



East Suffolk and
North Essex
NHS Foundation Trust

What do I do now?

***Bereavement Suite
Colchester Hospital***

Tel: 01206 742812

***Monday to Friday, 8am–4pm
answerphone at all other times***



What do I do now?

This booklet gives information about the legal processes and arrangements that are necessary after a death. The first few pages outline practical matters. The middle section provides a list of some organisations that provide support and guidance to the bereaved. At the end is some information about local funeral-related services.

The three practical tasks are:

- 1 Liaising with the Bereavement Suite regarding the **Medical Certificate of Cause of Death**.
- 2 Obtaining a **death certificate** from the Registrar of Births and Deaths.
- 3 Arranging a **funeral**.

Adjustments to processes during the pandemic

The usual process is set out on the following pages. Some of this information will not apply due to adjustments made due to the pandemic. Please bear this information in mind when reading this leaflet.

Losing a loved one is never easy. The pandemic situation we find ourselves in limits families in what they would ordinarily be able to do following a death. This presents some additional challenges and obstacles please be aware of the following changes due to COVID-19 below.

How to register a death

- A Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (known as the MCCD) is required to register a death. This is completed by doctors within the hospital.



- The Bereavement Office will inform you when the MCCD has been electronically sent to the Register Office, you will then be able to make an appointment to register the death via the ways below:

- 1 by going to the Essex County Council website:
www.essex.gov.uk/register-a-death and filling in the pre-registration death form.

or

- 2 if you do not have access to the internet, telephone 0345 603 7632 and you will be asked to give some information to assist the registrar in preparing the registration.

You will need to attend a Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to register the death. You may register in any office within Essex. You can order Death Certificates either online or over the phone for £11 a copy.

Family visits

Depending on the level of Government restrictions in place requests for family visits may not be able to be accommodated. In any case there are likely to be some restrictions in place.

Please contact the Bereavement Suite to discuss any request for visiting before travelling to the hospital.

Collecting personal possessions

Belongings will be released with your loved one to your appointed funeral director and can be collected from there.

1 How do I arrange the medical certificate?

A Medical Certificate of Cause of Death must be completed by a doctor who attended the patient during their stay in hospital. It is the duty of the Medical Examiner's Officer to request completion of certificates.

All hospitals must have all medical certificates independently reviewed by a Medical Examiner. A Medical Examiner is a senior doctor who discusses the cause of death with the doctor issuing the certificate. There is an opportunity for you to speak with a Medical Examiner if you have any questions about the care received or the cause of death. Providing the Medical Examiner is satisfied the cause of death offered is accurate and there is no requirement to notify the Coroner of the death the certificate can then be released to the Registrar's Office. This additional step may slightly delay releasing the certificate. However, the benefit of this system is to ensure the certificate has been completed fully and accurately and you have an opportunity to speak with a doctor should you wish to. This can help prevent delays and/or rejection of the certificate at the Registrar of Births and Deaths and allow you the opportunity to ask questions and understand the cause of death stated on the certificate.

The first step in arranging a certificate is to telephone the Bereavement Suite on **01206 742812** (10 am–4 pm). We generally are able to pick up calls but occasionally may be engaged in other duties. If your call is not answered or you are calling outside office hours, please leave a message – don't forget to provide the name of the person who has died, your name, and a contact telephone number where we can reach you. We aim to respond to messages as soon as possible.




There is generally no need for you to come to the hospital as the medical certificate will be sent electronically to the Registrar for you. If you wish to attend for any other purpose please discuss this with a member of the team before travelling to the hospital.

The Medical Examiner's Officer will inform you as soon as possible if there may be a delay in producing the certificate. Sometimes doctors are busy on ward rounds or may be working nights. In some cases, they may need to notify a coroner about the person's death. When a patient has died in the Emergency Department it is not always apparent what the cause of death is. In these situations it is more likely the Coroner will need to be informed of the person's death. Please see the information on pages 10 and 11.

How do I find the Bereavement Suite ('Butterfly Lodge')?

