

A close-up photograph of a purple daisy flower with numerous water droplets on its petals. The center of the flower is a mix of orange and yellow. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

# Helpful information following a death at Heartlands Hospital



We would like to express our sympathy and sincere condolences to you and your family at this sad time.

There are many practical matters for you to manage at this time and the aim of this booklet is to offer you some help and guidance.

### **What do I do now?**

- You should telephone Bereavement Services on the next working day following your relative's/friend's death
- The office is open Monday–Friday between the hours of 10:30–16:00, and can be contacted on **0121 424 1476**

### **Birmingham Heartlands Hospital**

Bordesley Green East  
Bordesley Green  
Birmingham  
B9 5SS

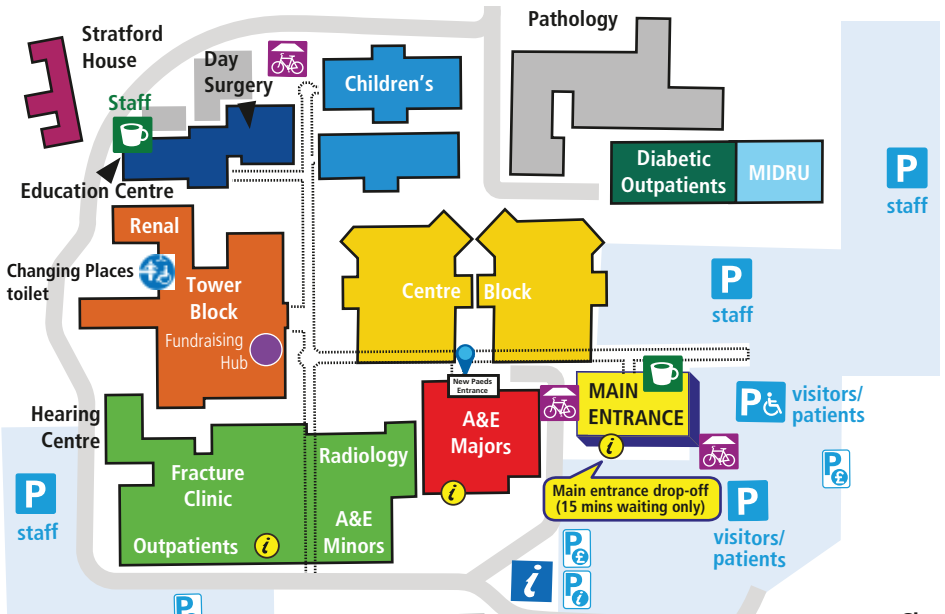
Main switchboard telephone number: **0121 424 2000**

# Contents

Location of Bereavement Services	5
Formalities	6
Contacting Bereavement Services	6
Medical Certificate for Cause of Death (MCCD)	7
Referral to Coroner	8
Deaths in the Emergency Department	9
Hospital post-mortem	10
Viewing arrangements	10
Dignified relocation	11
Tissue donation	11
Registering the death	11
Parking	13
Fast track release	13
Out of England and Wales	15
Organising the funeral	15
People you may need to notify	16
In memory donations	17
What is grief?	18
Why do people react differently?	18
How might people respond?	19
What can family and friends do to help?	19
Talking to children about death	20
Support and advice	20
Useful organisations	21
Further information	25

# Location of Bereavement Services

If arriving by public transport or taxi please go to the Information Desk at the main entrance.



## Directions to the bereavement entrance from the Main Entrance

- Walk through the main entrance
- Turn left towards the main reception desk
- Ask for the Bereavement Services team who are located in this area

**We will issue you with a complimentary car park pass**

## Formalities

Certain formalities must be dealt with following the death of a relative or friend.

Before the death can be registered, you will require a medical certificate that states the cause of death. This is normally issued by a hospital doctor and will be given to you by a member of staff from the bereavement office at the hospital.

**We would therefore advise you to not attend the hospital without first speaking to the staff in the bereavement office.**

## Contacting Bereavement Services

To contact Bereavement Services, please telephone after 10:30 on the first working day after the death has occurred.

When you contact the office a member of the team will request further information from you.

