**BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT**

During this Covid-19 pandemic we are very mindful that unfortunately some of our staff will suffer the loss of loved ones as well as possibly colleagues.

To help support managers in such difficult circumstances we wanted to pull together the relevant information and support into one document to assist managers in what we know will be challenging situations.

We would ask all managers facing such circumstances to contact their HR Business Advisor for guidance and support.

**How to Respond to a Bereavement** – the following are some important things for you to consider when dealing with a bereavement

* Remember thatevery bereavement is different. These are exceptional circumstances, there may be delays in issuing a death certificate, delays in holding a funeral, very few people will be able to attend the funeral and so it is more important than ever to be compassionate and flexible.
* Begin a dialogue with the employee, asking how they would like to stay in contact. Is phone or email contact preferred? Are there particular times to avoid? Be careful not to pressurise the employee into making decisions at this point
* Ask how much information they want colleagues to know, and if they wish to be contacted by colleagues.
* Ensure the bereaved employee knows they are not expected to work and discussions can be had about when they will be ready to resume work after the initial shock has passed. Be open to revising and reviewing the situation with the employee.
* Consider that the death may result in the employee themselves having to self-isolate and check if they need any assistance with food or other provisions
* Consider any family or children who are affected.
* Be conscious of diversity, and accommodate religious beliefs and customs where ever possible
* Stay in regular contact.
* Signpost the employee to other support – see Appendix 1 and Essentials page with useful links as well as at the end of this document. This includes a link to our Employee Assistance Programme that is available to support the employee and their family members
* Discuss what bereavement leave the employee needs and consider other leave if required – see section below on Bereavement leave
* Consider adjustments that may be needed, such as a phased return to work or temporary change of duties
* Particular care should be taken where the work the employee is returning to may itself involve dealing with death or bereavement. The manager will need to be mindful of the bereaved employee’s resilience
* On return, hold regular reviews with the bereaved employee.
* Take bereavement into account should there be an impact on performance.
* Be aware of changes in personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities.
* Consider the impact on other members of the team and any support they may need
* Be aware that special dates such as inquests, birthdays and the anniversary of a death may have an impact on your employee.
* Remember that the full impact of a bereavement may not be felt until some time after the death.
* Be aware that dealing with this will be challenging for you as a manager and seek your own support from colleagues and HR if required
* Grief impacts on almost every aspect of the bereaved person’s life. It can interfere with their thought processes, concentration and sleep patterns at a time when they may need to make important decisions. Fatigue, anxiety and mood swings are common. Knowing that they are supported by their employer can help to minimise the employee’s stress levels

**BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

In the unfortunate event a member of your team needs to take some time off work due to the death of a close relative they will be entitled to take up to 10 working days off.

The full Bereavement Leave Guidance is available at the end of this document (Appendix 2).

We are aware that during this period funeral arrangements will be more difficult and there may be unavoidable delays. If that then requires a Head of Service to agree additional leave please consider the flexibility in the policy.

**DEATH OF A COLLEAGUE**

In the tragic event of a death of a colleague we have a specific policy regarding how this needs to be handled – see Appendix 3 Death in Service Guidelines. Please contact your HR Strategic Lead as soon as you are notified and we will advise and support you through the process.

Some of the advice at the start of this document as well as the additional support listed in Appendix 1 will also be very relevant in terms of support for you and your team.

We are also very aware that more targeted support may well be required for you and your team in such difficult circumstances and this can be arranged. Manages should contact their HR Business Advisor who can assist.

HR can also assist in making sure pension arrangements are made.

**Appendix 1 – also on Essentials**

**We are Camden: Supporting you through bereavement during COVID 19**

We hope that colleagues and their families will be safe and well during the current situation however the reality is that during the global coronavirus pandemic we are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances. We want to support you during this difficult time.