If you need to come to the Bereavement Suite for any reason appointments are usually arranged in 'Butterfly Lodge', which is located near Gainsborough Wing at Colchester Hospital. From the main visitor car park follow the road round to the right past the Turner Diagnostic Centre heading towards Gainsborough Wing. Just past the ambulance drop-off point there is a small white building. There is dedicated free parking available adjacent to the lodge. You will need to enter your vehicle registration number via the touchscreen on the wall inside Butterfly Lodge.

The Medical Examiner's Officer will need to ask you about funeral arrangements to ensure no delays are caused. This includes the name of your appointed funeral director and whether you plan to arrange a cremation or a burial. We appreciate you may need some time to make these decisions but encourage you to try and get arrangements underway 


as soon as you can. Once you have formally engaged your funeral director to act on your behalf, and you have confirmed this choice with us, they are able to take your loved one into their care. We request that funeral directors collect each patient within two working days of being formally engaged by families and being notified by us that all required documentation is in place. This is to ensure you are not delayed in being able to visit your loved one at your funeral director's chapel of rest.

2 How do I register the death?

Once the medical certificate, has been sent to the Registrar's you will need an appointment to register the death. Deaths should be registered within 5 days unless a coroner is investigating the cause of death. **Please note you do not need to have registered the death and obtained the 'Green Form' from the Registrar's to enable a funeral director to collect a patient from us.**

Your verbal instruction to us to release the patient to your chosen funeral director is sufficient to enable this. Please be aware most funeral directors will not collect a patient from us unless you have formally engaged their services. In the event you are undecided about which funeral director you will be using we will generally follow-up with a call to you in a few days time to see if you require any support with this. Be assured we will not release your loved one to a funeral director without your express permission to do so.

How do I make an appointment with a registrar?

To make an appointment with the Registrar of Births and Deaths you can either call **0345 603 7632** (between 8.30 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday) or use the Essex County Council 

website at <https://www.essex.gov.uk/register-a-death>


Essex County Council has registrars' offices throughout the county. The death needs to be registered in Essex. Where this is problematic for you, please speak with the Bereavement Suite team for advice.

What should I take to the Registrar's Office?

The medical certificate will be sent by email to the Registrar's Office for you. Please take any other documents that will help provide information which the Registrar will record, including:

- full name of the deceased (and, where applicable, maiden name)
- date and place of birth
- name and occupation of spouse (if applicable)
- the usual home address of the deceased
- whether the deceased was in receipt of a pension or other social security benefits
- the date and place of death (this will be on the medical certificate)
- the date of birth of the surviving widow/widower
- the NHS medical card (if available).

It is advisable to take official documents with the required information on them (for example, birth or marriage certificates, passports, etc) to ensure the information you provide is accurate. Amending details after a registration has been completed can be complex and difficult and will incur a significant administration fee.

Along with providing the death certificate, the registrar will give you the '**Green Form**'. This is the committal certificate 

which enables the funeral to proceed and must be given to your chosen funeral director as soon as is practicable.

You may ask for as many death certificates as you wish but note that the Registrar charges a fee for each one. Current prices for the certified death certificate are given on the Essex County website. When settling the financial affairs of the deceased, you will find that a few extra copies of the certificate are useful. Payment may be by cash, card or cheque.

Registration Office staff will be able to advise you about other organisations you should contact (such as utility companies) and about useful services such as 'stopmail', which reduces distress caused by inappropriate mailings and reduces the risk of identity theft.

3 How do I arrange a funeral?

The National Association of Funeral Directors advises that you contact at least two funeral firms in your area for an estimate of funeral costs. You should expect clear price lists indicating what services they will provide and what other fees might be incurred from cemeteries, crematoria, churches etc.

Ask whether the funeral director offers a simple basic funeral package, along with more elaborate and expensive arrangements.

Although comparison between firms is advisable, a choice must be made fairly quickly to avoid delays. Funeral directors will not collect a patient from the hospital, for transfer to their firm's chapel of rest, until you have formally engaged them to act on your behalf.

If you are arranging a cremation, make sure you have informed the Bereavement Suite; the Medical Examiner's



Officers will arrange for the doctors to complete a cremation certificate. The funeral director will collect the Cremation certificate along with your loved one when they visit the hospital.

Further plans for the funeral should be discussed with other members of the family. If a formal ceremony is to be held at a church or crematorium, you will be making decisions about music, the order of service, readings, and perhaps choosing a photograph for a programme. You can plan for a religious ceremony, conducted by a minister, or a more informal one, with friends and relatives speaking. A simple graveside service is also possible.

