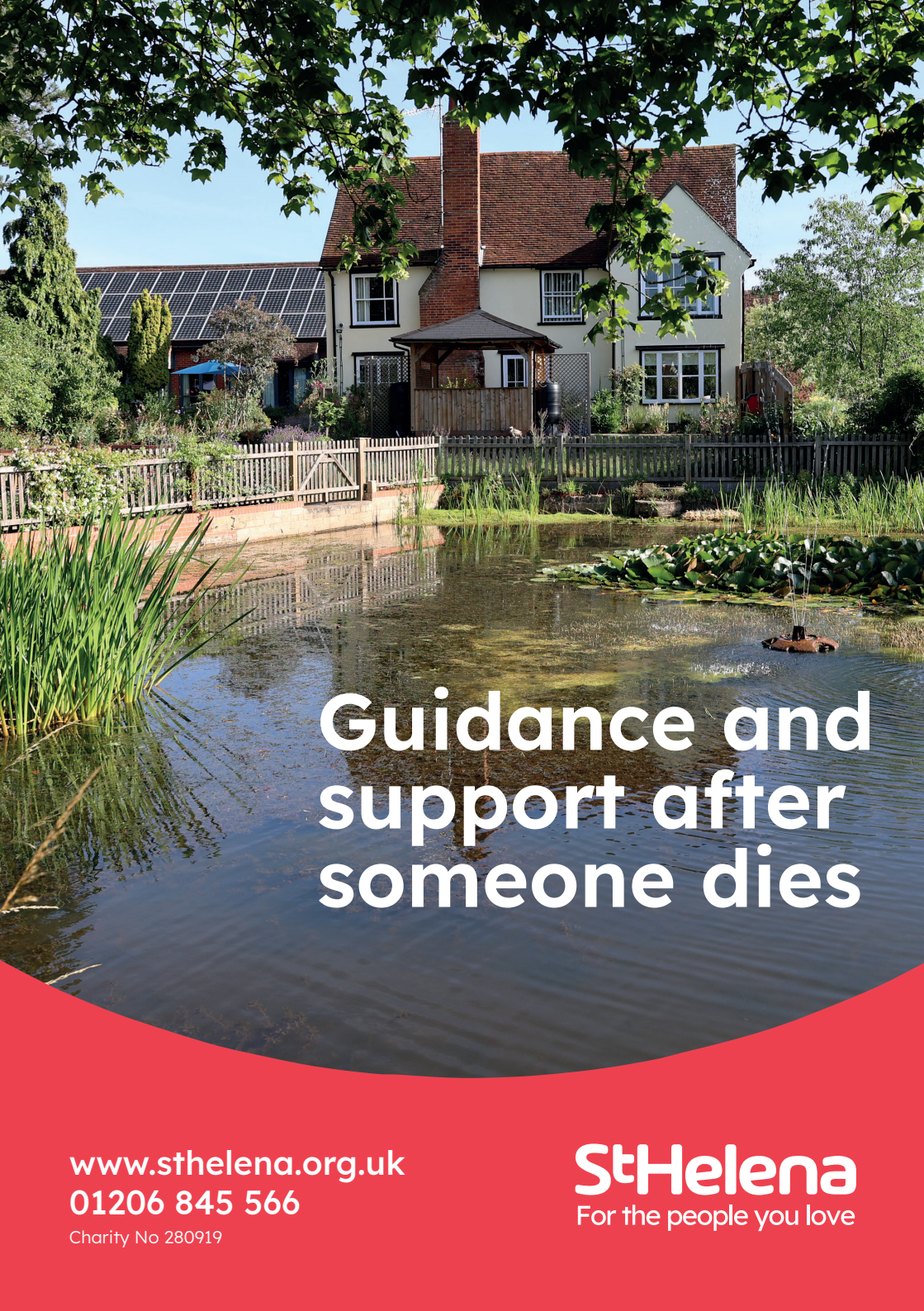




Guidance and support after someone dies

www.sthelenas.org.uk
01206 845 566

Charity No 280919

St Helena
For the people you love

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Guidance and support after someone dies

When someone dies, not only can it be a sad and difficult time but there are also many difficult, yet necessary, steps. This booklet is divided into sections and designed to guide and support you through the various tasks you will have to undertake in the coming days and weeks.

What to do first

There are three things you should do within the first few days after someone dies.

1. Obtain the medical certificate of cause of death. You will need this to register the death.
2. Register the death within five days. You will then receive the documents you need for the funeral.
3. Start to arrange the funeral. See the following pages of this booklet for more information.



Obtain the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

You will need this document completed before you can register the death. The certificate will show the cause of death and will be signed by a doctor who has seen the person in their lifetime. Following someone's death, a doctor who has seen the person in their lifetime will determine the cause of death and complete an MCCD which they will present to the medical examiner based at Colchester General Hospital. The medical examiner is an independent senior doctor whose role is to review the patient notes and check they agree with the cause of death. As part of this they will also contact you as the next of kin, to ensure there are no concerns or issues that haven't already been identified. Once they are happy with the MCCD, the medical examiner's office will send the completed MCCD to the register office.