Please find below a range of resources that you can tap into at any time.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Overview** | **More details** |
| Grief resources specific to COVID, including advice about grieving in isolation | Cruse Bereavement Care have put together resources to share how bereavement and grief may be affected by this pandemic. It covers some of the different situations and emotions bereaved people may have to deal with. | <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>  [Grieving and Isolation](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/grieving-and-isolation)  [Traumatic bereavement](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/trauma)  [Funerals](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/funerals)  [Anger and blame](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/anger-and-blame)  [Feeling guilty](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/guilt)  [Feeling your bereavement is not a priority](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/bereavemnt-priorities)  [Children and Young People](https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/children-and-young-people) |
| Employee Assistance Programme | There is an employee assistant programme (EAP) available which offers confidential emotional, physical and spiritual advice and support should you need it. This includes one to one virtual counselling. It’s free for employee’s and their family and you can contact at any time of the day or night on 0800 243 458 or [www.eapdirect.co.uk](http://www.eapdirect.co.uk/) (Username Camden and Password Employee). | [Employee Assistance Programme](https://lbcamden.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/HR/Pages/Employee-Assistance-Programme.aspx) |
| General information on bereavement | Mind provide information on bereavement, where to go for support, and suggestions for helping yourself and others through grief | [Mind bereavement, support and self care](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/support-and-self-care/) |
| Support for yourself – helpline | The Cruse Bereavement Care Freephone National Helpline is staffed by trained bereavement volunteers, who offer emotional support to anyone affected by bereavement. | Call for free on **0808 808 1677** |
| Workplace Grief and Loss: Coping with the Loss of a Coworker | Three tips for coping with grief and loss in the workplace from goodtherapy.org | <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/workplace-grief-loss-coping-with-death-of-coworker-0503185> |
| Supporting bereaved children during the outbreak | The childhood bereavement network offers support around talking to children about death, and offers advice about practical support.  Winston’s wish also provides support about how to tell a child or young person that someone has died from coronavirus. | <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>  [How to tell a child or young person that someone has died from coronavirus](https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/) |
|  |  |  |
| Losing someone to suicide | Specific information is available here. | [Rethink mental illness – suicide: coping with loss and what support is available](https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub/suicide-coping-with-loss/) |

**Appendix 2**

**BEREAVMENT LEAVE POLICY**

In the unfortunate event that you may need to take some time off work due to a bereavement, you may be entitled to a number of paid days off work, regardless of your length of service.  
  
You can take up to 10 working days if the deceased was:

* Your partner or child
* A close relative living in your household and you are responsible for finalising their affairs
* A person that you, or any person living in your household, had a close personal relationship with and you are responsible for finalising their affairs

You can take up to 5 working days bereavement leave if the deceased was:

* A close relative living in your household, but you are not responsible for finalising the deceased's affairs
* A person that you, or any person living in your household, had a close personal relationship with, but you are not responsible for finalising their affairs
* The relationship is not as above, but you are responsible for finalising the affairs of a deceased person.

A 'close relative' is defined as a partner; spouse or ex-spouse; child; parent; grandchild; grandparent; brother or sister. However, your manager will consider the circumstances and make a judgement on whether bereavement leave applies.  
  
If the circumstances of your bereavement do not fall within the definitions above, or  you require more time off you will need to discuss this with your line manager and they may consider granting a period of Special Leave.  
  
To arrange bereavement leave you should request time off from your line manager providing them with the number of days you require and the nature of relationship with the relative. Your line manager will then agree with you the amount of time off and what will be recorded as bereavement leave.

**SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY**

You should use your annual leave, flexi leave or time off in lieu for unexpected situations. However, Camden may grant special leave in exceptional circumstances to cover any unexpected situations. Special leave will be considered for:

* Extensions of other types of leave
* Granting leave to candidates at parliamentary elections representing political parties who received more than 10% of the national votes cast at the last general election
* Time off (sabbatical leave) for working on a project, not necessarily to do with their work which they do at a further or higher education establishment
* Other exceptional circumstances

You may request special leave through your line manager. Your line manager may agree to leave with pay of up to one month, or leave without pay for up to six months. Requests for special leave of more than one month with pay, or more than six months without pay will need to be agreed by your Head of Service.

