

## **Covid-19 bereavements and support FAQ**

We know that very sadly over the coming weeks some people in our communities will experience the loss of a loved one. This be a challenging and distressing experience for family and friends at any time, and the current circumstances bring additional challenges which can make the impact of the loss even greater.

This document includes key information to help those working in front line council services answer questions residents might have following a Covid-19 bereavement. The information is provided in a question and answer format.

### **A friend/family member has died at home, what should I do?**

In the first instance you should report the death by calling 111 (or 999).

### **What will happen next?**

You will be asked whether or not the death is Covid-19 related, if it is then a **Pandemic Multi-agency Response Team (PMART)** will be dispatched to the scene. PMART is a London-wide response to the pandemic that enables emergency services to focus on emergency cases. They consist of a driver, two police officers and a trained clinician. When they arrive they will be wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), this may be alarming but it is a routine safety precaution.

The PMART will then:

- Confirm a death and the identification of the deceased
  - Determine whether the circumstances of the death are suspicious or not
  - Collect medical history and complete sudden death paperwork
  - Prepare the deceased for removal
  - Provide those present with information explaining the next steps, including where the deceased will be taken, how to register the death and where to get further information and support.
- The deceased will be taken to either:
- o Funeral Directors appointed by the family,
  - o Regional mortuary, should the family's funeral director not have capacity,
  - o Local public mortuary, within Camden (St Pancras Public Mortuary).

### **What support services are there available to me?**

There are a number of free and confidential self-referral services in Camden who can support you with bereavement during this period of uncertainty.

#### **Helpline support**

This is quick to access though you may have to wait on the line or be phoned back.

- **Samaritans** offer round the clock support for anyone who is experiencing stress, despair or is in crisis. You can call them free on **116123** or if that is not

possible call **0330 094 5717**. You may be charged for this 0330 number, depending on your phone package.

- **Cruse Bereavement Care** host a number of wellbeing support resources specific to coronavirus on their website, [cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief](https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief). You can also call them on **0808 808 1677**, Monday to Friday.
- **The Silver Line** is a free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people. They are open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. You can call them on **0800 470 80 90**

## Counselling support by phone

This is more intensive support and may take a little longer to arrange.

- **Camden, City, Islington & Westminster Bereavement Service (CCIWBS)** offer counselling to anyone aged 18 or over with a GP in Camden or Islington. You can contact them via **0207 284 0090** or visit their website at [bereavement-counselling.org](https://www.bereavement-counselling.org)
- **iCope** is a free and confidential service that provides support for stress, depression and anxiety which can sometimes accompany a sudden bereavement. Please note, iCope is not a crisis or emergency service. You can contact them by calling **020 3317 6670** or visit their website at [icope.nhs.uk/camden-islington](https://www.icope.nhs.uk/camden-islington)
- **The Brandon Centre** provides confidential help and advice for young people aged 12 to 24 and their parents and carers. This covers a range of issues including counselling and is open on weekdays. Please see [brandon-centre.org.uk/](https://www.brandon-centre.org.uk/) or email [counselling@brandoncentre.org.uk](mailto:counselling@brandoncentre.org.uk).
- **Age UK Camden** offer counselling sessions to people aged 55 and over who are registered with a GP in Camden. You can call them **020 7239 0400**, email [counselling@ageukcamden.org.uk](mailto:counselling@ageukcamden.org.uk) or visit [ageuk.org.uk/camden/](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/camden/)
- **Marie Curie Telephone Bereavement Support** provide support to anyone affected by a terminal illness or concerns about coronavirus, whether directly affected or a family member. You can call them on **0800 090 2309** seven days a week or visit [mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus).

## I need to register a death, who do I contact?

Immediately following the death of a loved one there are a number of arrangements that need to be made. This can be especially difficult in the case of a sudden or unexpected death. Our registrars are available to guide you through the process and can signpost you to any additional bereavement support you might need.

For the duration of the pandemic period, death registrations will be completed by telephone appointment. You can book an appointment online at [camden.gov.uk/births-deaths-marriages-citizenship](https://www.camden.gov.uk/births-deaths-marriages-citizenship) or call **020 7974 4444**. The Hospital or GP practice should send the relevant documents to us. Once that has been done, the registrars will call you to book an appointment. At the appointment you will need to provide our registrars with information about the person who died, they will then record these details and provide you with a document that will allow

you to make arrangements for a funeral. Deaths should be registered within five days.

## **Are funerals still allowed to take place?**

Despite this unprecedented time, we know that it's important to say goodbye to loved ones. That's why we're working with professionals in the funeral sector, faith leaders and others to ensure that, wherever possible, family wishes will be respected and acknowledged.

Government guidance currently allows funerals to continue, however, to comply with social distancing rules that keep you, other mourners and funeral staff safe, you are asked to keep attendance to close family members only.

When organising a funeral you may want to consider:

- Who is attending, being mindful to shield those in high risk groups
- Recording eulogies on your phone or another device for those unable to attend
- Practising social distancing by organising a seating plan
- Organising a celebration of life or memorial for a later date, when it is safe for more people to attend

Funerals may also have to be shorter at this time so that the venue can be cleaned between services.

## **I need to make funeral arrangements with religious observances**

We understand and recognise the importance of ensuring some of our faith communities are able to bury their deceased within a set time frame. We will do all that we can to ensure these practices are respectfully observed. In emergency legislation passed to help deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has made clear that there will no enforced cremations against the wishes of an individual as long as there is burial space available.

## **I need help paying for a funeral**

We know that some of you will be facing financial difficulties as a result of the current health emergency and that the cost of funeral arrangements may be further adding to the stress to already upsetting circumstances.

The Government offer a number support packages that you may be eligible for including the Funeral Expenses Payment which can provide financial assistance to family or friends with the costs of a funeral. The Government have issued guidance on how you can access this at [gov.uk/funeral-payments](https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments) or alternatively you can call the Bereavement Services helpline on **0800 731 0468**.

Funeral Expenses Payments can help with some of the costs of the following:

- Burial fees for a particular plot,

- Cremation fees, including the cost of the doctor's certificate,
- Travel to arrange or attend the funeral,
- The cost of moving the body within the UK, if moved more than 50 miles,
- Death certificates and other documents.

If your husband, wife or civil partner have passed away then you may also be eligible for up to 18 months of bereavement support payments, you can find out more about how to access this at [gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment](https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment)

If you are a parent and have lost your husband, wife or civil partner then you may be eligible for a widowed parent's allowance. You can find out more [gov.uk/widowed-parents-allowance](https://www.gov.uk/widowed-parents-allowance).