

Dealing with Death and Dying Checklist and Support for Managers and Colleagues

Overall purpose

The checklist for managers and colleagues aims to provide information in the following circumstances:

- Where colleagues may be dealing with a prognosis of limited life expectancy or terminal illness, and the effect that this may have on them as individuals wanting to remain at work for as long as they feel able to, both safely and in a supportive environment.
- Where staff may be affected by the death of a colleague, family member or close friend.
- Where bereavement may occur involving a member of staff.

In all the above circumstances, compassionate conversations need to take place, as well as signposting to internal and external resources which may help support colleagues. Leaders are encouraged to have open and supportive conversations, to express empathy and practical support to our colleagues, and in the event of bereavement, time off work to attend a funeral.

All colleagues should familiarise themselves with the Special Leave Guidance and the bereavement leave and pay available.

Foreword by Alison Thorpe, Chaplaincy Manager

"In order to fully care for our colleagues, we need to recognise that grief is as individual as the relationship that they had with the person who's died. Everyone experiences significant losses differently; and there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. The word 'grief' comes from the Latin root 'gravis' which means to make heavy or to burden and so often it is the heavy burden of dealing with the practicalities, combined with the myriad of emotional, physical and psychological effects that overwhelm us at a time of loss. This new guidance should ensure that a colleague's responsibility to work is never another practical burden, but rather a source of caring, sustaining support.

For some colleagues, coming back to work can be a positive part of their grieving process, as a return to routine and normality may be beneficial, accepting that there may need to be allowances and adjustments, as they find their new identity and new way of being. In our diverse workforce, there may also be practicalities and difficulties that might not be familiar to us, including geographical considerations and non-traditional family definitions. There may be considerations around different cultures or different faith needs and customs. The bereaved individual will be the expert on what these may be, but chaplaincy services can also provide advice and support on different faith traditions.”

Death of a relative, close friend or significant other

When a colleague advises they are going through bereavement, it may be helpful to consider the following areas:

- Consideration should be given to alternative ways of notification and contact if the death is particularly traumatic or sudden, and a family member may call on behalf of the colleague.
- Colleagues are not expected to come in to work on the day they report bereavement.
- It should be recognised that a colleague may be upset and not able to talk for long.
- Establish relationship of the person who has passed.
- Acknowledge the colleague's loss.
- Understand the responsibility the colleague has in relation to the funeral and any other arrangements e.g. the estate or accommodation, liaison with the coroner.
- Establish any travel arrangements should the person who has passed on, not live nearby, e.g. a colleague may need to travel abroad to attend a funeral or a religious ceremony.
- Understand what support would be helpful for the colleague – considering that situations can differ, and people grieve differently.
- Discuss what if anything the individual would like the wider team or colleagues to know and if they wish to be contacted by their colleague.
- Are there any faith or cultural practices e.g., travel or timeframe for burial, which may require extra support and time off. The Chaplaincy service can provide multi-faith support and advice should this be helpful.

Time Away and Return:

- Agree any arrangements for keeping in touch (how and how often) during any times away from the workplace.
- Discussion about the flexible working they may need and how this might work in practice, eg adjusted working pattern.
- Support following return to work depending on the circumstances, this could include a phased return, flexible working, reasonable adjustments, adjusted duties or temporary alternative duties.

- Discussion about longer term support around significant anniversaries or birthday - it may be helpful to agree leave or adjusted working pattern during these times.
- Ongoing support through regular and compassionate conversations as everyone's experience of grief will be different.

Death of a colleague

The death of a colleague can affect others in the wider team and the actions and any details need to be shared in an empathetic way. Further advice can be sought from the People Services Support Team, HR Business Partners and the Occupational Health Team.

- Consider how the family or next of kin would prefer the news to be shared.
- Signpost colleagues to support services where appropriate.
- Risk assess colleagues in the wider team who may be affected by the bereavement and explore additional support for example Occupational Health and the Chaplaincy service.
- Think about the support you may need as the leader.
- Communicate with colleagues how they can give condolences.
- Share details of the funeral / ceremony if colleagues have been invited.
- Offer ongoing support through regular catch ups with colleagues in a compassionate way.
- Occupational Health and the Chaplain service can offer support to the wider team and support colleagues to talk through the bereavement.
- HR Business Partner can support with a death in service checklist with additional considerations.
- Consider how the wider team would like to honour the colleague who has passed, e.g. a fundraising event, a book of remembrance or a remembrance service to share stories and remember the colleague who has passed, or a memorial leaf or flower at the garden of remembrance.
- Remember significant dates relating to the colleague who has passed and signpost the wider team to the support available.
- Where the family give consent, leaders can speak with the communications team too, and a tribute shared with the wider Trust, along with a minute's silence to be arranged.

Life Limiting/Terminal Illness

Colleagues who become increasingly unable to remain at work as a result of a prognosis of limited life expectancy or terminal illness, may require different types support from a number of People Services colleagues as their illness progresses.

- The Trust Pensions Team are able to support colleagues with a limited life expectancy to ensure they can make an informed decision about how they want to use their pension benefits.
- Where the staff member may have life expectancy of one year or less, the line manager and People Services Support Team should contact the pensions team to clarify whether or not the staff member has NHS pension membership, as life and family benefits may be payable.
- The Trust Pensions Team are able to support colleagues with a limited life expectancy/terminal illness to ensure they can make an informed decision about how they want to use their pension benefits. It is important to clarify if in some cases a one-off lump sum payment is preferable to serious health payments.

