



Bereavement Care

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Suffolk is committed to supporting the lodge Almoners and Brethren in times of Bereavement with support, advice and friendship.

This information can be used as guide when assisting the Brethren of your lodge and could help when trying to help someone who has undergone a Bereavement.

If you feel any of your Brethren need or would benefit from further support from the province and this can include financial, signposting or just a friendly chat, please do not hesitate to get in contact with your lodge Almoner or the Bereavement lead for Suffolk for further help and support.

Bereavement Lead for Suffolk - Jon Neill
Call 07771933454 or email jnneill20@gmail.com

As almoner you should support widows and their families in their time of need, helping them with their grief and guide them through some of the practical implications following the death of their loved one.

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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 phone call or suggest a video call if they are comfortable in doing so. In addition, you should enquire as to whether the family wishes for the death to be notified within the Province.

Under normal circumstances, a member of the Lodge might attend the funeral but this is not possible under current restrictions where there is a limit on the number of people who can attend.

Knowing what to say and how

For the inexperienced almoner, when supporting a bereaved person or family, giving them reassurances, normalising their feelings, experiences, behaviours and physical symptoms is really important. If you don't feel confident in doing so, you may wish to keep the following in mind when speaking to the bereaved:

- 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 platitudes like 'time is a great healer' or 'they are not suffering anymore'. Instead, empathise by putting yourself into their shoes and actively listen to what they have to say.
- Remember that you are not a counsellor and shouldn't attempt to be. There are a number of specialist organisations that can help and you should refer the person to these (see Useful Contacts).
- Keep the Lodge informed on their progress but only if you have their permission to do so.

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 most important 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 (limited regional availability) allows a death to be reported to many government organisations in one go.
- Arranging the funeral. There are currently restrictions affecting funeral arrangements because of coronavirus. If using one, a Funeral Director can give help and guidance about how this might affect arrangements. 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.

Supporting the bereaved

The death of a loved one can have an impact on the bereaved person'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 up to 21 months after can be made however there will be fewer monthly payments. Contact the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) for information and advice (see Useful contacts).
- 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

Call the Bereavement Service Helpline on 0800 731 0469.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

Cruse Bereavement Care

Offers support after the death of someone close.

Call 0808 808 1677.

www.cruse.org.uk

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

Turn2Us

Helping people access the money available to them through welfare benefits and grants. Call 0808 802 2000.

www.turn2us.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Services to bereaved children and young people.

Call 01242 515 157.

www.winstonswish.org.uk

The Masonic Charitable Foundation

Call 0800 035 60 90 to discuss gaining access to the Counselling Careline.

www.mcf.org.uk

The MCF's Advice and Support Team

Offer advice, guidance and support on a range of issues. Contact them by calling 0800 035 60 90. Your 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 bereavement at

www.mcf.org.uk/almoner



Provincial Grand Lodge of Suffolk

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The information contained in this factsheet is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute advice. The organisations referred to for further help are just a sample of other support services available.