



Bereavement Pack

Advice and support following
the death of a loved one



Condolences

The Highland Hospice team would like to offer our condolences to you on your recent bereavement.

We know that the death of someone special can be difficult for those involved. This booklet is not intended to cover everything, but it offers guidance on some of the practical matters you may need to address. Some decisions may need to be made quite soon, when you understandably will have other things on your mind.



Contents

Page 2 – Condolences

Page 3 & 4 – Looking after yourself

Page 5 & 6 – Registering a death

Page 7 & 8 – Arranging a funeral

Page 9 & 10 – Checklist for actions to take following a death

Page 11 – Support from Highland Hospice

Self-help in bereavement

When someone close to us dies, life can feel profoundly different. You may feel numbed by what has happened or kept occupied by all the practicalities that need to be attended to. After a while, everyone else's life can seem to return to normal and you may feel left behind, wondering how you can go on. Grief can feel all-consuming and over time it is important to allow yourself permission to grow around your grief.

Growing Around Grief

Lois Tonkin
whatsyourgrief.com



[Short Animated Film That Explains Bereavement](#)

It is important to remember that there is no “right way” to grieve and no timetable for grief. Be gentle with yourself and take things at your own pace.



Those around you

Family dynamics at times of bereavement can be difficult to navigate. You are dealing with the death of the same person, but you all grieve in your own way. However, family can be a great source of support to talk and share memories.

Speaking to children and young people can be difficult, especially if it's the first time. Although it can be hard, being open, honest and answering questions as best you can, can support a natural grief process.

Looking after yourself

Look after your physical needs – Get plenty of rest and remember to eat and drink properly.

Permission to feel – Your feelings may change quickly and unexpectedly. Anger, guilt, sadness and relief are all perfectly natural emotions. Learning to accept how you are feeling can be a helpful first response.

Express yourself – This could mean talking with someone you trust or keeping a journal of your thoughts and feelings. These actions can help to process emotions.

Keep small routines – Keeping regular mealtimes or daily walks can bring structure and stability.

Avoid numbing the pain – Alcohol or substances may give short relief, but things won't feel better once the effect has worn off.

Stay connected – Remembering your person through rituals, photos or visits to special places can help.

Be patient – Grief can take longer than expected.

When to seek extra help

Consider talking to your GP if distressing thoughts or strong physical symptoms continue for many months.

Registering a death

Before a burial or cremation can take place, a death must be registered at a Registry Office. This must be done within 8 days of the death. All deaths that happen in Scotland must be registered in Scotland.

- **If the death occurs at Highland Hospice, staff will guide you through the medical certificate and next steps.**
- **If the death occurs at home, contact the GP to confirm the death. If it happens outside normal GP hours, call NHS24 on 111. The attending doctor will provide the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and advise on registering the death.**

Who can register a death

The death can be registered by:

- **A relative (spouse, civil partner, blood relative, or relative by marriage)**
- **Someone present at the death**
- **The person's executor or legal representative**
- **The occupier of the premises where the death took place**

If none of the above apply, anyone with the necessary information can register.

What to take

Bring what you can - don't worry if not everything is available. The Registrar can help.

- **Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (if not already sent)**
- **Birth certificate of the person who has died**
- **Marriage or civil partnership certificate (if relevant)**
- **NHS medical card (if available)**
- **Any paperwork about pensions, benefits or allowances**

You will also be asked for:

The person's full name, address, occupation, date and country of birth, and marital status.

What you will receive

The Registrar will give you:

- **Form 14 (Certificate of Registration of Death) - your funeral director needs this before the funeral can go ahead**
- **Form 334/SI – for National Insurance and benefits**

Both are free. Extra copies can be purchased for a small fee.

Please note that registrars usually work by appointment only. Phone or email in advance to arrange a time.

For more information on registering a death visit [Register a death - mygov.scot](https://mygov.scot) and then select your council area from the drop-down menu.

If further support is required, our chaplain and/or social work team can help you navigate this process.



Arranging a funeral

When someone dies, you always have choices about what happens next. Arranging a funeral can feel daunting at a time when emotions are already running high. Many families tell us it helps to start by thinking about what their person may have wanted. Sometimes wishes are written in a will, set out in a letter of wishes, or planned in advance through a funeral plan. If no clear instructions were left, the executor of the will or the nearest relative will usually decide whether the funeral is a burial or cremation, and the type of service to be held. Try to keep your person at the heart of any choices you make and remember you are doing your best in very difficult circumstances.

