



**Support and Guidance**

**Death in Service (Member of Staff)**

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1. Introduction

The death of a colleague can be a traumatic experience for anyone. Colleagues (and potentially students) who worked closely with, or knew, the deceased will be affected. It is imperative that the University’s response is appropriate, effective, and sensitive to the needs of individuals. Such events are, thankfully, rare and it is important that you feel supported and are clear about the actions that you need to take.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and support for managers and HR staff when a death in service is reported.

We acknowledge that each circumstance will be different and that individuals may react differently and at different times to the news. A tailored approach may therefore be needed when providing support to colleagues, within the parameters outlined below.

## 3. Notification to the University

There are several ways in which the University can be notified that a member of staff has died:

- By a family member, next of kin, friend or by a colleague who is a close friend of the deceased.
- By the authorities, for example after an accident/natural disaster.

The death may be sudden or might be the result of a long illness of which colleagues in the school/service may already be aware.

If you are the person who receives the initial contact advising the University of the death of a member of staff, please ensure the conversation is handled sensitively as this will be a difficult time for the individual sharing the sad news.

You should be guided by the caller during any conversation, consider offering to call them back if they are too upset to speak. You may also wish to give consideration to the following:

- Offer your condolences and offer support.
- Gently ask questions about the date and details of the death. They may not be able to respond to the questions or may not have all the details, offer to speak with them at a later date or ask if they would like you to speak with someone else.

- Ask who the best person is for the University to keep in contact with and provide information to. Please take the name, telephone number, email address, and home address. Confirm their relationship with the deceased.
- If you are asked to provide any information relating to the deceased during the telephone call, explain that such information cannot be shared over the telephone. Ask sensitively if the request could be put in writing and provide details of the nominated point of contact.
- Explain the University will do all it can to keep requests for information to a minimum.
- Ask if there are any colleagues at the University that they wish to contact or offer to do this on their behalf.
- Depending on the nature of the call, you may be able to clarify whether the family are content for the University to advise colleagues. If they ask for the University to inform colleagues of the death, agree with them what should be said.
- Remember you may need to repeat some of the information – this will be a very difficult conversation for the caller to have with you.

Notification may also be through email. If this occurs the email should be forwarded on to your Head of HR.

If notification is received from the authorities, it is important to establish if the family have been made aware. In the event the authorities request information from you, make a note of the request, along with their contact details, and pass this on to your Head of HR. Information should not be shared without the caller's identification being verified.

#### 4. Next steps

##### 4.1. During working hours

When you receive notification of a death in service during work hours you should immediately inform:

- Director of People and Culture – Louise Kindon ([L.Kindon@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:L.Kindon@leeds.ac.uk)) or  
Director of People Services – Linda Mortimer-Pine ([l.mortimer-pine@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:l.mortimer-pine@adm.leeds.ac.uk))
- Secretary and University Registrar – Jennifer Sewel ([J.A.Sewel@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:J.A.Sewel@leeds.ac.uk)) or  
Deputy Secretary – Andrew Mulholland ([A.P.Mulholland@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:A.P.Mulholland@leeds.ac.uk))

In the event that none of the above are available you should notify your Head of HR.

#### 4.2. Outside working hours or where email access is restricted

If notification is received out of working hours or where access to email is restricted, reporting should be via telephone to University Security on (0113) 343 2222. They will ensure that Secretariat and HR are contacted immediately.

The Vice-Chancellor and relevant members of University Executive Group (UEG) will be informed by the appropriate member of HR/Secretariat. They will ensure that any immediate external matters are handled appropriately.

#### 5. HR support

Your local HR team will provide you with support and advice so please also contact your Head of HR:

- Michelle Nettleton ([M.Nettleton@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:M.Nettleton@adm.leeds.ac.uk)) for AHC, FSS & LUBS
- Chris Craven ([c.p.craven@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.craven@adm.leeds.ac.uk)) for FBS, EPS & Environment
- Samantha Guy ([S.J.Guy@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:S.J.Guy@adm.leeds.ac.uk)) for FMH
- Ruth Buller ([r.buller@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:r.buller@adm.leeds.ac.uk)) for Professional Services

The Head of School/Service, has a key role to play in responding to the death of a colleague, advise and support will be provided by a co-ordinating team, see point 7 for further details.

#### 6. Notification to colleagues

A Coordinating team will be brought together by the Head of HR for the area in which the death has occurred. The main role of the team will be to provide support and

guidance to you. Further information can be found under Role of the Coordinating Team.

