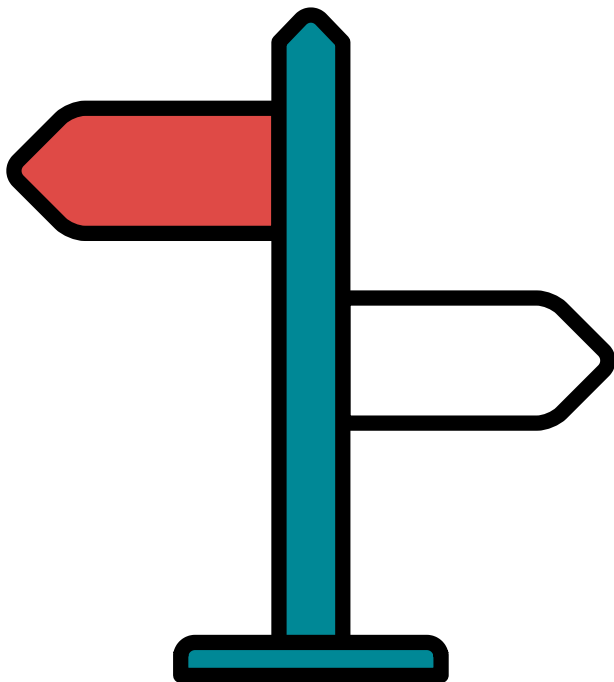


# Bereavement Factsheet



## Dealing with grief

It can be hard to know how to support someone who is grieving because it affects people so differently. Although you may be worried about saying or doing the wrong thing, the support you can provide others at this time is crucial to helping them cope with their bereavement.

Typically, in the days following a death it is usual to send a card, letter of condolence or flowers on behalf of the Lodge so that the individual or family know that you are thinking of them.

In the weeks following a death, you may decide to follow this up with a telephone call or a home visit to the bereaved if they are comfortable in you doing so. When in contact you should establish whether they would like the death to be notified within the Province and if it might be possible for a member of the Lodge to attend the funeral, once arrangements are in place.



## Knowing what to say and how

For the inexperienced almoner, when supporting a bereaved person or family giving them reassurances, normalising their feelings, experiences and behaviours is really important. If you don't feel confident in doing so then the following may be helpful:

- Act naturally and be yourself whilst remembering to take cues from them.
- Use your tone of voice to help calm somebody down. This helps people take in information and think more clearly.
- Help them to make decisions for themselves and suggest choices or options.
- Never say 'I know how you feel' and avoid meaningless phrases like 'time is a great healer' or 'they are not suffering anymore'. Instead, empathise by putting yourself in their shoes and actively listen to what they have to say.
- Remember that you are not a counsellor and shouldn't attempt to be one. There are a number of specialist organisations that can help and you should refer the person to these (see Useful contacts section).
- With their permission, keep the Lodge informed of their progress.

## The coronavirus pandemic

Due to restrictions which came into play during the pandemic, many people were unable to see loved ones before they died or hold the funerals they would have wanted. This can leave unresolved feelings because they haven't had the opportunity to say a proper goodbye or seek comfort from family and friends. It is important to help them feel that their grief is still valid.

## What the family will need to do

Although it is not your responsibility to become involved with making or organising any of the practical arrangements following a death, the individual or family may ask you about them so it is important to have an awareness of what will be happening. The key arrangements for them to take care of include:

- Obtaining a Death Certificate showing the cause of death.
- Registering the death. This has to be done within five days unless there is a Coroner's Inquest. The family will then be able to make the necessary arrangements for the funeral.
- Notifying appropriate agencies and organisations of the death. The 'Tell us Once' government service allows a death to be reported to most government organisations in one go. Banks, utility companies, landlords or housing associations will need to be contacted separately.



- Arranging the funeral. The funeral can usually only take place after the death has been registered. It is recommended that a chosen Funeral Director is a member of either the National Association of Funeral Directors or the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF). More information on arranging a funeral can be found on the GOV.UK [website](#)
- Deciding what to do with property and possessions which is usually dependent on a will.

## Practical support for the bereaved

The death of a loved one can have an impact on the bereaved's financial situation, potentially affecting pensions, benefit entitlements, insurance or savings plans. The following are some examples of how a family may be affected and where they can turn for assistance:

- Are they entitled to additional state benefits or support? Bereavement Support Payment is a benefit paid to widows or surviving civil partners. It consists of an initial payment followed by up to 18 monthly instalments. The claim must be made within 3 months of the death to get the full amount but a claim of up to 21 months after can be made which would result in fewer monthly payments. Contact the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) for information and advice (see Useful contacts section).
- Are they entitled to a reduction in Council Tax? Contact the local authority for advice.
- Are they facing financial difficulties? Support may be available from the Masonic Charitable Foundation. This includes help with daily living expenses, supporting children in full time education and funeral costs. Contact your Provincial Grand Almoner or the MCF for advice on making an application.
- Remember! A change in circumstances may mean they are entitled to other state benefits.

## Useful contacts

- **The Department for Work & Pensions**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions> or call the DWP Bereavement Service Helpline on 0800 731 0469.
- **Cruse Bereavement Care**  
Offers support after the death of someone close - [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk) or call 0808 808 1677.
- **Tell Us Once**  
A service for reporting a death to most government organisations in one go - [www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once](http://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once)

- **Turn2Us**

Helping people access the money available to them through welfare benefits and grants

-[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk) or call 0808 802 2000.

- **Winston's Wish**

Services to bereaved children and young people -

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) or call 08088 020 021.

- **The Masonic Charitable Foundation**

[www.mcf.org.uk](http://www.mcf.org.uk) or call 0800 035 60 90 to discuss gaining access to the Counselling Careline

- **The MCF's Advice and Support Team**

Offers advice, guidance and support on a range of issues. Contact them by calling 0800 035 60 90. Your Metropolitan/Provincial Grand Almoner may be able to signpost you to local support and assistance.

Why not watch the MCF's 'Almoner's Tale' video on the topic of bereavement -

[www.mcf.org.uk/almoner](http://www.mcf.org.uk/almoner)



The information contained in this factsheet is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute advice. The MCF does not endorse any of the organisations listed.

