

Death, Dying and Bereavement

Hoping for the Best and Planning for the Worst

Covid-19 (coronavirus) - advice for people, families and communities planning for end of life care and bereavement support

On this *webpage* you will find information that we hope will help people who are very ill and their families and communities

This can be an especially difficult time for people who are receiving end of life care and their loved ones. It is important now that we all know what is important to us, to know what matters and we share it. Hold on to the little things that matter and let us care for each other.

Here is some information you may find helpful

Visiting restrictions in hospitals, hospices and care homes

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there are visiting restrictions in place at hospitals, hospices and care homes to prevent the virus spreading.

If you are ill and an inpatient, you may feel isolated away from family and friends. If your loved one is ill, you may feel uninvolved, helpless and worried about their care.

What you can do

- Everyone should talk to family members about their wishes and plans in advance. This might include financial arrangements. This will be helpful so you know what is important to your loved one who is ill, or who is at risk of becoming very ill.
- Make a plan so you and your family can communicate with someone who may have to go into an inpatient unit. Make sure they know the best person to contact regarding a loved one's ongoing care and decision making.
- If you can, provide IT equipment to keep in touch with someone who is ill while you cannot visit them. You can use facetime, zoom or Facebook Live for example to keep in touch.

You can [find out more about the restrictions in place on visiting someone in a University of Birmingham NHS Trust hospitals here](#)

More information you may find useful in thinking about and planning for your care

It is important to be prepared in case you or a loved one contracts COVID-19 and becomes seriously ill. This is especially important if you or someone close to you is in a higher risk group (people with serious underlying medical conditions and older people). During a pandemic, medical decisions might need to be taken very quickly. Having thought about different situations which may arise is better for you, your loved ones and helps the medical professionals looking after you to provide the care you want.

Here are some important questions to think about:

- If you were to become seriously unwell due to an infection such as the coronavirus, how would you like to be cared for?

- Is there anyone that you would like to be involved in future decisions about your care, if you were to become unwell (e.g. a friend, family member or carer)?
- If you became seriously ill and thought you might die, where would you want to be cared for?
- Would you want to be admitted to hospital where more aggressive treatments are sometimes appropriate (e.g. being put on a ventilator)? Or would you prefer to be cared for at home cared for by those you are living with and Community and Hospice Nurses with GP support?
- If your heart stops beating and there was a chance that it could be restarted with cardiopulmonary resuscitation, would you want a medical team to try this? This is maybe something you have never thought about – you can find out more about why it is important [here](#).

Some specific treatments and interventions will not work for people who have complex underlying health problems, or when people are very frail or sick. It is important that you discuss with a health professional what treatments might be available and how they can help you.

There may also be some interventions and care options which you are not aware of, but which could greatly improve your quality of life (e.g. palliative care). Speak to a health professional to learn what might be available for you.

Most importantly give thought to the things that matter to YOU, and talk about or share them with your loved ones

The Compassion in Dying website has lots of information and resources on writing an advance care plan, advance decisions to refuse treatment, lasting power of attorney and more

- Your doctor may talk to you about the ReSPECT process to help you think about your treatment and care you can find more information about that [here](#)
- The My Wishes App and Website can help: <https://www.mywishes.co.uk/how-it-works>

Wills

- If you are thinking about writing you will this helpful blog talks about how to do this in light of the Coronavirus <https://brumyodo.org.uk/uncategorized/getting-your-will-written-in-the-time-of-covid19/>
- You can find Government guidance on making a will here: [Information on writing a will](#)

Getting the right help if someone is very ill and not getting better

If your loved one is very ill and not getting better, there is advice available.

What services are available to you?

- Contact your own GP who will speak to the community nurses and palliative care services to help and support you
- If you are known to District Nursing Services please contact them through the single point of access number: 0300 5551919

- Palliative Care services are available to support you at this time some common questions about COVID-19 and Palliative Care support can be found on the Marie Curie Website [here](#)
- You can contact your local hospice team for advice and guidance even if you are not known to them
- Please use the Hospices of Birmingham and Solihull (HoBS) central patient number:

0121 809 1900

Your local Hospice Number is:

- [Birmingham St Mary's Hospice](#): 0121 752 8798
- [John Taylor Hospice](#) 0121 465 2000
- [Marie Curie Hospice Solihull](#) 0121 7033600
- St Giles Hospice

What can you do to care for someone who is very ill at home?

If you are caring for someone who is very ill or dying at home there are things you can do to help them feel comfortable, from helping with their pain to moving them in bed. Here is a link to useful advice and guidance about this

Link: [Get information about looking after someone who is dying](#)

Planning a funeral in exceptional times

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, funerals are now limited to only allow close family members to attend to reduce the spread of the virus.

This can be a difficult time for anyone who has lost a loved one these restrictions may add to your sense of Loss following the death of your loved one. The Funeral Director you choose, will support you at this time with arrangements and guide you in alternative ways that may be possible to include others in the funeral e.g. recording the service or live webcasts of the service.

Once the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted -planning a memorial service or celebration of the person's life can take place

Information you may find useful about funeral planning

Following national guidance and to ensure that social distancing takes place, from today (26 March 2020) new, emergency measures will be put in place for Birmingham City Council bereavement services.

Where funerals are taking place, attendance will be reduced to six people, consisting of the immediate family only. This does not include the official that is conducting the service. No person diagnosed as suffering from Covid-19 is permitted to attend a funeral, until they have been confirmed as recovered. Services will be a maximum of 30 minutes and funeral directors will be able to assist with the rules about social distancing.

More Information about funerals in Birmingham can be found on the Birmingham City Council Website [BCC Funeral Guidelines](#)

Further information

- [Planning a funeral in exceptional times](#)
- It is now possible to register a death online [Register a death online](#)
- [Advice from Cruse Bereavement Care](#) on how to stay connected with a funeral when you can't be there
- [Advice from the National Association of Funeral Directors](#)
- Current advice from The Sikh Council UK
<https://sikhcouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Funeral-Guidance-1-4-20.pdf>
- Current advice from the [Muslim Burial Council](#)
- **Coping with grief and supporting someone else going through bereavement**

During the global coronavirus pandemic, we are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances.

People who have been bereaved at this time may experience additional and deeper emotions because of the restrictions in place due to Covid 19- familiar people they would turn to and usual support networks may not be accessible. There are some helpful support resources from Cruse [here](#)

What else you can do?

- Get some support or counselling.
- Contact [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) or the [Counselling Directory](#)
- [Bereavement support organisations lists](#)
- [Get advice about supporting children through bereavement in COVID times](#)
- [Get advice about supporting young people through bereavement](#)
- [Get support for people widowed young or whose child has died](#)

Information you may find useful

- [Talking to someone you know after someone has died](#)
- [Supporting a grieving friend](#)

Spiritual & Pastoral Support

At a time when we face a crisis in our lives, many people who do not regularly attend a place of worship, seek to make sense of what is happening, through prayer, reflection, and by receiving the spiritual and pastoral support from an appropriate person of faith. This is particularly true during the current Covid 19 pandemic, during which physical distancing adds to the sense of isolation. Most places of worship, of all faiths, have a website which contains their contact details. If anyone experiences difficulty in contacting a place of worship please text or email the Birmingham Council of Faiths and we will do our best to assist, e-mail pjrookes@gmail.com or 07703336088