

# Guidance and support

after someone dies



## Contents

### 3 Section one: What to do first

Obtain medical certificate  
Register the death

### 7 Section two: How to arrange a funeral

Funeral arrangements  
Funeral Directors  
Help with funeral costs

### 10 Section three: Bereavement

Grieving  
How St Helena can support you  
Bereavement Support for adults and children  
How to refer to us

### 14 Section four: Remembering someone special

Visit St Helena multi-faith chapel  
Donating in-memory of someone special  
Ways to support St Helena

### 17 Other ways to support St Helena

House Clearance service  
Make a donation  
Leave a gift in a will  
Share your story

### 19 About St Helena



## Guidance and support after someone dies

When someone dies, not only is it a sad and difficult time but there are many things that have to be done. This booklet is divided into sections and designed to guide and support you through the various tasks you will have to undertake in the coming days and weeks.

### Section One – What to do first

There are three things you need to do within the first few days after someone dies.

- 1 Obtain the medical certificate of cause of death. You will need this to register the death.
- 2 Register the death within five days. You will then receive the documents you need for the funeral.
- 3 Start to arrange the funeral. See Section two of this booklet for more information.

## 1 Obtain the medical certificate of cause of death

You will need this document to register the death. The certificate will show the cause of death and will be signed by a doctor.

When someone dies at The Hospice, a doctor will issue the medical certificate of cause of death and St Helena will arrange to give this to the next of kin or executor of the deceased's will. The deceased will then be moved on to Hunnaball Family Funeral Group within 24 hours, unless you have chosen the funeral directors you would like to use. In this case, St Helena will liaise with your chosen funeral director.

When someone dies at home or in a care home, the GP needs to be contacted immediately, even if out of hours (please contact your own GP surgery for details of how to contact a GP out of hours). The GP will provide you with the medical certificate of cause of death. You can also contact a funeral director immediately (many offer a 24 hour service) to collect your loved one and take them to their chapel of rest.

Under certain circumstances, a doctor reports a death to the local coroner. If this does happen you can find out more at [gov.uk/after-a-death](http://gov.uk/after-a-death)

## 2 Register the death

All deaths must be registered at the register office in the county where the death occurred within five days.

If you go to another register office they will be able to register the death but cannot issue any death certificates – these will be posted to you by the registrar in the county where the death took place and may cause delay in the scheduling of the funeral.

If a funeral needs to be organised urgently for reasons of faith, it is sometimes possible to obtain the necessary paperwork from the register office prior to the full registration of the death.

### Who can register the death?

- A relative
- Someone who was present at the death
- A member of staff from St Helena or the hospital
- The person making arrangements with the funeral director

You can make an appointment at [essex.gov.uk](http://essex.gov.uk) or telephone 0345 603 7632 and you can expect appointments to take approximately 30 minutes.

If your loved one has died at The Hospice then the next available appointment at the register office will be booked for the next of kin by the St Helena team.

You will need to take the medical certificate of cause of death with you to the appointment. (Please see point 1 above on how to obtain the certificate.)



And, if available, the deceased person's:

- Birth certificate
- Council tax bill
- Driving licence
- Marriage or civil partnership certificate
- NHS medical card
- Passport
- Proof of address (i.e. utility bill)

Don't worry if you can't find all these documents – you'll still be able to register the death without them.

You will need to tell the registrar:

- The person's full name at the time of death
- Any names previously used i.e. maiden name
- The person's date and place of birth
- Their last address
- Their occupation
- The full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving or deceased spouse or civil partner
- Whether they are getting a state pension or any other benefits

At the appointment you will receive a death certificate. You can buy extra death certificates at the appointment. Please note, register offices only accept cash. Often banks, insurance companies, utility companies and other institutions will need original death certificates to close down accounts and will not accept photocopies.

To find your nearest register office please visit [gov.uk/register-offices](http://gov.uk/register-offices). Please note, you will need to book an appointment in advance.

#### **Tell Us Once service**

Most registry offices have access to the Tell Us Once service which can be used to report the death to most government and local government organisations. For more information visit [gov.uk/after-a-death](http://gov.uk/after-a-death)

#### **Other information**

If the deceased registered as an organ donor, they should have told someone close to them.