Choosing a funeral director

While it is not a legal requirement to use a funeral director, many people choose to do so. Costs can vary, so it is worth asking for a written estimate before making decisions. Some funeral directors also publish clear pricing on their websites. While we cannot recommend particular providers, it can be reassuring to choose a director who is a member of one of the following professional associations:

National Association of Funeral Directors – www.nafd.org.uk

Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors – www.saif.org.uk

Arranging the funeral yourself

Some people prefer to organise a funeral themselves, such as arranging a direct cremation. If you are thinking about this option, your local council can provide guidance through their bereavement services pages:

[Highland Council – Burials and Cremations](#)

[Argyll & Bute Council – Cemeteries and Burial Grounds](#)

[Pushing up the Daisies | Bringing Death Home](#)

Paying for a funeral

Funerals can be costly, and this may add to the stress of arranging them. Funeral directors usually ask for a deposit (often around £1,000), but there are different ways funeral expenses can be met:

- **By you or another family member**
- **From the deceased's estate (funeral costs take priority over other debts, and banks can release funds directly)**
- **Through life insurance or pension benefits**
- **From a pre-paid funeral plan arranged by the deceased**

If you are on a low income, you may be eligible for the Scottish Funeral Support Payment, available through Social Security Scotland. More details, including how to apply, can be found at: mygov.scot/funeral-support-payment

In some circumstances, hospice family support teams may also be able to help you access grants, particularly if your person's profession is linked to a charitable fund.

For ways to reduce your funerals costs visit: [Caledonia Funeral Aid](#)



Checklist for actions to take following a death

After a death, there are several practical matters that may need to be addressed in the days and weeks ahead.

Tell Us Once:

Tell Us Once is a service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go, including HMRC, DWP (Benefits), the Passport Office, DVLA, the local council, and some public sector pension schemes.

- **A registrar will explain the service when you register the death.**
- **You can use the service online or by phone with the reference number provided by the registrar.**
- **For more information, visit the UK Government website and search for “Tell Us Once”.**

Immediate (as soon as possible)

Doctor	Contact immediately if the death is at home
Funeral Director	
Registrar	Legal requirement to authorise the funeral and provide certificates
Bank(s)	You will need a copy of the death certificate
Cancel any appointments	Including medical and outpatient appointments
Credit card companies	You will need death certificate
Family, friends & neighbours	Especially to notify funeral arrangements. Can anyone help do this?
GP and other healthcare agencies	
Home care agency	
HP repayments	You will need the death certificate
Insurance (home, car and other)	To keep valid, including joint policy. NB if you are a named driver
Landlord or Mortgage provider	
Minister / priest / place of worship	Especially if they are to conduct/attend the funeral
Personal/work pension provider(s)	
Social services & volunteers	Meals provision, volunteer transport, volunteer visitor, etc.
Solicitor and the will	Especially if you are the executor. NB to check for funeral wishes
Work colleagues and employer	

Urgent (as soon as you can)

Accountant (if applicable)	
Blue Badge	
Council Tax office	
Customer and clients (if applicable)	
Dentist	
Equipment loan	You will need to return loaned equipment (may be collected)
Pharmacist	You will need to return unused medicines
Utility companies	Electricity, gas, TV licence, internet, telephone

Important but less urgent

Library membership	More urgent if you need to return books or DVDs
Other savings, bonds and shares	You will need the death certificate for each of these
Season tickets and clubs	You will need to cancel membership and return any equipment
Concessionary travel cards	

Further guidance:

For detailed advice on other practical matters after a death, you can download the Scottish Government guide [What to do after a death in Scotland - gov.scot](#) from the Scottish Government website or request a printed copy from your local council or library.

Support from Highland Hospice

If you find it hard to talk to friends and family, it is ok to reach out for professional support. Highland Hospice offers bereavement support for anyone affected by the death of a significant person in their life. Our trained team can listen, provide guidance, and support you in navigating this difficult time.

Adult Bereavement Support:

Telephone: 07709 717586

Email: bereavement@highlandhospice.org.uk

Specialist Child and Young Person Bereavement Support (Crocus Highland):

Telephone: 01463 714568

Email: crocushighland@highlandhospice.org.uk

