

Death of Service User Policy

Policy Statement

This policy provides guidance to care staff in the event of their having a role to play in the arrangements that must be made after the death of a service user.

The policy should be used with reference to the organisation's policy on end-of-life care. It is written in line with Regulation 9: Person-centred Care of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014. This regulation requires service providers to ensure that the care and treatment of service users must be appropriate, must meet their needs and must reflect their preferences, including at the time of their death.

Heydays Care and Support Services will comply with all legal requirements and best practice guidance relating to the death of a service user, including the Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009, Regulation 16: Notification of Death of a Person Who Uses Services, which states that a registered person Dawn Darby Manager must send notifications about deaths of service users, where the deaths occur during the carrying out of the service or in connection with it.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has changed how they regulate by acknowledging the need for change to reflect the evolving landscape in health and social care. Whilst on-site inspections remain essential elements of performance assessments and the opportunity to observe care service users receive, they are not the only way to assess quality.

In the event of a death, either expected or sudden, Heydays Care and Support Services follows all required procedures and provides support to bereaved relatives, friends and other service users who may be affected. It ensures all staff comply with the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on [*Handling the Deceased with Suspected or Confirmed Covid-19*](#).

It is the policy of Heydays Care and Support Services to make sure that in the event of a death, either expected or sudden, it follows all required procedures and provides support to bereaved relatives, friends and other service users who may be affected.

It is recognised that people receiving domiciliary care services could die for reasons that are unrelated to the services provided. In most cases, Heydays Care and Support Services will not be involved in the arrangements made after someone's death.

Guidance if a Service User Dies with Suspected Coronavirus

If a service user dies, precautions should be followed to protect staff if the cause is unknown.

Care staff should comply with the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on [*Handling the Deceased with Suspected or Confirmed Covid-19*](#).

This states that while risk of transmission from Covid-19 from the deceased is low, there may be ongoing risk of infection from handling body fluids and tissues where infection is suspected or confirmed. The exact duration that SARS-CoV-2 can remain infectious in body fluids and tissues in a deceased body is unknown. Standard infection control precautions (SICPs) and transmission-based precautions (TBPs) should be sufficient to protect those handling the deceased with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 while deceased service users remain in the care home environment.

Precautions are outlined which includes:

- use of PPE as per guidance
- maintaining a safe distance (at least 2m) from the bereaved and avoid contact with others with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 infection. Ask others to leave the room and any areas the deceased will travel through as they are moved
- place a barrier, such as a cloth or mask, over the mouth of the deceased when moving them to try and prevent the release of droplets from the respiratory tract
- body bags are not deemed essential but could minimise infection risk. They are recommended where leakage of bodily fluids is likely
- cloth wrappings (shrouds or wraps) and coffins may be used to manage the risk of contact transmission but are not a replacement for body bags, where recommended.

Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs) and Transmission-Based Precautions (TBPs) must be used for bodies. No further precautions are required unless Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs) are being undertaken.

This guidance remains under review and may be updated in line with the changing situation as required. Heydays Care and Support Services will ensure it regularly checks for updates.

If notified of a death Heydays Care and Support Services will send its condolences to the family members of the bereaved and will sensitively address any termination of contract issues as and when appropriate.

There could be instances, however, when someone dies while care service staff are actively involved and they may need to act to make sure that due process is followed.

For example, care staff could find one of their service users dead when arriving or they could be present when a service user dies. It is also possible that agency staff could be closely involved in the provision of end-of-life care.

It is Heydays Care and Support Services policy to make sure that in the event of a death, either expected or sudden, it follows all required procedures and provides support to bereaved relatives, friends and others affected.

Actions to be Taken after Death of a Service User

The key actions to be taken include the following (not during a pandemic).

1. In the event of visiting a home and finding a person apparently dead, immediately call for an ambulance/emergency services.
2. Notify the line manager, who might contact the next of kin, police or GP in response to the needs of the situation (or instruct the staff to do any of these things).
3. Make note of the time of arrival and finding the person evidently dead. Record the date and time of death if this occurs in the care worker's presence.

4. Notify the GP if appropriate, though in most circumstances this will be done by a relative.

In certain circumstances, Heydays Care and Support Services manager might need to do the following.

5. Seek verification of the death from a medical practitioner or, if an expected death, from a registered nurse who is qualified to carry out the verification procedures.
6. Notify the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in line with its "Notifying the Death of a Service User" reporting procedures (Regulation 16 of the Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009).
7. Record any unusual circumstances surrounding the death that might need further investigation.
8. Identify any bereavement support, counselling or occupational health support needs of staff who are emotionally affected by the person's death or the events surrounding it.
9. Be prepared to communicate and co-operate with any other agencies that might need to investigate the death, e.g., the police, local safeguarding authority, CQC.
10. Prepare staff for any such involvement.

Training

All new staff are taken through the organisation's policy on the death of a service user as part of their induction training.

Heydays Care and Support Services also provides staff with training on bereavement and loss as part of its ongoing training program.

This training focuses on how people cope with death, personally and culturally, and in respect of religious and non-religious beliefs. It also focuses on the diverse customs and practices used to mark a person's death and how to provide emotional support to people who are grieving.