

Coping with bereavement

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For more information about support for families

You can search our online directory for local services for families and Ofsted registered childcare.

You can also view our other factsheets that contain a wide range of local and national information about the things that matter to families.

Visit: www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk

Do you need some extra help?

You can call us to speak to a Navigator on 01273 293545. Our helpline is open Monday to Friday 9.00am-4.30pm. You can also email us with your enquiry familyhubs@brighton-hove.gov.uk

The information included in this factsheet was correct to the best of our knowledge at March 2023. For the most up to date information, please contact the services listed directly.

About this factsheet

The death of someone close can feel overwhelming, you may feel a mixture of emotions. It is important to know that there is no standard way of experiencing loss and no right way to grieve. It is completely normal to feel shock, guilt, anger, relief, despair and many other different emotions.

There are practical things that need to be undertaken at this very difficult time in people's lives and this factsheet outlines the key steps to take. We have also included some information about where you can go for help and support and a brief guide to the grieving process.

What you need to do as soon as possible after someone dies

Tell Us Once

Tell Us Once is a service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. It notifies government departments and most local authority services. The registrar would normally tell people about it when they register the death but knowing about it could relieve some of the stress in someone whose been bereaved.

[What to do after someone dies: Tell Us Once - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Bereavement Advice Centre

There are many practical matters to attend to when someone dies the Bereavement Advice Centre supports and advises people on what they need to do after death.

[Bereavement Advice Centre | Free Helpline | Freephone 0800 634 9494](http://www.bereavementadvicecentre.org)

Get a medical certificate

You will be able to get this from your GP or a hospital doctor. You will need this to register the death.

Register the death

You should register the death within 5 days. You can go to any register office, but if you go to the one in the area that the person died, you will be given the documents you need for the funeral at the time of your visit.

The register office in Brighton & Hove is on the Ground Floor of Brighton Town Hall in Bartholomew Square, BN1 1 JA. Tel: **01273 292016**. Email register.office@brighton-hove.gov.uk

A relative should register the death. If a relative is unable to do this, another person can if they:

- were there at the time of death
- were the person who found the body
- are the person in charge of the body

- are in charge of making funeral arrangements

What you need to do

Take the medical certificate showing the cause of death (signed by a doctor) with you.

If available (but don't worry if not), also take the person's:

- birth certificate
- Council Tax bill
- driving license
- marriage or civil partnership certificate
- NHS medical card
- passport
- proof of address (e.g utility bill)

You should also take supporting documents that show **your** name and address (e.g a utility bill) but you can still register a death without them.

Arranging a funeral

Most people use a funeral director to arrange a funeral, but you can also do this yourself.

Funeral directors

You can search for a Funeral Director online at The National Association of Funeral Directors <http://nafd.org.uk> and the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors <http://saif.org.uk> .

Arranging the funeral, yourself

Contact the Bereavement Services Team at Brighton & Hove City Council **on 01273 604020**, or email woodvale@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Help with funeral costs

You may get a Funeral Expenses Payment if you are on a low income and need help to pay for a funeral that you are arranging. How much you get depends on your circumstances and you must pay back the Funeral Expenses Payment if you receive money from the deceased's estate.

The estate includes any money or property they had but not a house or personal items left to a widow, widower or surviving civil partner.

To get a Funeral Expenses Payment you or your partner must get one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- The disability or severe disability element of Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

You must also be one of the following:

- the partner of the deceased when they died
- a close relative or close friend of the deceased
- the parent of a baby stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy
- the parent or person responsible for a deceased child who was under 16 (or under 20 and in approved education or training)

What you will get

Depending on your circumstances, the Funeral Expenses Payment can help pay for:

- burial fees and exclusive rights to burial in a particular plot
- cremation fees, including the cost of the doctor's certificate
- up to £700 for funeral expenses, such as funeral director's fees, flowers, or the coffin
- the cost of moving the body within the UK, if it is being moved more than 50 miles
- death certificates or other documents

Making a claim

You must apply within 3 months of the funeral. You can make a claim before the funeral if you have got an invoice from the funeral director. You cannot make a claim if you've only been given an estimate.