This will include:

- Full name of the person who has died
- Date of their death
- Confirmation of next-of-kin, and/or person leading with the arrangements
- If cremation or burial is planned
- The last occupation of the deceased person
- Whether there are valuables or property to collect

A member of the team will then discuss with you when the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) will be available.

The MCCD should be available to you on the third working day following a death. However, if a referral has been made to the Coroner this will not be possible (please see 'Referral to the Coroner' section on page 8).

Telephone: **0121 424 1476** Monday–Friday (10:30–16:00)

Please note that the offices are closed weekends and bank holidays. However, please do leave a message on our answer phone during these times.

## Medical Certificate for Cause of Death (MCCD)

By law, a medical doctor is required to provide a MCCD when a person has died to confirm and state the cause of death.

The MCCD must be completed by a doctor who has seen the patient alive in the last 14 days.

The information on the MCCD must accurately record the cause of death.

This information will be transferred by the registrar onto the death certificate and will become the formal record.

The doctor who is to complete the MCCD must have discussed the case with the consultant in charge of the patient's care.

The deceased person's care will be reviewed by an appointed Trust consultant – called a medical examiner (a senior doctor who has had no input into your relative's/friend's care). The medical examiner will confirm the cause of death and then the paperwork will be released to you. The medical examiner will also explain the cause of death to you.

If the medical examiner is unable to see you when you collect the paperwork, they may contact you by telephone.

The aim of Bereavement Services is to complete the MCCD and to offer an appointment to the person leading on arrangements on the third working day following the death.

The appointment will be organised for you by the bereavement staff and will be in the Bereavement Services office.

Occasionally, there may be circumstances where the completion of this certificate may not be possible within this time scale. The team will keep you informed of changes to the process if this happens (please see 'Referral to Coroner' on page 8 for further information).

**Please do not book appointments either with the Registrar or plan a funeral date until you have confirmation that the paperwork is ready to collect.**

## Referral to Coroner

In some circumstances, the death may have to be referred to the Coroner. This is a legal requirement and cannot be avoided.

These may include:

- If the death was sudden or unexplained
- If it occurred during or following surgery/procedures
- If your relative/friend had a fall/fracture
- If the death occurred following chemotherapy
- If your relative/friend was involved in an accident
- If the death of your relative/friend may have involved an industrial disease

Referrals to the Coroner need not be a cause for concern, although it will delay the issuing of the medical certificate. The bereavement staff will talk through why the referral has been made and will explain the process to you.

The role of the Coroner is to establish the cause of a person's death. Until the decision is made by the Coroner the deceased person will remain in our care.

When the Coroner has reached a decision they will notify the next of kin. Bereavement Services will have to wait until formal notification has been received from the Coroner's office before they can proceed.

Although a referral to the Coroner is made, after reviewing the situation the Coroner may give permission for the hospital doctor to issue the medical certificate.

As soon as the MCCD is complete, Bereavement staff will contact the next of kin leading on arrangements to make an appointment to collect the MCCD.



If the cause of the person's death is unknown the Coroner may order a post-mortem. This is a physical examination to identify the cause of death.

If the Coroner decides it is necessary to proceed with further investigations, the Coroner's office will notify the next of kin and arrange for the deceased person to be collected and transferred into their care.

Although your consent is not needed for this procedure, the Coroner's officers will inform you if the procedure is required.

Alternatively if the Coroner feels that more investigation is necessary, an inquest may be held.

A Coroner's inquest will provide an opportunity for all those involved to talk through the circumstances leading up to the death. This allows family members to hear about the events leading up to their relative's/friend's death. It also provides an opportunity for relatives/friends to ask questions regarding their relative's/friend's care and subsequent death.

For further information regarding your relative's/friend's referral to the Coroner, you may contact the Coroner's administrator on: **0121 303 3228**, selecting option 1.

### **Opening times:**

Monday to Friday, 09:00–16:00, excluding bank holidays.

When a death is referred to the Coroner we would advise against making any funeral arrangements until you have had confirmation to proceed from the Coroner's Office.

## **Deaths in the Emergency Department**

When a death occurs in the Emergency Department, in most circumstances, the death will require referral to the Coroner.

Referrals will be received by the Coroner during working hours and the number for the Coroner and opening times are the same as those listed on page 9.

Bereavement Services will be aware of the death on the first working day following the death and may be contacted after 10:30 for information and clarification.

