

Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) October 2017



Bereavement Support



The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board offers its sincere condolences regarding your recent bereavement and hope this booklet will be of help to you.

Following the loss of a child the feelings of shock, numbness, disbelief and confusion may seem overwhelming. There are many important decisions to be made but nothing needs be hurried. You can take your time; there is no right or wrong way to do things. It is important that you take the time you need to decide what feels right for you in dealing with the pain and sadness consuming you when someone you love has passed away.

We hope this leaflet provides the practical guidance and support information you will need.

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Seeing your child

You are entitled to see and be with your child for as long as you wish. Parents often find it helpful to see and hold their child. Take your time and remember you can change your mind. The hospital staff will explain to you what has happened to your child and how they will look when you see them. They can accompany you if you wish to explain anything about your child's appearance which may concern you. If you prefer, staff can take a picture of your child for you to see before you make any decisions.

You may spend time in private with your child and hold, wash and dress him or her in some clothes or a special blanket you have chosen unless, very rarely, the police explain this is not possible. You may wish to take photographs, a lock of hair or have hospital staff assist you in taking hand or foot prints as keepsakes. Alternatively the hospital staff can arrange these things for you and you can obtain them later.

The Hospital Chaplain or the Minister of Religion can say a prayer with you or give a blessing to your child.

When you are ready your child will be taken to the hospital mortuary, but you can ask to see him/her again. Even once you have gone home you can ring the hospital and ask to come back and see your child.



Registration of the Death

After the doctor, or the Coroner after a post-mortem, has given you the signed death certificate, your child's death should be registered at the Registrar's office closest to the hospital within 5 days of the death. This may not necessarily be the office closest to your child's home.

Someone else can do this for you, but that could delay, by a few days, some of the paperwork needed for organising the funeral. This is because the necessary certificates will be posted rather than handed to you personally.

It is possible to register at the office nearest your home, however this could mean a delay of a few days in receiving the certificates because of posting paperwork. Such delays may not matter to you but may be important if, for religious or cultural reasons or personal preference, you wish to organise the funeral straight away.

If you are collecting the death certificate from Croydon University Hospital please telephone 0208 401 3000 x3143 or x3144 before you come. Please note that if the death is referred to the Coroner the Coroner's Office will contact you to explain the procedures.

The Croydon Register Office is located on the ground floor in the Town Hall. It is open Monday-Friday 9.30-4pm (<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/community/births-deaths-marriage/deaths/registering-deaths/reg-death>) (register.office@croydon.gov.uk).



Child death review process

What is the child death review process & why is it required?

The Government introduced legislation in April 2008, which requires every Local Authority to review the deaths of all children residing in their borough. This applies to all children aged 0-18 years regardless of where they died and the circumstances surrounding their death.

If the death is unexpected a Rapid Response meeting is called shortly after the death is reported. A group of key professionals come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death of a child.

Further to this an overview panel has responsibility for reviewing all child deaths, both expected and unexpected. Information is collected and summarised into a short report from records held by services and agencies who knew the child. These reports are treated with respect and in strict confidence.

The panel, consisting of doctors, health specialists and childcare professionals, gives consideration to and makes recommendations about whether the cause of death might have “modifiable factors” which may or may not have been related to the death of your child, and reports any concerns, patterns and trends to the Local Authority. The reports contain no personal details and each case is reviewed anonymously.



Post-mortem

All deaths which are sudden, unexpected or as a result of an accident will be referred to the Coroner. The coroner's officer will explain to you what the post-mortem examination involves and where and when it will happen. In these circumstances the coroner does not need written consent.

There are some instances when the hospital may wish to carry out a post-mortem. This may be for research into certain conditions or at the family's request. This type of post-mortem requires written consent from the family/next of kin.

The post-mortem will try to establish the cause of the death and will be sensitive to any cultural and or religious needs. The examination will be done with the same care that would be used if your child were having an operation.

The appearance of your child's skin and colouring will naturally change after death whether or not a post-mortem has been carried out, but there is usually no reason why you cannot see your child again after the examination has taken place. The mortuary staff will be able to advise you. Your child will be kept in a very cool room, so please be aware that if you spend time with them again they will feel very cold to touch.

Usually within six weeks you will be sent an appointment to come back to the hospital to see the consultant and discuss the post-mortem results.

If there is no requirement for a post-mortem and the doctor has given you the signed death certificate, or the post-mortem has been completed and the coroner has issued the death certificate, your child does not have to remain at the hospital.



Funeral

Prior to the funeral you may wish to have your child at home, you may wish to put him or her in their own bed. During this time you may wish close family and friends to come and see your child.

Most people find it helpful to make contact with a funeral director and talk over the options available. Some are able to offer special arrangements for children. If you are worried about paying for the funeral talk to your funeral director about where you may be able to get help. If your religion or culture prescribes a particular type of service you may not need to make specific personal decision and choices.