If you get Universal Credit, you will not get a decision on your claim until after your next payment.

How to claim

Claim by phone by calling the Bereavement Service Helpline on **0800 731 0469**, Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm. The adviser will also be able to tell you about any other bereavement benefits you may be entitled to.

Legal matters

Grant of Representation (Probate)

This gives you the legal right to deal with the deceased person's property, money, and possessions (their estate). You can apply for a Grant of Representation yourself or use a solicitor. You will need to check first to see if there is a will as this normally states who organises the estate. If there is no will, then the next of kin can apply. Once your application is approved, you will need to:

- Pay any inheritance tax that is due
- Collect the estate's assets, for example money from the sale of the deceased's property
- Pay any debts, for example utility bills
- Give any property, money or possessions to the people who are entitled to it (beneficiaries)

You can find out more and complete the application form at www.gov.uk or call the Probate and Inheritance Tax helpline on **0300 123 1072**.

Parental Responsibility

Parental Responsibility (PR) is defined in the Children Act 1989 (CA 89) as all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities, and authorities which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and the child's property.

In UK law, all mothers and most fathers have legal rights and responsibilities as a parent – this is known as 'parental responsibility'. A mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child from birth. A father usually has parental responsibility if he is:

- married to the child's mother
- listed on the birth certificate (after a certain date, depending on which part of the UK the child was born in)

If the parent who has parental responsibility dies, unmarried partners, civil partners and non-civil partners can also acquire 'parental responsibility'. For guidance about this, please see the following website: www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities/who-has-parental-responsibility or consult a solicitor.

Finances and benefits

Help in a crisis

If you are in immediate financial hardship, the Family Hubs can signpost you to services that may be able to help, for example foodbanks and crisis loans. Call **01273 293545** or email familyhubs@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Bereavement Support Payment (formerly Bereavement Allowance and Widows Pension)

You may be able to get Bereavement Support Payment if your husband, wife, or civil partner died on or after 6th April 2017.

You could be eligible if your partner either:

- Paid National Insurance Contributions for at least 25 weeks
- Died because of an accident at work or a disease caused by work

When they died you must have been:

- Under State Pension age
- Living in the UK or a country that pays bereavement benefits

What you will get

- You will get a larger first payment followed by up to 18 monthly payments. The amount depends on your circumstances.

If you have children aged under 20 in full time education, you will get a first payment of £3,500 followed by a monthly payment of £350. If you do not have children under 20 in full time education, you will get a first payment of £2,500, followed by a monthly payment of £100.

You must claim within three months of your husband, wife, or civil partner's death to get the full amount.

If you get benefits, Bereavement Support Payment will not affect your benefits for a year after your first payment. After a year any payment you have left over could affect the amount of benefits, you're eligible for.

How to claim

You can download a Bereavement Support Payment pack from www.gov.uk or call the Bereavement Service Helpline on **0800 731 0469**.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Contact the Bereavement Service to cancel the deceased person's benefits and entitlements including their state pension. They will also check whether you are entitled to any benefits and whether you are eligible for help with funeral costs. Telephone: **0800 731 0469**.

Child Benefit

Contact the Child Benefit Office on **0300 200 3100** if a child or parent dies. You need to do this within eight weeks of the death.

Tax Credits

Contact the Tax Credit Helpline on **0345 300 3900** if your partner or a child you are responsible for dies. You need to do this within one month of the death.

HMRC

If the person who died was self-employed, you will need to contact the HMRC. They will work out whether the right amount of tax has been paid by the deceased. Telephone: **0300 200 3310**.

What to do if a child or baby dies

Child Benefit

You should tell the Child Benefit Office as soon as possible after the death. Child Benefit payments will usually carry on for 8 weeks after a child's death. You may still be able to claim Child Benefit if your child died before you made a claim.