## Hospital post-mortem

Even when the doctors know the cause of death, they may make a request for a hospital post-mortem in order to gain further knowledge about the illness. Unlike a Coroner's post-mortem, this can only be done with the agreement of the next of kin and after a consent form has been signed.

## Viewings arrangements

Families/friends are encouraged to view the deceased person at the funeral directors, as this is often a more comfortable and suitable environment. However, there are occasions when you may wish to view the patient whilst they are still in the hospital mortuary. If you do wish to view the patient, we advise only having one viewing per family. There may be circumstances when it is not possible to view the patient and this will be discussed with the next of kin. We have a room with a waiting area. This is not dedicated to any religious order or faith.

If you would like to view your deceased relative or friend whilst they are in hospital, please contact the ward or unit where your relative or friend died so that an appointment can be arranged for you.

We would advise that children under the age of 16 should be accompanied if they wish to view a patient.

Viewing over the weekend is only possible in exceptional circumstances and is restricted to close family and friends of the deceased person.

Please contact the Site Manager via switchboard to arrange this:  
**0121 424 2000.**

## Dignified relocation

During busy periods, it may be necessary to transfer the care of your loved one to a different hospital site within University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust or to a funeral director externally.

If you have identified a funeral director, please inform the bereavement office to enable us, if possible, to facilitate the transfer of your loved one directly into the care of your appointed funeral home.

## Tissue donation

Many families find the donation of tissues (e.g. cornea, heart valves, skin and bone) a source of comfort. If you feel your relative/friend would have liked to help others in this special way please contact the National Referral Centre, via **0800 432 0559**.

In order for tissue donation to occur you will need to make this call as soon as possible, as tissue donations have to be completed within 24 hours of death occurring. The tissue donor coordinator will reassure you regarding any concerns you may have and offer advice and support.

## Registering the death

Once you have received the MCCD you will need to register the death. This is a legal requirement.

All deaths that occur at the Birmingham Heartlands Hospital should be registered at the Birmingham Register Office within five days from the date of death unless there has been referral to the Coroner.

### **Birmingham Register Office**

Telephone: **0121 675 1000**

An appointment must be made to register the death at

Birmingham Register Office and the MCCD must be taken with you to the appointment.

Appointments can be made either by telephone or via the website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/registeroffice](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/registeroffice) and then clicking on the 'Register a death ' section. If your relative/friend has been referred to the Coroner you will **NOT** be able to make an online appointment. If this is the case, you can complete the 'Contact Us' section on the website. A member of Birmingham Register office staff will then contact you to arrange an appointment.

The Birmingham Register Office is open between the hours of 09:00–16:00, Monday–Friday for appointments excluding bank holidays.

**Address:**

Birmingham Register Office  
Holliday Wharf  
Holliday Street  
Birmingham  
B1 1TJ

**At the appointment the registrar will ask you for the following information about the person who has died:**

- Full name/birth name
- Date and place of birth
- Date and place of death
- Occupation
- Marital status
- The full name of the deceased's spouse or legal civil partnership (if applicable)
  - Whether they are alive or deceased
  - Their occupation, and if they have/were retired

**It is helpful if you can take the following with you when attending to register the death.**

- The deceased person's passport, driving licence, National Insurance number and medical card if available
- Proof of **your** identification such as your passport or driving licence
- Cash/debit card to pay for the death certificate and any additional copies

Details of fees can be found on the registry office website.

Extra certificates may be needed to provide to insurance or pension companies.

**The registrar will also give you:**

- A **green** form which you must take to your chosen funeral director
- A **white** form (9BD8) which you must complete and send to the Department of Work and Pensions

## Parking

There is pay and display parking located near to each office.

If you are travelling by public transport please visit the following website to access local bus and train information and timetables:  
[www.networkwestmidlands.com](http://www.networkwestmidlands.com)

## Fast track releases

In most instances a fast track release of the deceased person may be requested, for cultural or religious reasons.