Think about whether you want to request that contributions be made to charities. This can be done in lieu of flowers. Memorial websites with messages and photographs can be set through a number of websites:

St Helena Hospice's 'Timeless Tribute'

www.timelesstributefunds.org.uk

JustGiving (a website that allows you to nominate any charity you choose)

www.justgiving.com

Visiting your loved one in the Mortuary

If you wish to visit your loved one it is advisable to make arrangements with your funeral director. Should you wish to visit at the hospital please contact the Bereavement Suite during office hours. There may be some restrictions to allow visits where there is involvement from the Coroner. Bereavement Suite staff can advise you on this when you contact them to arrange a visit.



Where can I collect personal possessions from?

It is best to ask ward staff to return belongings to you on the ward if you are present when, or shortly after, your loved one died. Any property that you did not collect from the ward will be packaged on the ward, sealed in a bag, and transferred to the Bereavement Suite. The sealed bag is then handed to your chosen funeral director when they collect your loved one from our Mortuary. This should be returned by them to you still sealed to provide a secure handover of all items to you. In the event there are any items missing you should contact the ward in the first instance as the ward is responsible for packaging all belongings.

Personal jewellery is not routinely removed from patients unless this has been requested or there is a risk of the item dislodging. Items left with the patient are generally returned via the funeral directors. If you prefer to collect any items yourself, please notify the Bereavement Officer of this.

If there is a post-mortem examination, what difference will this make?

There are two types of post mortem examinations, one that is requested by a hospital doctor and one that is ordered by a coroner.

- **Consent** (also known as hospital) post mortem examination, can only be conducted with your authorisation. You are under no obligation to agree to this and you have full control over the extent of the examination.
- A **Coroner's** post mortem examination is a legal requirement in some circumstances. If there is a need to refer the death to the Coroner, the Bereavement Office



will notify you of this. You will then be contacted by the Coroner's Office who will inform you of the process. Where the Coroner orders a post mortem examination, the Coroner issues the death certificate directly to the Registrars. You will not need to attend the hospital if the Coroner orders a post mortem examination.

Where can I find support and comfort?

At the hospital, the Chaplaincy Service (**01206 742014**) and the Bereavement Suite are the first ports of call.

The Chaplaincy Service has a book of remembrance, which is kept in the Chapel. A simple form with dates of birth and death along with any thought or memory you wish to be included is printed in this booklet; it can be returned to the Chaplaincy or to the Bereavement Officer.

Helpful organisations and their contact details

There are several local and national organisations that provide support for the bereaved. If, as the weeks pass, you find yourself unable to cope and would like to discuss this, consider contacting one of the following organisations.

Some provide support for specific groups of people (such as those who have lost children) while others provide support to anyone.

St Helena Hospice North East Essex Bereavement Service

Tel: **01255 258240** (Monday to Friday, 9 am–5 pm)

Email: patient@sthelenahospice.org.uk with the subject 'bereavement'.

The Samaritans

Tel: **116123** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

www.samaritans.org



For families who have lost children:

The Compassionate Friends

Tel: **0345 123 2304** (10 am–4 pm and 7 pm–10 pm)

www.tcf.org.uk

The Lullaby Trust

Tel: **0808 802 6868**

www.lullabytrust.org.uk

Roadpeace

For those bereaved due to road traffic incidents

Tel: **0845 4500 355** (Monday to Friday, 9 am–5 pm)

Email: [**helpline@roadpeace.org**](mailto:helpline@roadpeace.org)

www.roadpeace.org

The Terence Higgins Trust 'Lighthouse Project'

For the lesbian and gay community

Tel: **0808 802 1221** (Monday to Friday, 10 am–8 pm)

Families of former military personnel may be entitled to help with funeral arrangements.

SAFFA, The Armed Forces Charity

Tel: **0800 260 6767**

www.saffa.org.uk/get-help

ESNEFT Armed Forces Veterans Group (AFVG)

www.esneft.nhs.uk/armed-forces-veterans-group-afvg/

For bereavement group support sessions with trained counsellors:

Age Well East

Tel: **0300 37 33 333**

www.agewelleast.org.uk



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 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.