If a newborn baby dies

You are entitled to up to 8 weeks of Child Benefit if you claim within 3 months of the death.

If a child is stillborn

You cannot claim Child Benefit if the child is stillborn.

Call the Child Benefit helpline on 0300 200 3100

Tax credits

If you are claiming tax credits and your child dies, your payments may change. You will need to tell the Tax Credit Office within one month of the death. If you do not, you might:

- have to pay back overpayments
- not get all the money you are owed

You can continue to get tax credits for up to 8 weeks following the death.

If the child died before you claimed tax credits, you can still claim (unless the child was stillborn).

Call the Tax Credits Helpline on **0345 300 3900**

Sure Start Maternity Grant

You can still get the grant if you qualify. You must make a claim within 3 months of the birth.

Print out and fill in the Sure Start Maternity Grant form at www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant. A health professional (such as a doctor or midwife) must also sign your claim form. You can also call the Sure Start Maternity Grant Helpline on **0800 169 0140**.

Maternity and paternity leave and pay

You will still qualify for leave and pay if your baby:

- is stillborn after the start of the 24th week of pregnancy

Step by step checklist

Registering the death	Done
Contact "Tell Us Once", which notifies government departments and most local authority services. The registrar would normally tell people about it when they register the death but knowing about it could relieve some of the stress in someone whose been bereaved.	
Contact the GP or hospital about obtaining the Medical Certificate for Cause of Death OR contact the coroner's office to find out when you can register the death	
Contact the Registrar to make an appointment to register the death. In Brighton & Hove call 01273 292016, or visit Brighton Town Hall, Bartholomew Square BN1 1 JA	

Arranging the funeral	Done
Contact a funeral director to discuss arrangements and your place of worship if appropriate	
If you need financial help towards the cost of the funeral see page 3	

Who you need to inform	Done
Employer, education, or childcare provider	
Any health professionals the deceased was in contact with	
Agencies providing care such as social services, home carers	

Financial organisations	Done
Banks, building societies, national savings	
Insurance companies, for example life, buildings, medical, car	
Pension providers	
Any other financial institutions so that any accounts solely in the deceased's name can be frozen	

The home and utilities	Done
Mortgage provider, landlord, local authority housing department or housing association	
Buildings and property insurance companies, to ensure continued cover, especially if	

the house is left unoccupied	
Utility companies (electric, gas, water, telephone, internet, cable TV) and arrange transfer of account details if necessary	

Government offices	Done
Pensions Service or Jobcentre Plus to cancel any benefits to the deceased or their carer	
Inland Revenue to deal with tax (if applicable)	
Child Benefits and Tax Credits	
Local Council for housing benefit, council tax, electoral register, bus pass, disabled parking permits,	
The DVLA and the insurance company of the deceased owned a car or held a driving licence	
The Passport Agency	

Organisations offering support

Support for children and young people

Talking to your child's school or childcare provider

You should let your child's school or childcare provider know as soon as possible so that they can offer support to your child and let other children know if appropriate. Your child may also be able to access counselling and other support through their school.

Winston's Wish

Winston's Wish supports families, in particular bereaved children, and teenagers. There is a helpful resource on their website for young people called *Help 2 Make Sense*. www.winstonswish.org. They also have a range of publications that they can send out.

They have a new headquarters based in Hove and can offer 121 support and a drop in for children, young people, and their parents/carers on the first Saturday of every month between 10am-2pm.

Telephone: **08088 020 021**.

Early Childhood Project

The Project is a registered charity based in Brighton & Hove that offers bereavement support. They provide age appropriate materials covering all the issues around bereavement and how to support children at this upsetting time. Visit www.ecpuk.org, call **01273 294105**

E-motion

E-motion is a free online counselling service, where young people aged 11-25 will be put in touch with an online counsellor who will support them via email. <https://www.e-motion.org.uk/>

Young People's Centre

The centre offers low cost counselling sessions for young people aged 11-25 in Brighton & Hove. Call to have an initial chat about face to face counselling on **01273 887886**, or email counselling.ypc@impact-initiatives.org.uk

Forward Facing

Forward Facing is a registered charity which aims to give children and young people with long term or life-threatening conditions, or who have experienced bereavement the opportunity to take part in a range of fun activities. Visit www.forwardfacing.co.uk, or call **07824 325716**.