More information can be found at [organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation](http://organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation)



## Section two – How to arrange a funeral

### **Did you know?**

- The only legal requirements in England and Wales are that the death is certified and registered and the deceased is either buried or cremated.
- You do not need to have a funeral ceremony.
- You do not need a religious minister.
- You do not have to use a funeral director.

### **Funeral arrangements**

Most people use a funeral director to arrange the funeral, but you can arrange a funeral yourself. We hope the information here will help you as you make choices and arrangements.

### **Different types of funeral**

Funerals can be religious, non-religious or anything in between. Your loved one may have already expressed their wishes for their funeral. If not, you can decide what you would like to include in the funeral service, and many often choose music, poetry, hymns and readings. You may like the idea of having someone talk about your loved one – you could do this yourself and/or ask friends and relatives to do so.

If you have your own faith leader, this person would be the natural choice to lead the funeral – and to help you with planning. Funeral directors will have a good range of contacts if you are unsure who to ask.

### **Planning a funeral with a funeral director**

#### **How to choose a funeral director:**

Unless you have a particular funeral director that you know well or your loved one wished to use, it is advisable to call or visit a few and ask for written, itemised quotes. There may be additional factors that influence your choice, such as their location and word of mouth recommendations.

We strongly recommend that you choose a funeral director who is a member of one of the following:

- National Association of Funeral Directors ([nafd.org.uk](http://nafd.org.uk))
- National Federation of Funeral Directors ([nffd.co.uk](http://nffd.co.uk))
- Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors ([saif.org.uk](http://saif.org.uk))

These organisations have codes of practice – they must give you a price list when asked.

The websites above may also be useful in helping you find a funeral director to

approach. If you would like a list of funeral directors, please ask a member of staff for our funeral directors leaflet.

The British Humanist Association can also help with information on non-religious funerals. For more information visit: [humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/non-religious-funerals](http://humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/non-religious-funerals)

### **What will a funeral director do?**

Your chosen funeral director should support you throughout the process of organising the funeral. This could include: providing a coffin, transferring the deceased from the place of death to their premises, care for the deceased in preparation for transportation to the funeral (usually a hearse), and arranging the burial or cremation as appropriate.

### **When can you visit a funeral director?**

You can contact and make arrangements with a funeral director before the death is registered, but they will need to see some of the paperwork you received from the registrar before the funeral can take place.

### **Planning a funeral without a funeral director**

If a funeral director is not involved, you will need to liaise directly with the cemetery or crematorium where the funeral is to take place.

Funerals can be held in a place of worship, a crematorium chapel, or at home. More information can be found at [goodfuneralguide.co.uk](http://goodfuneralguide.co.uk) and [moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://moneyadvice.service.org.uk). Natural burial grounds are an increasingly popular choice and are usually ecologically friendly. The body or ashes are buried in a woodland setting. Information and advice can be found at [naturaldeath.org.uk](http://naturaldeath.org.uk).

Our Chaplaincy team can offer you help and advice so that you can plan the most appropriate funeral for your loved one. You can call them on 01206 845 566 or ask to see them at The Hospice.

### **Funeral donations**

Many people like to ask for donations instead of flowers at funerals. If you would like donations to be made to St Helena, we can help by providing donation envelopes and a personalised funeral collection box. Personalised online Tribute Funds can also be set-up at [timelesstributefunds.org.uk](http://timelesstributefunds.org.uk). Please contact the Fundraising team if you would like to discuss the options available at [memories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:memories@sthelena.org.uk) or call us on 01206 931 468.

### **Paying for a funeral**

Costs may vary considerably from one funeral director to another. It is worth discussing with family and/or friends what is important and how the costs will be met before arrangements are made.

The person who signs the contract with the funeral director is responsible for

paying for the funeral. It does not need to be the same person who registers the death.

Some funeral directors will ask for a deposit to cover some initial costs. These are the costs the funeral director will pay to others, for example, the crematorium fee, newspaper announcements or flowers. You can ask your funeral director for a written quote detailing all these fees.

### **Funeral plans**

It is worth checking whether a pre-paid funeral plan exists as some people prefer to make their own plans before they die.

### **Paying for the funeral from the estate**

If there are funds from the deceased's estate (including life assurance payments), it is expected that this will be used to pay for the funeral. Most banks usually agree to release money for the funeral as quickly as possible. The bank will let you know which documents you need to provide, but it is normal for them to ask for the death certificate and the invoice from a funeral director.