Our contact details

Bereavement Suite
Colchester Hospital
Turner Road
Colchester CO4 5JL
Tel: **01206 742812**

Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays), 8am–4pm
(answerphone at all other times)



A message from the Bereavement officer

The death of a close relative or friend may be hard to come to terms with; whether you have known for some time this was near or whether it has been sudden and unexpected. Grieving is normal and natural and affects us all in different ways.

As well as dealing with your grief you are also faced with many things that need to be done. The steps involved in arranging the medical certificate, registering the death and dealing with the various documents can be both daunting and confusing. Please be assured we will do all we can to make the process as simple as we can for you during this difficult time.

Children and adolescents

Even though children may not understand the meaning of death until they are three or four years old, they feel the loss of close relatives in much the same way as adults. It is clear that, even from infancy, children grieve and feel great distress. However, they have a different experience of time from that of adults and may go through the stages of mourning quite rapidly.

In their early school years children may feel responsible for the death of a close relative and so may need to be reassured. Young people may not speak of their grief for fear of adding extra burdens to the grown-ups around them. The grief of children and adolescents, and their need for mourning, should not be overlooked when a member of the family has died. They should, usually, for instance, be included in the funeral plans.

Colchester & Tendring Youth Enquiry Service offer counselling sessions for under 18s. They can be contacted on:
Tel: **01206 710771**
www.yesyouthenquiryservice.org/counselling

Practical advice

You can get practical help from the funeral director, the family doctor, a solicitor, a minister of religion or at Citizens Advice. You may feel that you want more than practical advice, and that you need to talk with someone who is sympathetic and outside your immediate family or with other people who have been through a similar experience.

You will hear the phrase “our sincere condolences” many times. It is always well meant, but we know that words are inadequate for what you have lost.

Chaplains

The chaplains are available in the hospital to support you at this time to offer care and support to bereaved family and friends, irrespective of individual religion or belief. We can accompany you to the Bereavement Office or to the Viewing Room when, if you request, we can say prayers.

We can help you make contact with your own minister/priest or faith leader.

If at any time you would like some space and time to talk confidentially, we can meet in the privacy of one of the Chaplaincy offices.



To contact the chaplain

Support from our hospital chaplaincy service is available to everyone, to people of all faiths and beliefs, including those who are non-religious. The chaplains are available to listen and offer confidential bereavement support. If you would value the opportunity to talk with a chaplain they can be contacted on **01206 742014**.



Book of Remembrance

A Memorial Book is held in the Chapel at Colchester Hospital.

Memorial Book entry request

If you would like your relative's name recorded in our memorial book, please fill in this form

Name of the person to be remembered:

.....

Date of death:

..... / /

Either hand this form to one of the Bereavement Office staff or send it to:

Chaplaincy General Office
Colchester Hospital
Turner Road
Colchester
CO4 5JL



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In memory of your loved one

Please accept our sincere condolences at this sad time. We are grateful to you for taking the time to read about the hospital's charity which helps improve the hospital for patients and staff.



Colchester & Ipswich Hospitals Charity

Registered charity number 1048827

The charity gives grants to wards and departments for special equipment, to enhance care and improve the environment for patients across east Suffolk and north Essex. For advice about writing funeral notices and orders of service to ensure donations reach the ward or department of your choice or to make a donation please contact Colchester & Ipswich Hospitals Charity.

Personalised donation envelopes

If you are arranging a funeral and would like to ask for a donation to benefit a ward or department instead of floral tributes, our funeral collection envelopes will make it easier and can be designated for a particular ward or department. Personalised remembrance envelopes can be ordered from Colchester & Ipswich Hospitals Charity.

Tel: 0300 770 1369

Email: charity@esneft.nhs.uk

Web: cohoc.org.uk

Your experience matters

We value your feedback. Please help us improve our services by answering a simple question, in our online survey – “Overall, how was your experience of our services?”

This survey is known as “The Friends and Family Test”.

You can either scan this QR code with a smart phone camera:



Or type the following web address into your browser:
www.esneft.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views-matter/friends-and-family-test/

Thank you very much.

Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format.

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www.esneft.nhs.uk



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