Support for when a baby or child dies

Still birth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)

SANDS supports anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby before, during or shortly after birth. Their helpline is open Monday – Friday 9.30am - 5.30pm and Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6pm – 10pm. Tel: **0808 1643332**. www.sands.org.uk

The Miscarriage Association

Provides support and information to anyone affected by miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, or molar pregnancy. Their pregnancy loss helpline is open Monday to Friday from 9am – 4pm.

Telephone: **01924 200799**. <https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/>

Child Bereavement UK

Child Bereavement UK supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement. They have lots of useful resources on their website as well as a telephone helpline **0800 028 8840** where you can book one to one support sessions over the phone. www.childbereavement.org.uk

Child Death Helpline

The freephone helpline offers support to anyone affected by the death of a child of any age, under any circumstances, however recent or long ago.

The helpline is open Monday to Sunday 7pm to 10pm – Monday, Thursday and Friday 10am to 1pm - Tuesday and Wednesday 1pm– 4pm.

Mobile freephone: **0800 800 6019**. Landline freephone: **0800 282 986**. www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a charitable organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents dedicated to the support and care of other similarly bereaved family members who have suffered the death of a child or children of any age and from any cause. They offer telephone, online and face to face support. Call the helpline which is open 365 days a year on **0345 123 2304**, or email helpline@tcf.org.uk www.tcf.org.uk

Other organisations offering support

CRUSE

Cruse is a national charity that offers telephone, online and face to face support to children, young people and adults. They have a specialist website and helpline for children and young people <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> Their general helpline can be reached on **0808 808 1677** Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 5.00pm.

The Samaritans

The Samaritans helpline is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and will offer support and time to talk things through whatever you are going through. Telephone **116 123**.

Widowed and Young (WAY)

WAY is a national charity for men and women aged 50 or under when their partner died. It is a peer-to-peer support group run by a network of volunteers who have been bereaved at a young age themselves. www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Survivors of Bereavement by suicide (SOBS)

Offers support and aims to overcome the isolation of people aged over 18 who have been bereaved by suicide. SOBS offers help over their helpline, email and runs support groups. Tel: **0300 111 5065**, or visit <https://uksobs.org/>

Facing the Future – for anyone bereaved by suicide

Facing the Future offer support groups in Brighton & Hove where you can meet others bereaved by suicide and share your experiences and feelings.

Call **0207 7580667** or visit <https://www.facingthefuturegroups.org/>

Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan can offer support, information, and practical advice if someone close to you has died of cancer. Call their support line on **0808 808 0000**, Monday to Friday 9am – 8pm

A brief guide to coping with grief

Is what I'm feeling normal?

When someone you love dies, your feelings will be influenced by many different things. This might include your relationship with the person, what happened in the lead up to their death and the support

around you. Your feelings are also likely to be influenced by your personality, your cultural background, and any religious beliefs you might have. It is important to know that what is normal is different for each person.

These are some of the different reactions that people may have, there are many others, and your experience may be different. The important thing is to accept that is ok to have these feelings. Grieving is a normal, healthy process that we all try to learn to live with when someone we love dies.

Shock

You might have thought you were prepared, because the person's death was expected or because you have previously lost someone you love. But whatever the circumstances, it is very common to feel an initial sense of shock.

Numbness

It might feel like you are living in a fog for the first six months or so after the person you care about has died. You may feel numb or worry because you have not cried. Feeling numb is one of the things that helps us to cope with very intense and distressing emotions. Gradually over time, the sense of numbness will go, and you will start to emerge from the fog.