## 7. Role of the Head of School or Service

After consulting the co-ordinating team and seeking agreement from the next of kin to release the news, you should:

- Inform colleagues, possibly through an all-staff meeting (and students if appropriate), drawing attention to sources of support such as Staff Counselling or the Employee Assistance Programme. Further information can be found under Section - Useful information.
- Arrange to catchup with any staff who may be on leave or away from work as soon as practically possible to ensure they are kept up to date.
- Acknowledge that staff (and students) may be in shock, offer them time away from work to gather their thoughts, answer questions where you can but maintain confidentiality.
- Avoid speculation on circumstances surrounding the death, if cause, is not known.
- Ensure that the employee's internal telephone and emails are redirected to a colleague.
- Discuss and agree with the family an out of office message for the employee's outlook account.
- Liaise with the family and colleagues about funeral arrangements and attendance at the funeral (subject to family agreement).
- Write appropriate personal letters of condolence to the bereaved next of kin (to complement a formal letter sent by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the University institutionally).
- Be prepared to meet family members/friends and make arrangements for the collection of personal belongings, ensuring that belongings are handled sensitively.
- Arrange with family members/friends for the return of any University equipment.
- Take the lead in liaising with relevant parties about any memorial arrangements.

- Identify someone who can, if necessary, speak to the media if this should be required. It is important to note that any contact from the Media should be directed to the Media who will act as a point of contact. The team can be reached on [pressoffice@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:pressoffice@adm.leeds.ac.uk)

#### 8. Contact from the Media

In the sad event a death is reported in the media, or the circumstances surrounding the death attract media attention, you should direct any queries that you receive to [pressoffice@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:pressoffice@adm.leeds.ac.uk)

#### 9. The Co-ordinating Team

The co-ordinating team comprises of members from professional services as follows:

##### Human Resources

This will be your Head of HR or a nominated HR Manager. They will:

- Support in the co-ordination and notification of the University's response to the death of a member of staff.
- Liaise with other members of the co-ordinating team as appropriate.
- Liaise with the HR Operations Manager who will update SAP, and who will also liaise with the Payroll team regarding salary matters.
- Inform the Pensions Manager of the death in service and arrange for them to liaise directly with the next of kin regarding the management of pension administration (if the colleague was a member of the pension scheme).

##### Secretariat

A member of Secretariat will:

- Advise the Vice-Chancellor's office, UEG and other University bodies.
- Liaise with Security Services and the insurance team (if appropriate).
- Liaise with the Communications team regarding media enquiries, funeral information and an obituary (if appropriate).

- Ensure that the University flag is flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral, with family agreement.

### Staff Counselling and Psychological Support

A member of the team will:

- Provide individual and group specialist support as may be requested or required, immediately after the sad news has been shared and, in the days, or months ahead.
- Identify if specialist bereavement counselling or support is required and help with the implementation of this.
- Provide support to you and your management team, if required.

### The University Chaplaincy

A member of the team will:

- Advise on responding to a colleague's death.
- Be available to discuss issues such as University attendance at funerals and community remembrance.
- Offer support to family and friends (if appropriate).

Between them, the co-ordination team will:

- Arrange to meet with you as soon after the sad news has been received to provide support and guidance on next steps.
- Act as a bridge between your school/service and the range of resources available in the University and beyond.
- Ensure that appropriate pastoral support is made available to you and colleagues (and students if appropriate), both in the immediate days after receipt of the sad news and subsequently, including signposting to external organisations.
- Ensure that appropriate pastoral support via the Chaplaincy is made available to the bereaved family/friends.
- Liaise with external organisations e.g., the police, hospitals, coroner if applicable.

- Ensure that unnecessary duplication is avoided.
- Amend central records to avoid inappropriate contact.

#### 10. Death on campus

If a death occurs on campus or because of a specific 'critical incident', the Security team should be contacted immediately, refer to Useful information for contact details and Emergency services called.

#### 11. Student Death

In the sad event you are informed of a student death please refer to the Student Death protocol accessible [here](#).

#### 12. Contact details and supporting information

University Secretariat:

Email: [university-secretary@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:university-secretary@leeds.ac.uk)

University Chaplaincy:

Email: [chaplaincy@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@leeds.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0113 343 5074

University Security:

During working hours:

Telephone: 0113 343 5494 or 0113 343 5495

Out of hours:

Telephone: 0113 343 2222

#### University Staff Counselling and psychological support

Free, professional counselling for staff. The team can be contacted as follows:

Email: [staffcounselling@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:staffcounselling@leeds.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0113 3433694. When leaving a message explain the call is following the news of a death in service.

### Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

A free confidential service which complements the University Staff Counselling and psychological support team. EAP is run by Legal & General, they offer a wide range of wellbeing and support to staff and their immediate family which includes a spouse, partner, registered civil partner and children aged 16 to 24 in full time education, living in the same household.

EAP can be contacted as follows:

Confidential telephone helpline: 0800 316 9337

WhatsApp and SMS: Text 'hi' to 07418 360 046

#### Online:

Visit [legalandgeneral.com/eap](https://legalandgeneral.com/eap) and use the access code **BeWell**

#### Mobile app:

Download the Spectrum Life app through Apple Store or Google play and use the access code **BeWell**