the deceased partner used to deal with, for example coping with bills, cooking, housework, getting the car serviced and so on.

Allow people enough time to grieve. Don't expect too much too soon from a bereaved relative or friend, they need the time to grieve properly, and this will help to avoid problems in the future.



If your friend or relative seems not to be coping well, encourage them to seek help. Their GP is a good place to start. Other organisations that may be helpful are listed at the back of this booklet.

## **Advice and support**

We have listed several organisations used to dealing with bereavement. It is sometimes easier to talk to a stranger on the telephone about the way you feel rather than someone that is close to you.

### **Age UK**

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

0800 169 2081

Local contact (01384) 354308

Offers advice, information and services for the elderly and their carers.

### **Chaplaincy Services – Russells Hall Hospital**

(01384) 456111

Chaplains are available to offer listening and pastoral care and can give advice on funeral arrangements.

### **Compassionate Friends**

[tcf.org.uk](http://tcf.org.uk)

0345 123 2304

An organisation of bereaved parents and their families offering understanding and support.

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk) or [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

0844 477 9400

Local contact (01384) 262878

Exists to promote the well being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. Provides counselling and support information, advice, education and training services.

### **Edwards Trust**

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

0121 454 1705

Offers a wide range of local support services to anyone affected by the death of a child aged 18 or under.

### **Hope Again (Cruse Bereavement Care's young persons services)**

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

0808 808 1677

### **Road Peace**

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

0845 4500 355

Provides support and information and local contact for those bereaved or injured in a road crash.

### **Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)**

[www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)

0300 111 5065

Local contact (01922) 724841

Self help group which offers support to families and friends of those who have been bereaved by suicide.

**Samaritans**

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

[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

116 123

Local contact (01384) 781118

Samaritans provide confidential, non judgemental emotional support 24 hours a day.

**The Way Foundation**

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

or [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk)

An organisation for people who have become widows or widowers at a young age (under the age of 50).

**The White House Cancer Support**

[www.support4cancer.org.uk](http://www.support4cancer.org.uk)

(01384) 231232

Practical information and bereavement support after someone close to you dies from cancer.

**Winston's Wish**

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

08452 03 04 05

Winston's Wish national helpline offering support, information and guidance to all those caring for a child or young person who has been bereaved.

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

If you have cause for concern, compliment or suggestion regarding the care your loved one or yourselves received whilst at the hospital, you may wish to contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service.

Freephone: 0800 073 0510

## **Acknowledgements**

Finally, please be assured that you have our sympathy at this time. We hope the information contained in this booklet has been helpful.

**Author:** End of Life Steering Group

**Owner:** Diane Reynolds & Sue Edwards

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**Approved by:** End of Life Steering Group

**Review Date:** September 2016

## **Disclaimer**

We wish to thank the advertisers and sponsors, without whom this publication would not have been possible. However the hospital/community services do not endorse any of the products or services they provide.

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## Notes

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