Feeling overwhelmed

You may find that the full force of your grief hits you straight away, and you might cry a lot every day. You may have expected to grieve deeply in this way and accept your feelings. Or you may find these emotions are unexpected. You may even feel angry that you feel this way.

You may feel overwhelmed and worry that you are not coping. You may worry that your grief feels so devastating you do not know how you can live with it. But over time, feelings of grief and loss tend to become less intense, and you begin to find a way to live with them.

Relief

You may feel a sense of relief when the person you care about dies - particularly if it has been a long illness, if the person has been suffering, or if you have been the main carer. If you feel like this, you may also feel guilty for feeling relieved. Relief is a normal response and not something you should feel guilty about. It does not mean you didn't love and care for them or that you are a bad person.

Anger

It is very common to feel angry when you are grieving. Your anger might be directed at different subjects such as: the fact that your loved one was taken before their time, things that happened or did not happen before they died, or that they are no longer there. You might feel angry with circumstances, others, or yourself. You might be angry for all these reasons or for entirely different reasons. These are completely normal feelings.

Physical symptoms

It is also completely normal to experience physical symptoms of grief, for example:

- difficulty sleeping
- loss or increase of appetite (e.g. comfort eating)
- headaches
- feeling drained or having no energy

- being prone to picking up minor bugs and illnesses.

These are all normal reactions to losing someone close to you. We often tell people they need to look after themselves, but when you are grieving it is really important. Try to treat yourself kindly and give yourself the time, space, and care that you need.

Mixed feelings about a difficult relationship

All relationships have their difficulties. You may have thought that because you had a difficult relationship with the person, you would grieve less or cope better when they died. Instead, you may find that you experience an unexpected mix of emotions. There might be some aspects of the person or your relationship with them that you are not sad about losing. But you may still feel upset about losing the positives, or the relationship you could have had. Your feelings of sadness may be mixed with feelings of anger, guilt, regret, and everything in between. All these emotions are completely normal.

How can I cope?

There are lots of different factors that affect grief - such as the kind of relationship you had with your friend or relative, how you normally deal with emotional issues, and the support you have around you. These different aspects mean that we all cope in different ways, and you will find some things help you more than others. However, here are some things that may help you to cope.

Taking one day at a time

Focusing on one day at a time can help you cope with your feelings and get through the simple everyday tasks that you need to do.

Keeping busy or taking time out

You may find that keeping busy and throwing yourself into different activities helps. If this works for you, try to do things even if you do not feel up to it. Alternatively, you may find you need to take things more slowly and take time out of your day-to-day life and activities. You need to do whichever works best for you.

Recognising your emotions

Lots of the emotions you might feel when you are grieving have physical symptoms. If you are feeling stressed, your heartbeat may be faster. If you are angry, you might clench your jaw. Sometimes those physical symptoms might be a way of helping you to recognise your own emotions. When you notice them, you just need to make space at that time to feel those emotions, which can help you to cope with them.

Getting out of the house

Not only does getting out of the house give you some physical exercise, but it can help you to think differently. Sometimes, particularly if you are feeling lonely, it can be good to see other people out and about, even if you are not ready to engage with them.

Looking after your physical health

Getting enough sleep and eating properly can help you deal with the different emotions you are feeling.

Get support from family and friends

It helps if you have support within your own family and friends, as well as from others such as a support group. This is because friends and family are the people who will be there for you in the long term.

Talking through your feelings

It may be enough to talk with family or close friends. Or you may find it helpful to get dedicated bereavement support, either one-to-one or in a group. Joining a group can be particularly helpful, as you can talk to other people in the same situation. If you feel that you don't want to talk, it is important to find other ways to manage your feelings.

Letting others grieve in their own way

Sometimes different family members may have different ways of grieving. Perhaps one person wants to talk about and share their feelings, but another person prefers to busy themselves with activities. You may find that people's different ways of coping can create tensions and strains within the family. You need to try to find a way to be sensitive to each other's needs, while coping with your feelings in your own way.