Certain criteria must be met before the release can be agreed:

- **The release is for burial only**
- A doctor who has seen the patient alive in the last 14 days must be available to complete the MCCD

- The death **does not** need to be referred to the Coroner
- We can only facilitate a release when the MCCD is available and between the hours of 08:00–20:00
- It is not possible to release the deceased person outside of these times

**If a death occurs between the hours of 08:30–16:00, Monday–Friday, the following process will happen:**

- Contact should be made with Bereavement Services. Contact details can be found on page 6
- Bereavement Services will liaise with the medical team to complete the MCCD as soon as possible
- The next of kin leading on arrangements will be notified by telephone when this is complete and an appointment made to come and collect it. Please do not come directly to the bereavement office as it will take some time to prepare
- Bereavement Services will allow the funeral director to collect the deceased person without a green form from Birmingham Register Office. This is only possible if the next of kin has given written permission and provided details for their funeral director
- The death must be registered at the Birmingham Register Office (see page 12 for details)
- The family must ensure that the full name and address of the patient has been given to the funeral director as this information will be required for the hospital to release the patient

**If a death occurs between the hours of 16:00–20:00 Monday–Friday, or from 08:00–20:00 Saturday–Sunday and bank holidays, the following will happen:**

- Release of the deceased person will be organised by our senior site manager who can be contacted via switchboard (see page 3)
- We have a clear process and guidance for our senior site managers to follow to facilitate the release of your relative/ friend

Should the death require referral to the Coroner this will not

take place until the next working day and a fast release will not be possible. (See 'Referral to the Coroner' on page 8).

## Out of England and Wales

If you want to repatriate your relative/friend out of England and Wales, you will need to provide photographic identification such as a passport, driving licence or ID card.

## Organising the funeral

Whilst we cannot recommend a specific funeral director to you, we can help to advise you on what to expect.

If you are organising a cremation your funeral director will need specific paperwork to be completed by the hospital. It is helpful for us to know as soon as possible if you are planning a cremation – this is why we will ask you about this when you first contact us.

If your relative/friend has a pacemaker or other cardiac device in place at the time of death, this will need to be deactivated and removed prior to cremation. The hospital staff will arrange this on your behalf.

The medical examiner will complete the cremation paperwork. As part of this process, you as the next of kin may be contacted by telephone to discuss your relative's/friend's cause of death.

This process is in place to enable you to ask any questions you may have about the care of your relative/friend.

If we are unable to answer your questions, we may suggest that you contact the consultant in charge of your relative's/friend's care via their secretary who can be contacted on the switchboard.

We may also put you in touch with the Patient Relations Department who can be contacted by telephone on: **0121 424 0808**, or via the main hospital switchboard: **0121 424 2000**.

Funerals can be expensive and often unexpected. If you are worried about finances please speak to Bereavement Services as

we may be able to offer advice to guide you.

Most funeral directors will require a deposit before agreeing to conduct the funeral.

## People you may need to notify

Birmingham City Council can help you with informing local and central government agencies who will need to be notified of the change in circumstances. This is known as the "Tell Us Once" service.

Following registration the registrar will provide you with details of this service which you can then contact on line or by telephone. Please ask the Register Office for details.

There will be other organisations you may need to notify such as the following:

### **Legal/Financial**

- Bank/Building Society
- Insurance companies
- Solicitor
- Credit card companies

### **Employment/Pension**

- Employer
- Trade Union

### **Domestic and Personal**

- GP
- Royal Mail deliveries
- TV Licensing
- Rental companies
- Gas/Electricity/Water
- Cancel appointments
- Newspaper/Milkman
- Clubs/Associations



- Telephone company

### **Items that may need returning:**

- Pensions/Benefits books
- Passport
- Driving Licence
- National Insurance card
- NHS equipment on loan
- Library cards/season tickets
- Disability parking permit

## **In memory donations**

Rather than flowers at the funeral of their loved ones, many people now ask for donations in their memory. Your funeral director can arrange for donations to go to a charity or cause of your choice.

If you would like to make a donation to the hospital, you can donate to University Hospitals Birmingham Charity, the official charity for the hospital which works to provide items, equipment and facilities that are 'over and above' that which the NHS can fund.

Your donations can go to the ward that cared for your relative/ friend through their end of life, which will help the Charity to purchase items specifically for the ward.

Donations and specific instructions can be sent to the address below, and cheques can be made payable to:

University Hospitals Birmingham Charity  
5th Floor Nuffield House  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
B15 2TH

Please include details of your contact information and we will write to you to let you know that your donation has been received.