**Appendix 3**

**Dealing with Death in Service Guidance**

**Version 1.2 January 2018**

1. **Introduction**

* 1. These guidelines are in place to support managers and employees in the sad event of an employee’s death. It is essential that these situations are handled in both a sensitive and efficient manner to prevent any additional distress to relatives and colleagues.
  2. Our purpose is to ensure that the next of kin are treated in a respectful and sympathetic way whilst also ensuring that the practicalities are dealt with, for example, any payment owed to the deceased employee’s estate and the need to reclaim any Council property.
  3. A checklist on the steps to follow and a sample letter of condolence are included in Appendix 1 for further assistance.

1. **Communication in the workplace** 
   1. The line manager is likely to be the first person to be advised when an employee dies and will need to ascertain the date of death. The manager must notify HR Services as soon as possible and include personal details that they are aware of e.g. if the deceased employee was married and had children.
   2. The manager should gently ask the caller for the next of kin’s full name, telephone number and address for our contact at convenient times. If applicable, HR Services will pass on these contact details, the date of death and the personal details to the Pensions team for the benefit of future correspondence.
   3. The manager needs to complete and submit the electronic ‘Leavers form’ available on Essentials stating the reason for leaving as ‘death in service‘ and giving any additional details of any untaken annual leave entitlement calculated to that time.
   4. The manager should notify senior management and colleagues sensitively and if appropriate, offer them free and confidential support from [Workplace Options](https://lbcamden.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/HR/Pages/Wellbeing.aspx).
   5. A decision will need to be made if customers and suppliers who dealt with the employee are to be informed and how this will be conveyed. The approach will largely depend on the relationship that each service or person had with the deceased employee. For some it may be appropriate to send a letter for others a telephone call would be preferable. Service users will need to be kept informed of any disruption or alteration to service provision.
   6. The extent of any media interest will depend on the circumstances surrounding the employee. Any enquiries from the media must be referred to the Communications team; no information must be given to external enquirers.
   7. The manager may contact ICT if he/she needs access to the deceased employee’s Camden email and home drive for a limited period. This would be to leave a suitable message and to pick up on items of work that were in progress.
2. **Death at work** 
   1. If an employee dies whilst at work (either by result of an accident or another cause), an ambulance must be called immediately. If the fatality is a result of a work related incident, please notify the Corporate Health and Safety team as soon as possible on 020 7974 6655 and select the option to speak to a Health and Safety advisor.
   2. Work related fatalities are required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). The Corporate Health and Safety Team can coordinate the RIDDOR reporting and any incident investigation so it is important that they are notified as soon as possible.
3. **Communication with next of kin** 
   1. It is appropriate for a relevant manager to send a letter of condolence to the next of kin. If any assistance is necessary, see an example letter in Appendix 2.
   2. The manager will also need to contact the next of kin in a sensitive way to find out:

* If they are happy for any members of staff to attend the funeral and to ask if flowers can be sent or a charitable donation if preferred;

And to arrange:

* To return any personal possessions;
* For the return of any laptops, mobile phones, passes and keys, along with any other items belonging to Camden

1. **Administrative requirements** 
   1. A ‘leavers form’ must be completed in all circumstances, stating the reason for leaving as ‘death in service’.
   2. HR Services will stop payments for any salary sacrifice agreements for goods, i.e. Cycle to Work Scheme, or services, i.e. Childcare Vouchers. The outcome of what will happen to any goods/services obtained in this way will be dependent on the contract signed at the time of agreeing to the scheme/s.
   3. HR Services are responsible for ensuring all actions required are completed in a timely way, liaising with the pension’s service if relevant and liaising with the next of kin to obtain a signed indemnity letter so that any pay owed, including holiday pay will be paid to the bank account as advised by the next of kin. It is unlikely that Camden would wish to recover overpayment from the next of kin for any excess of annual leave taken.
   4. Pension administrators will require documentation, including the death certificate and the birth certificates of the beneficiaries to the pension benefits.
   5. If you die in service as a member of the LGPS a lump sum death grant of three times your annual rate of [assumed pensionable pay](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/IHRMC91Z0ukvZJyhZmcaN?domain=lgpsmember.org) at your date of death is paid, no matter how long you have been a member of the LGPS, provided you are under age 75 at the date of death.
   6. If you also have a deferred benefit and/or a pension in payment from a previous period of membership of the LGPS, the lump sum death grant that will be payable is the greater of:

* the total of any lump sum death grants payable from the deferred and/or pensions in payment
* three times your assumed pensionable pay at your date of death i.e. the in service death grant
  1. If you pay Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) arranged through the LGPS (in-house AVCs), the value of your AVC fund is also payable, as is any extra life cover.
  2. An ongoing pension is provided for your spouse, registered civil partner or, subject to certain qualifying conditions, your eligible cohabiting partner and to your eligible children.
  3. LGPS pension benefits are administered by the Pensions Shared Service for Camden, Merton, Richmond, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth (Tel: 020 8871 8036) or, for some members, the LPFA (Tel: 020 7369 6118). If an employee dies in service as a member of the Teachers Pension Scheme or the NHS pension scheme, similar benefits to those shown above are payable by the administrators of those schemes.

1. **Policy ownership & effective dates**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Policy owner | Human Resources |
| Approving body | Human Resources |
| Date approved | January 2018 |
| Effective date | January 2018 |
| Review date | October 2018 |
| Version | 1.2 |

**Appendix 1: Manager’s Checklist**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **As soon as notified of the death of an employee**:   1. Gently ask for the name, telephone number and address of the next of kin for contact at convenient times. 2. Advise HR Services on 020 7974 6655 of the contact details, date of death and whether the deceased employee was married/had children to assist communications from the Pension team, if applicable.   **In the case of a member of staff dying whilst at work**:   1. Dial 999 and request an ambulance 2. If the incident is work related, contact the Health and Safety Executive giving details of employee’s name, date of birth, address and details of the incident:  * Monday – Friday, 8:30 – 5pm please call 0345 300 9923 * Out of hours, please call 0151 922 9235  1. If the incident is work related, after an ambulance has been called and the Health and Safety Executive has been notified, please contact the Corporate Health and Safety team on 020 7974 6655 and select the option to speak to a Health and Safety advisor. | **Tick as**  **appropriate** |
| **2** | **Complete and submit a ‘Leavers form’.**  State ‘death in service’ as the reason for leaving and in the any other additional information box give details of any outstanding annual leave at the time.  *Data from this form will go to HR Services and ICT to action.* |  |
| **3** | **Notify staff in a sensitive way**  The manager should notify senior management and colleagues sensitively and if appropriate, offer them free and confidential support from [Workplace Options](https://lbcamden.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/HR/Pages/Wellbeing.aspx). |  |
| **4** | **Manager’s Letter to Next of Kin**  Send letter of condolence to the next of kin – sample letter shown in Appendix 2. |  |
| **5** | **Contact**  The manager will also need to contact the next of kin in a sensitive way to find out:   * If they are happy for any members of staff to attend the funeral and to ask if flowers can be sent or a charitable donation if preferred;   And to arrange:   * To return any personal possessions; * For the return of any laptops, mobile phones, passes and keys, along with any other items belonging to Camden |  |

**Appendix 2: Letter to next of kin**

To be used with appropriate letterhead

Dear **[Next of kin],**

I was truly sorry to hear of the loss of **[employee’s name]**. **He/she** will be missed by everyone in the **[section/team]**.

**Manager may insert a personal paragraph in the letter at this point**.

I know that all **[employee’s name]** colleagues would like me to pass on their deepest sympathies at this very difficult time.

If there is anything I can do to help you further at this time, please do not hesitate to contact me on **[telephone number]**.

Yours sincerely,

**[Your name]**