Planning a funeral may seem daunting but the hospital chaplain will be happy to offer support and guidance. (Croydon University Hospital chaplain also has a separate leaflet regarding "Planning your baby's funeral" which may help.

If you are not sure what to do try and take some time to talk and think with those closest to you about what would be right for your child. The hospital can make arrangements for you if you feel you cannot cope with it yourself.

You can decide for your child to be buried or cremated and this is a decision which should not be rushed. You can have a religious or non-religious ceremony in a church, by the graveside, in your own home or in a place of your choice.

If you decide on a cremation, you do not need to have the ashes buried, but you can keep them wherever you wish for as long as you like or you can scatter them at a place of your choice. You may decide in the future to bury the ashes in a conventional memorial site such as a Garden of Remembrance or a place that is special for your family.



Faith support

The hospital chaplain is available to give you support and advice regarding the death of your child and the formalities which follow. You can find out where they are located and how to contact them via the main hospital switchboard.

At Croydon University Hospital a Bereavement Support Service has been in place for over 10 years. This service offers an opportunity to work through some of the painful emotions and difficulties following the death of a loved one in a confidential and supportive environment.

To make an appointment for an initial assessment please use the contact number below. The volunteers either have counselling qualifications or counselling skills training. They receive regular supervision and operate within the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) Code of Ethic.

A representative for all religious beliefs and cultures can be contacted via the chaplain at the Bereavement Support Service.

The Croydon University Hospital chaplain is located in the Woodcroft Wing (yellow zone) & can be contacted via:

Telephone: 020 8401 3105 (direct line)

All enquiries are treated with absolute confidentiality.



Other children in the family

If you have other children, you may instinctively know what to do and say to them or you may need help to decide. A nurse, social worker or chaplain may be able to assist.

Other children in the family should be given the opportunity to express their grief at the same time as you and you may wish to have support with this. Brothers and sisters should be encouraged, but not forced, to see and spend time with your child. Touching, holding or giving a kiss should also be supported as should attendance at the funeral if they wish.

However, like you, a child will first need a clear explanation of what they will see, why and where and who will be with them to support them. With the best intentions you and other adults may feel that your other children are “too young” to see their brother or sister or to experience grief. However even the youngest child does grieve, senses the distress in the family and also puzzles and worries over what is not said or kept hidden.

Siblings (like you) need accurate information, clearly given, and need to know that they can express their grief and voice their fears. Talk to them openly (according to their age) and help them, by your example, to understand that the death of their sibling, though a desperate sadness, can be talked about and feelings can be shared.

Perhaps if you cannot deal with their needs at this time, another relative or trusted friend could be there for the children to ensure that they do not feel excluded.

The **Child Bereavement Charity** has some very helpful literature specifically for children coping with child deaths.

www.childbereavement.org.uk



Local Organisations offering support, help and advice

CRUSE Bereavement Care - Croydon branch

020 8916 0855 / Helpline 0844 477 9400

www.crusecroydon.org.uk

Email - helpline@cruse.org.uk

Surrey SANDS Stillbirth and Neonatal Charity

07817 410 075

Email - surrey.sands@btinternet.com www.surrey-sands.org.uk

St. Christopher's Hospice Candle Project

Via 020 8768 4533 www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle

Croydon Council Bereavement Services

020 8684 3877

Email - bereavement@croydon.gov.uk

Croydon University Hospital Bereavement Support (Chaplaincy)

020 8401 3105

www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/Chaplaincy-and-Spiritual-Care.htm

Croydon University Hospital Mortuary

020 8401 3000 ext. 4712 to arrange an appointment time

Victim Support care team - Croydon Branch

020 87801 1777

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Woodside Bereavement Service “The Listening Ear”

(Christian based bereavement service for all who have suffered loss)

020 3256 2009

Email - wbs@thelisteningear.org.uk www.thelisteningear.org.uk

The Samaritans Croydon Branch

020 8681 6666

Email - jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-croydon-and-sutton

Croydon Health Services – Willow

Supporting Children and Young people through loss and change

020 8274 6317 / 07779 965 952

Email – h.williams18@nhs.net



Organisations offering support, help and advice

Child Death Helpline

0800 282 986 / 0808 800 6019 (free from mobile phones)

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Child Bereavement Trust

0800 028 8840

www.childbereavement.org.uk

Lullaby trust (previously fsid)

Freephone 0808 802 6868 bereavement support support@lullabytrust.org.uk

Freephone 0808 802 6869 information & advice info@lullabytrust.org.uk

www.lullabytrust.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Freephone - 0808 802 0021

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Childhood Bereavement UK

01494 568 900

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

SANDS Office

020 7436 7940

<https://www.uk-sands.org/>

The Compassionate Friends

0845 123 2304

www.tcf.org.uk

Facing Bereavement

www.facingbereavement.co.uk

SCARD -Support and care after Road Death and Injury

0845 123 5542

www.scard.org.uk

SAMM - Support after Murder and Manslaughter

Helpline - 0845 872 3440

www.samm.org.uk