### **Help with funeral payment**

If you are on a low income and you need help to pay for the funeral you are arranging, you could be eligible to receive a Funeral Payment from the state. You will be expected to pay the money back if you receive money from the deceased's estate at a later date. You can read more about this – including whether you are eligible – at [gov.uk/funeral-payments](http://gov.uk/funeral-payments).

### **Other information**

If you need further information on dealing with the deceased's estate or affairs please visit [gov.uk/wills-probate-inheritance](http://gov.uk/wills-probate-inheritance)





## Section three – Bereavement

### Grieving

The death of a family member or friend can be devastating and can bring about stronger emotions than you have previously experienced.

For some people, grieving starts at the time of death. For others, it can start much earlier; even during your loved one's life.

Grieving is part of bereavement, and is unique and personal to you. It can be a stressful time, which you will cope with in your own way, and support from others may help.

Grief comes in waves. Some waves are small, you can feel them but they don't engulf you. Other times the wave is huge and overwhelming. Waves of grief will come and go and are a normal part of bereavement.

Here are some of the feelings and thoughts you may have encountered already or may encounter:

- Numbness, shock, and difficulty accepting the person has died
- Thinking you have seen or heard the person, or searching for them
- Difficulty in sleeping or eating
- Feeling physically low and worrying about your health

- Sadness, guilt, anger, anxiety, feeling nothing at all
- Loneliness
- Feelings of relief
- Depression/low mood
- Finding everyday situations and relationships difficult to cope with
- Disappointment that plans and dreams may not be fulfilled
- Difficulty in remembering their voice

**It's really important to look after yourself after the death of a loved one. Here are some tips of do's and don'ts to help you:**

#### Do

- Talk to others about who has died and your feelings
- Tell others what you need and how they can help you
- Make time to sleep, eat, rest and think
- Give yourself permission to grieve
- Tell yourself that whatever emotion you experience right now is ok

#### Don't

- Isolate yourself
- Feel guilty for needing support
- Use drugs or alcohol to 'cope' - the relief will only be temporary
- Make major life decisions, if avoidable, for at least a year

#### Traumatic Loss

Sudden and/or traumatic death can affect grief. Many people are haunted by images, sounds and smells. Often we avoid reminders because it is so awful. This is not uncommon and usually improves with time. Symptoms can be eased by talking over events with a trusted adult.

Sometimes trauma symptoms do not get better over time and this may lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). You should discuss this with your GP who may suggest treatment, usually a talking therapy.

When trauma is experienced you may feel numb. Numbness is your mind's way of protecting you from pain to help you cope. Do talk about your thoughts and feelings and seek advice from your GP or the Samaritans urgently if you feel depressed or suicidal.

#### How St Helena can support you

Many people manage their grief with the love, help and support of the people around them. However, some people may find they benefit from support from



someone who is not closely involved in their life. Our goal is to support you, helping your life to go on in the face of bereavement.

### Bereavement Support for adults

We offer groups designed to help provide information, coping strategies and peer support for people who are adjusting to living with grief. Our groups are welcoming and run by experienced staff and volunteers'.

Our Bereavement Support may include one-to-one support or counselling where needed, decided by the service manager. We have an experienced team of bereavement volunteers and expert counsellors able to offer appointments.

We hold a few in-memory services throughout the year and have found that they are a comfort to families and friends. For some, attending a service can be a really important part of the remembrance process, as it means taking time out to remember a loved one.

### Bereavement Support for children

We provide bereavement support to any child or young person, regardless of previous hospice involvement or the cause of death.

Initially we offer a bereavement assessment to the whole family, including the parent/guardian, as we are aware that a significant death will impact everyone in the family. Following an assessment, we mutually agree on what support

would be best in each family's circumstances. The options for support are: advice, information, telephone support, one to one, family group or a combination. We use talking or creative therapies which enables people to express their thoughts and feelings whilst using different creative mediums, such as art, storytelling, puppets and toys.

We also run STARS (Sharing, Talking and Remembering Someone Special). STARS is a unique grief support programme for young families which we facilitate several times a year. The programme helps children, young people and their families to cope with the death of a parent or special person in their lives.

We aim to provide a safe, supportive environment where children and adults can meet and share their experiences and remember the person who has died through creative activities, alongside making friends. We recommend attendance around four months after the death.

### How to refer to us

If you or anyone you know would like access to our Bereavement or Family Support services, either now or in the future, please contact us.