More information can be found on the UHB Charity website at [www.hospitalcharity.org](http://www.hospitalcharity.org)

Alternatively, please call **0121 371 4852** if you have any further queries or questions.

## What is grief?

All of us will at some point face the death of someone we love.

Bereavement is probably the most serious loss we have to cope with, yet often, it is something we are completely unprepared for.

Grief is the normal reaction to the loss of someone we love. It is a process that helps us to come to terms with that loss. There are no right and wrong ways to grieve, and sadly no shortcuts to the healing process.

People from differing cultures and religions have their own distinctive ways of coping. Whilst the manner of expressing feelings may be displayed differently, the feelings associated with loss are similar.

## Why do people react differently?

Bereavement is a very different, unique and personal experience for everyone. We are all individuals and all have our own way of grieving.

The way you feel can depend on the relationship you had with the person who died as well as your own personal experiences.

The circumstances of the death may also affect your grief. For example, the feelings you have when someone dies following a long illness may be different to the feelings you have if your loved one died suddenly in an accident.

## How might people respond?

You may feel a variety of physical and emotional responses, such as:

- Crying or feeling weepy, tired, anxious and withdrawn
- You may feel unable to concentrate – simple everyday tasks may feel like, or become major obstacles
- You may feel completely overwhelmed with grief
- You may suddenly become aware of danger and death, and develop a much stronger sense of your own mortality
- You may feel relief that someone's suffering is over
- You may feel guilty, accusing yourself of all sorts of things
- You may feel anger towards the person who has died for leaving you
- You may start to question your faith

## What can family and friends do to help?

When someone suffers bereavement, sharing ones feelings with others is important. Friends and family can help by being there and listening.

When we support someone in distress we may experience feelings of inadequacy. It is undoubtedly difficult if we are grieving ourselves. It is not really about the words, but about listening, being patient and showing concern. It is about caring.

Practical help may be useful, particularly in the early days and weeks. Help with funeral arrangements, cooking meals and help with housework is often appreciated.

If you are the friend or relative of a bereaved person, take the lead from them. It is important that people do not assume they know what is best for them.

# Talking to children about death

As adults we feel the need to protect our children from things that we might find difficult. It is easy to assume children will not understand death and bereavement, or that it will be too upsetting for them.

However, we can often underestimate a child's ability to cope. Like adults, children find it harder to cope if they are not told what is happening and can be more frightened by their own imagination.

Children should be told facts in a simple manner, using appropriate words, e.g. dead, rather than lost or asleep. Give them plenty of time to ask questions, and offer plenty of love and reassurance.

It is helpful for adults to share feelings with children, such as feelings of sadness. By doing so they learn that it is natural to feel sad when someone dies. Children often like to draw pictures or write stories as part of their way of saying goodbye.

## Support and advice

We hope you have found this booklet helpful. If you feel it would help you to talk to someone, you may find the following contact numbers useful.

You may find that your religious community can be of comfort at this time.

The hospital's chaplaincy team are available for advice and support.

If you would like to speak to the Chaplaincy Team please telephone the hospital switchboard and ask to be connected to the chaplaincy team.

The hospital switchboard number is: **0121 424 2000**

## Useful organisations

### **Acorns**

Telephone: **0131 208 1882**

Email: [acorns.info@gmail.com](mailto:acorns.info@gmail.com)

### **Age Concern Birmingham**

Offers advice, information and services for the elderly and their carers.

76-78 Boldmere Road, Sutton Coldfield, B73 5TJ

Telephone: **0121 362 3650**

National Helpline: **0800 009 966**

Website: [www.ageconcernbirmingham.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernbirmingham.org.uk)

### **Age UK**

Offers advice, information and services for the elderly and their carers.

55 Alcester Road South, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7JG

Telephone: **0121 437 0033**

The Core, Central Library Building, Homer Road, Solihull, B91 3RG

Telephone: **0121 704 7840**

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

### **Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire**

Provides help and support for families and friends of those who have died from alcohol related illness.

57B Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BB

Helpline: **0800 0086 811**

Email: [enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk)

Website: [www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)

### **Bereavement Support Network**

Offers practical advice and support after the loss of a relative or friend.