Coping with your home

Living in a home you shared together can be particularly hard. All around you are likely to be reminders of the person, which may trigger your feelings of grief.

The home you shared together may feel like a sanctuary. Or you may find you prefer to spend as little time as possible at home, because that it feels empty. You may like to keep your home the same, or you may prefer to rearrange it.

It is quite common that when a parent dies grown-up children no longer want to visit. The house often brings back so many memories and feelings of grief for them. These are all normal feelings, and you need to do what works best for you.

Creating traditions

Important dates, such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other celebrations, can be particularly hard. It normally helps if you can think beforehand about what you will do and what will help you get through the day. You may like to create a tradition, such as visiting the person's grave, or the place where their ashes are scattered. There is no right or wrong thing to do on these different occasions, you only need to do the things that are important to you and that help you to cope.

Finding ways to connect with the person who has died

Sometimes having a particular routine or ritual can help you to reconnect with the person you loved. This doesn't need to be something you do on a particular date but might be something you can do

any time. It could be something like visiting the place where their ashes are scattered or going on a walk that you did together.

Getting support

Getting help when you need it is sensible, not a sign you have failed. You may feel that you can't cope, but you may surprise yourself with what you can actually handle.

However, if you feel you are not coping, or you know that the way you are coping is not good for you – for example if you are drinking alcohol heavily – you should try to think about what help you might need.

Look at the organisations that can offer support starting on **page 9** of this factsheet. You can also talk to your GP about how you are feeling as they offer support and refer onto other agencies that can help.

Family Hubs

Family Hubs

Family Hubs are here to support your family.

Our services are for all families in Brighton & Hove with children aged from 0-19. Young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) can access our services up to age 25.

There are four main Family Hubs in Brighton & Hove. Our services are also delivered from multiple other locations across the city.

Information, advice and guidance

Your family can get information, advice and guidance on topics such as:

- Childcare, childcare funding and free early learning
- Services that can support families with finances
- Local services for parents, young people and children

You can use our [online Family Service Directory](#) to search for services and childcare. You can also view our factsheets which include:

- advice for separated parents
- local support for your family
- new to living in Brighton & Hove
- financial help

Groups and workshops

You can join groups and workshops like:

- Early language and learning
- SEND support
- Parenting and parental relationships
- Physical and mental health

Some parenting groups are also available in Arabic.

One-to-one support for families

Families who face more complex challenges may be offered intensive one-to-one support. We look at the needs of the whole family and work closely with each member to help make positive changes. This support can be offered for a few weeks or up to a year.

NHS services

Midwives, health visitors and school nurses are based in Family Hubs, providing a range of services from pregnancy to age 19. You can also get support to stop smoking and help with breastfeeding and infant feeding.

Childcare and free early education

We provide childcare and free early education at the Family Hub nurseries and the Jeanne Saunders Centre for children with SEND.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

We provide free activities and food during the Easter, Summer and Winter school holidays. This programme is for school-age children from reception to year 11 who are eligible for benefit-related free-school meals.

Youth services

We work with youth providers to offer support, activities and services for young people. We also offer opportunities for young people to have a say in the way services are run, plus specialist support for young people in care.

Employment

We can help parent/carers prepare for employment with support, training, volunteering and accessing childcare. We also offer careers advice, better-off calculations, CV writing and preparing for interviews.

You can find the main Family Hubs at:

Central – Ivory Place, Brighton BN2 9QE

East – 178 Whitehawk Rd, Whitehawk, Brighton BN2 5FL

North – Hodshrove Lane, Moulsecoomb, Brighton BN2 4SE

West – Harmsworth Crescent, Hangleton, Hove BN3 8BW

Contact Family Hubs:

Telephone: 01273 293545

Email: familyhubs@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Website: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/family-hubs

[Front Door for families referral form](#) .

If you need help filling in this form, you can:

- phone 01273 290400
- send an email to FrontDoorforFamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk

For information about how we will use and store your personal details:

[Family Hubs privacy notice \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)