Death In Service

- Where a member of staff dies whilst still in the service of the Trust, a death in service notification form should be completed by the line manager, HRBP or People Services Support Team. This is then forwarded to the pensions team who complete the final sections. The form is then submitted by the Trust pension team to NHS Pensions bereavementreferrals@nhsbsa.nhs.uk.
- After NHS pensions receive the form, they will contact the family and any nominees who may be entitled to benefits and send them the appropriate paperwork.
- The HRBP Informs the Communications Team who usually work with the area to prepare a tribute and a letter of condolence from the Trust which the CEO signs.
- Information such as age, length of service at the Trust, role, any personal details deemed appropriate (eg married/partner, children, hobbies) is gathered from colleagues to profile the kind of person the deceased colleague was. This includes reflections around the staff member, reminisces.
- A tribute will be prepared and shared on Neti as well as by internal email, along with an invitation to attend a minute's silence to pay their respects. This will also be extended to the family.
- The communications team also share the draft tribute with the family who sign off the message.

Leader and People Services Support

There are various aspects of support that leaders can explore with the colleague dealing with a life limiting or terminal illness, and further advice should be sought from the People Services Support Team who are able to support in the following ways:

- Support the colleague to consider the impact of a life limiting or terminal illness on their health and wellbeing as well being able to continue working safely.
- Discuss and agree time off to adjust to their changed circumstances and consider their future.
- Discuss flexible working options they may need, and how this might work in practice, eg adjusted working pattern.
- Signpost to internal and external support and resources where appropriate such as the pensions team, and act as a point of liaison where needed to ensure timely and informed decisions can be made.
- Provide ongoing support through regular and compassionate conversations.
- Work with leaders to consider the impact on the wider team as illness may trigger traumatic feelings.

Internal sources of information and support for leaders and colleagues:-

There are a number of inhouse support options that all colleagues are able to access when they experience a bereavement or have a life limiting illness:

Employee Assistance Programme, Health Assured, on 0800 028 0199. Please be assured that any contact with them will be treated in the strictest of confidence

Occupational Health

Talk to an Occupational Health professional about your health and wellbeing, they can provide advice on phased return and workplace adjustments and signpost to support services
 Telephone: 01332 254 747
 Email: uhdb.occhealth@nhs.net

Visit UHDB policies, guidance, and internal wellbeing pages

- Special Leave guidance
- Flexible Working Policy
- Health, Wellbeing and Attendance Policy and Guidance

People Services Support

Chaplaincy

Remembrance Gardens

Talk to People Services or Divisional HR Business Partners as they can offer advice and support-

People Services Support Team: 01283 511511 ext 5725.

Advisory Team: 01332 786017 or email uhdb.hradvicehub@nhs.net

Chaplaincy services can offer support to colleagues and teams. This support is for any faith and cultural practice.

Email: dhft.chaplaincyrdh@nhs.net and uhdb.chaplaincyqhb@nhs.net

Bereavement Service

There is a designated Bereavement service providing a sensitive and empathetic approach to next of kin and relatives at a time of loss

[Bereavement services | z UHDB Intranet](#)

Colleagues can have a ceramic flower or leaf as a tribute to remember their colleague

[Remembrance Gardens | z UHDB Intranet](#)

Wellbeing Champions and Wellbeing team

You can contact a wellbeing champion who can signpost to support services

[Health, Safety and Wellbeing | z UHDB Intranet](#)

Your Trade union representative (Staffside)

Trade unions can offer support and advice to colleagues

[Trade Unions | z UHDB Intranet](#)

Communications team

Communications can support with a Trustwide tribute and support to arrange a silence

[News and Communications | z UHDB Intranet](#)

External sources of information and wider support for all colleagues:-

There are various charities and organisations that offer bereavement, suicide and mental health wellbeing support, some of which are listed below. Colleagues can also access support by contacting their GP practice.

Cruse Bereavement Support

Offers support, advice and information when someone dies

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
 call: 0808 808 1677

Child Bereavement UK

A charity offering support when a child dies, or person up to the age of 25, including resources to explain bereavement to a child and support groups for families, parents and young people.

Bereavement UK

A hub for bereavement support and information

<http://www.bereavement.co.uk/>

Marie Curie

End of life charity. Provides a free support line and information and support on all aspects of death and bereavement

<https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support>

call: 0800 090 2309

Mind

Provides support and advice around mental health wellbeing

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Stay Alive by charity Grassroots

Suicide support mental health app. You can download this app on your phone.

Sue Ryder Online Bereavement Support

Provides free information and resources, easy to access on a phone, tablet, or computer

<https://www.sueryder.org/>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

Sands

Stillbirth and neonatal death charity. Provides bereavement support services.

<https://www.sands.org.uk/>

Call: 0808 164 3332

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Peer to peer support to all those over the age of 18 impacted by suicide loss

<https://uksobs.org/>

National helpline: 0300 111 5065

Samaritans

Suicide bereavement services including support groups for people bereaved by suicide Available 24/7, call: 116 123, email:

jo@samaritans.org

NHS bereavement guide

'Our NHS People, understanding different bereavement practices and how our colleagues may experience grief'

[NHS England » Our NHS People:](#)

[Understanding different bereavement practices and how our colleagues may experience grief](#)

Switchboard Grief Encounters

A peer support group for LGBTQ people who have experienced a bereavement

<https://www.switchboard.org.uk/what-we-do/grief-encounters/>

Bereavement support line

A free national confidential bereavement support line, operated by Hospice UK, available 8:00am – 8:00pm, 7 days a week.

Call: 0300 303 4434

UK Government website

For practical guidance on what to do when a loved one has passed visit the government pages

Public Health England

'Help is at Hand' support after someone may have died by suicide – a bereavement booklet [You are not alone: Help is at Hand for anyone bereaved by suicide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)