Telephone: **0808 168 9607**

Website: [www.bereavementadvice.co.uk](http://www.bereavementadvice.co.uk)

## **Carers UK (Formerly Carers National Association)**

20-25 Glass House Yard, London EC1A 4JT

Telephone: **0808 808 7777**

Website: **[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)**

## **Child Bereavement UK**

Helpline: **0800 02 88 40**

Website: **[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)**

## **Child Death Helpline**

Helpline: **0800 282986**

Website: **[www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)**

Provides a listening service run by volunteers who have experienced the death of a child.

## **The Compassionate Friends**

For bereavement support after the death of a child (of any age)

Kilburn Grange, Priory Park Road, London, NW6 7UJ

Telephone: **0345 123 2304**

Hours: 10:00–16:00 and 18:30–22:30 every day

Website: **[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)**

## **Cruse Bereavement Care**

PO Box 800, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1RG

National helpline: **0808 808 1677**

Local Helpline: **0121 687 8010**

Website: **[www.crusebirmingham.co.uk](http://www.crusebirmingham.co.uk)**

## **Edward's Trust**

Provides support for all those affected by the death of a child or bereavement counselling for children who have lost a parent, sibling or significant carer.

Telephone: **0121 454 1705**

Email: **[admin@edwardstrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@edwardstrust.org.uk)**

Website: **[www.edwardstrust.org.uk](http://www.edwardstrust.org.uk)**

## **The Lullaby Trust (Formerly The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths)**

Raises awareness of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), provides expert advice on safer sleep for babies and offers emotional support for bereaved families.

Artillery House, 11–19 Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RT

Telephone: **0808 802 6868**

Website: **[www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)**

## **The Miscarriage Association**

c/o Clayton Hospital, Northgate, Wakefield WF1 3JS

Telephone: **01924 200 799** (24-hour answerphone)

Website: **[www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)**

## **Road Peace**

Supporting victims after road death and injury.

Telephone: **0845 450 0355** Monday–Friday 09:00–17:00

Email: **[info@roadpeace.org](mailto:info@roadpeace.org)**

Website: **[www.roadpeace.org](http://www.roadpeace.org)**

## **Samaritans**

13 Bow Street, Birmingham B1 1DW

Telephone: **116 123** (this number is free to call)

Website: **[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**

## **Support after Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM)**

Provide support through self help group for families and friends of murder and manslaughter victims.

Cranmer House, 39 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6DZ

Telephone: **0845 872 3440**

Website: **[www.samm.org.uk](http://www.samm.org.uk)**

## **Still Birth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)**

Victoria Charity Centre, 11 Belgrave Road, London, SW1V 1RB

Telephone: **0808 164 3332**

Website: **[www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk)**

## **Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)**

Self help group which offers support to families and friends of those who have committed suicide.

Helpline: **0300 111 5065**

Website: **[www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)**

## **Sudden**

Sudden is a global charitable initiative by Brake, the road safety charity whose aim is to help ease the suffering of people bereaved by any kind of sudden death.

Website: **[www.suddendeath.org](http://www.suddendeath.org)**

## **Switchboard LGBT+**

Provides support for those who have lost a partner in a same gender relationship.

Helpline: **0300 330 0630** 10:00–23:00 every day

Website: **[www.switchboard.lgbt](http://www.switchboard.lgbt)**

## **Terence Higgins Trust**

314–320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP

Telephone: **0808 802 1221**

Website: **[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)**

## **Victim Support (Birmingham)**

3rd Floor Alpha Tower, Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1TT

Telephone: **0808 168 9111**

Website: **[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)**

## **Winston's Wish**

An organisation helping bereaved children and young people rebuild their lives after a family death.

Telephone: **08088 020 021** Monday–Friday 09:00–17:00

Wednesday evening 19:00–21:30

Website: **[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)**



## Further information

If you have any issues regarding the care your relative/friend received, the patient relations team is available to support and assist you with any concerns you may have.

They can be contacted in the following ways:

Telephone: **0121 424 0808**

Email: [patientrelations@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:patientrelations@uhb.nhs.uk)

Postal address:

**Patient Relations**

**Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham**

**Edgbaston**

**Birmingham**

**B15 2GW**