### Adults (over 18's)

To access our bereavement service please refer yourself online at [sthelena.org.uk/referrals](http://sthelena.org.uk/referrals). This will take you between 10-15 minutes to complete, so please ensure you have plenty of time available to answer all the questions in detail. If you do not have access to the internet, please call 01206 984 274 to refer yourself.

### Children or families

If you would like to talk to someone, or make referral for a child, young person or family, our Family Support team is available to help.

Please call 01206 848 163 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). Outside of working hours please contact our SinglePoint service on 01206 890 360. Alternatively you can refer yourself directly online at [sthelena.org.uk/referrals](http://sthelena.org.uk/referrals)

### Bereavement support in the community

A number of other organisations offer local bereavement groups in the community which may be able to offer you support.

To find your nearest group and to hear more about how they can support you, please contact the following organisations directly yourself.

**CRUSE** Telephone: 0845 2669710 Email: [essex@cruse.org.uk](mailto:essex@cruse.org.uk)  
Website: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

**Age UK Essex** Telephone: 01245 346106 Email: [info@ageukessex.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukessex.org.uk)  
Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/essex](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/essex)

**Samaritans** Telephone: 116 123 Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



## Section four – Remembering someone special

### Visit The Hospice multi-faith chapel

This quiet space at The Hospice, for people of all faiths and all beliefs, is open for you to visit at any time and offers you a space to remember alone, or with family and friends. There are opportunities to leave messages, memories, thoughts and prayers, and the opportunity to light a candle in-memory of a loved one.

The Book of Remembrance is kept in the multi-faith chapel. You can request the name of your loved one to be entered. The book is always kept on display and will be left open at the day's date (except when it is being updated).

### Donating to St Helena in-memory of someone special

Many people choose to honour the memory of their loved one by raising funds for St Helena in their name. By doing so, you will be enabling others to benefit from our care and support in the future.

We rely heavily on the help and generosity of our supporters – without you we wouldn't be here. We all share a common goal: to be here for everyone who needs us, helping life go on in the face of dying, death and bereavement.

There are lots of ways to support St Helena in someone's memory with many listed in this booklet. We understand that you may prefer to talk through the options with us to see what works best for you to honour your loved one. You are welcome to call the Fundraising team on 01206 931 468 for more information and to discuss further.

### Funeral donations

You may wish to ask family and friends attending your loved one's funeral to donate to St Helena instead of buying flowers. We can help by providing donation envelopes and a personalised funeral collection box. Personalised online Tribute Funds can also be set-up. Please contact the Fundraising team if you would like to discuss the options available at [memories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:memories@sthelena.org.uk) or call us on 01206 931 468.

### Set up a Timeless Tribute Fund

Setting up a Timeless Tribute Fund in-memory of your loved one is a wonderful way to ensure that all donations given to St Helena by you, your family, or friends are given in their name.

Tribute Funds are often set up when planning a funeral, usually for donations in lieu of flowers, however a fund can be set up at any time and donations can be backdated.

Any donation, no matter how big or small, can be made through your Timeless Tribute Fund and seeing the Fund grow can give a great sense of achievement. You can also celebrate your loved one with friends and family, sharing



St Helena's Memory Tree

memories, adding photos and videos and marking special occasions with a virtual candle.

Setting up your Timeless Tribute Fund is really straightforward – simply visit [timelesstributefunds.org.uk](http://timelesstributefunds.org.uk). For more information you can contact the Fundraising team at [memories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:memories@sthelena.org.uk) or call us on 01206 931 468.

### Memory Tree

St Helena's Memory Tree, located at The Hospice, provides a stunning tribute to your loved one, whether they were cared for at The Hospice, or not. The tree is one of the first things you see when you walk in and symbolises the many memories of people whose names are on the leaves. The beautiful handmade sculpture features a hand-carved oak trunk and branches, with 500 bronze, silver and gold leaves which can be engraved with the name of your loved one in return for a donation to St Helena and will remain on the tree for as long as you wish. You are welcome to visit The Hospice at any time to see your leaf and can then spend time in the multi-faith chapel, a tranquil place for quiet contemplation, reflection and to remember.

### Services and Appeals

For some, attending a service can be a really important part of the remembrance process, as it means taking time out to reflect and remember a loved one. We have found that they are a real comfort to families and friends.



The services held by St Helena are informal and provide an opportunity to get together with others and celebrate your loved ones at a special time. The appeals also enable you to support St Helena by making a donation in-memory of your loved one.

To be kept informed of forthcoming appeals and services, please contact the Fundraising team on [memories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:memories@sthelena.org.uk) or call 01206 931 468.

### Taking part in an event or challenge

We hold a number of local events throughout the year with many people taking part with friends and family and dedicating their participation to the memory of someone special.

Some people like to take on a bigger challenge like cycling from London to Paris or climbing Mount Kilimanjaro for example. We organise some challenges ourselves and have spaces in other big events, such as the London Marathon, that you can sign up to and raise sponsorship for St Helena. Raising money for St Helena in-memory of someone special can be extremely rewarding and will enable us to continue to provide our care to local people.

### Sponsor a Nurse

By making a regular donation you will ensure that St Helena can continue to be here for everyone who needs us, now and in the future.

Our services run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year across North Essex and we employ over 100 nurses who work at The Hospice and out in your community, providing vital care for patients and their families who need comfort, care and advice.

To set up a direct debit or for more information, visit [sthelena.org.uk/nurse](http://sthelena.org.uk/nurse) or contact the Fundraising team on [memories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:memories@sthelena.org.uk) or call on 01206 931 468.

### Share your story

Stories about people's personal experiences of St Helena's services can help to reassure other people who may be apprehensive being cared for by a hospice, and stories help our fundraising activities as they explain how we support local people. If you would like to share your story, please contact Marketing on [stories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:stories@sthelena.org.uk) or call 01206 931 464.

However you decide to honour your loved one, the Fundraising team will be with you every step of the way to provide support. If you have any questions about any of these ways to remember someone special, or just want to talk through your own ideas then you can contact a member of the Fundraising team on [memories@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:memories@sthelena.org.uk) or call them on 01206 931 468.



## Other ways to support St Helena

Most of our funding comes from our local community and not from the NHS or government. We rely heavily on the help and generosity of our fundraisers, donors and volunteers. Without them we wouldn't be here.

### St Helena House Clearance service

Clearing the home of someone you love after their death can be a very emotional and distressing experience. We are here to help.

Our House Clearance service is undertaken by our trained, professional staff and volunteers who offer a quality service at competitive prices.

Our dedicated team will clear property of any size with every property receiving the same level of care and respect. The service is tailored to your needs and you can have as much or as little taken away as you wish.

Please note this is a chargeable service. Our House Clearance team will assess your property on an individual basis and provide a personal quote based on the level of clearance you require.

The fee will depend on the size of the property, amount of items for removal, and the proportion of saleable items.

The charge for this service covers some of our costs, including the disposal of unsalable items. Any profit from items sold within our shops or online, as well



as the income from recycling, goes directly to help local people face incurable illness and bereavement.

We are happy to liaise with a third party – solicitors and estate agents – and can collect keys from them in order to view and clear properties.

For a free, no obligation quote, please call 01206 890 165 or email [houseclearances@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:houseclearances@sthelena.org.uk)

#### **Make a donation**

You can donate online at [sthelena.org.uk](http://sthelena.org.uk) or over the phone by contacting our Fundraising team on 01206 931 468.

#### **Leave a gift in your will**

We are able to support 1 in 5 of the people we do thanks to someone leaving us a gift in their will. Making a will can allow you to ensure your affairs are in order, final wishes are met, and your loved ones are looked after in the future. For more information please contact [giftsinwills@sthelena.org.uk](mailto:giftsinwills@sthelena.org.uk) or call our Fundraising team on 01206 931 468.

## **About St Helena**

We help local people face incurable illness, supporting them and their families, friends and carers. We also support children and adults who are facing bereavement, regardless of cause of death. We reach out to members of our community, helping them make their own choices and live with dignity. By focusing on their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, we aim to bring comfort and relief to all those who need it, offering the people of North Essex individual care and total support, regardless of their diagnosis or personal circumstances.

At St Helena we all share a common goal: to be here for everyone who needs us, helping life to go on in the face of dying, death and bereavement.







Bereavement Support: 01206 984 274

Chaplaincy team: 01206 845 566

The Hospice: 01206 845 566

Fundraising: 01206 931 468

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[sthelena.org.uk](https://sthelena.org.uk) [StHelenaHospice](https://www.facebook.com/StHelenaHospice) [@sthelenahospice](https://twitter.com/sthelenahospice)

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