For deaths that take place within the Hospice, this form will usually be completed by a Hospice doctor. At this point, we will ask you which funeral director you would like to use. Once you have instructed them, they will collect your loved one and move them to the chapel of rest. If you are unable to decide on a funeral director or the death has been referred to the coroner, we will instruct Hunnaball Family Funeral Group to collect the deceased and they will arrange to move them into the care of your chosen funeral director.

When someone dies at home or in a care home, the MCCD will usually be completed by the GP. You can also contact a funeral director immediately (many offer a 24 hour service) to collect your loved one and take them to the chapel of rest.

Under certain circumstances, a doctor will report a death to the local coroner. If this does happen, you can find out more at **www.gov.uk/after-a-death**

Register the death

All deaths must be registered within five days at the register office in the county where the death occurred .

If you go to another register office, they will be able to register the death but cannot issue a death certificate. These will be posted to you by the registrar in the county where the death took place and may cause a delay in the scheduling of the funeral.

If a funeral needs to be organised urgently for reasons of faith, it is sometimes possible to obtain the necessary paperwork from the register office prior to the full registration of the death.

To check the current guidance on how to register a death, please visit **www.gov.uk/register-a-death**



Who can register the death?

- A relative
- Someone who was present at the death
- A member of staff from St Helena or the hospital
- The person making arrangements with the funeral director

You can make an appointment at **www.essex.gov.uk** or by calling 0345 603 7632 and you can expect appointments to last approximately 30 minutes.

If your loved one died at the hospice, the next available appointment at the register office will be booked for the next of kin by the St Helena team.

You will need to take the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) with you to the appointment (please see page 2 on how to obtain the certificate), along with, and, if available, the deceased person's:

- Birth certificate
- Council tax bill
- Driving licence
- Marriage or civil partnership certificate
- NHS medical card
- Passport
- Proof of address (e.g. utility bill)

Don't worry if you can't find all these documents, you'll still be able to register the death without them.

You will need to tell the registrar:

- The person's full name at the time of death
- Any names previously used i.e. maiden name
- The person's date and place of birth
- Their last address
- Their occupation
- The full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving or deceased spouse or civil partner
- Whether they are getting a state pension or any other benefits

At the appointment you will receive a death certificate. You can buy extra death certificates at the appointment. Please note, some register offices only accept cash. Often banks, insurance companies, utility companies and other institutions will need original death certificates to close accounts and will not accept photocopies.

To find your nearest register office please visit **www.gov.uk/register-offices**. Please note, you will need to book an appointment in advance.

Practical next steps

Tell Us Once service

Register offices have access to the Tell Us Once service which can be used to report the death to most government and local government organisations. For more information visit

www.gov.uk/after-a-death

House clearance

We understand that clearing a home can be an emotional and overwhelming task, especially during times of loss or transition. That's why St Helena offers a full or part house clearance service across north east Essex, - carried out with professionalism, care and sensitivity.

Whether you need help with a few items or an entire property, our team is here to ease the burden and support you through the process. For a free quote, please call **01206 890 165** or email houseclearances@sthelena.org.uk.

Other information

If the deceased registered as an organ donor, they may have told someone close to them. More information can be found at www.organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation

“ **Thank you so much for all you did in clearing Mum and Dad's house yesterday.**

You made what was a hard and difficult job that much easier and for that I am truly grateful. It is comforting knowing that some funds will be raised for St Helena as they looked after my mum so well, so it is a charity close to our hearts. ”

House clearance service user

Stopping junk mail to the recently deceased

If someone you know has died, the amount of unwanted marketing post being sent to them can be greatly reduced which helps to stop painful daily reminders.

By registering with the free service **www.stopmail.co.uk** the names and addresses of the deceased are removed from mailing lists, stopping most advertising mail within as little as six weeks. If you cannot access the internet you can call 0333 006 8114, where you will be asked for very simple information that will take only a few minutes to complete. Alternatively, ask the Medical Examiner team for a leaflet that can be returned in the post.

This free of charge service provided by the Bereavement Support Network will not only actively reduce unwanted marketing mail but can also help reduce the likelihood of identity theft, following the death of someone close. The information is not used for any other purpose and you only have to complete this once. Additionally to Stop Mail a comparable service can also be accessed from the Bereavement Register or Deceased Preference Service if you would prefer to use them.

How to arrange a funeral

The only legal requirements in England and Wales are that the death is certified and registered, and the deceased is either buried or cremated.

Did you know?

- You do not need to have a funeral ceremony
- You do not need a religious minister
- You do not have to use a funeral director

Funeral arrangements

Most people use a funeral director to arrange the funeral, but you can arrange a funeral yourself. We hope the information here will help you as you make choices and arrangements.

Different types of funeral

Funerals can be religious, non-religious or anything in between. Your loved one may have already expressed their wishes for their funeral. If not, you can decide what you would like to include in the funeral service and may choose music, poetry, hymns and readings. You may like the idea of having someone talk about your loved one – you could do this yourself and/or ask friends and relatives to do so.

The celebrant

If you are having a funeral service, you may wish to think about who you would use as a celebrant. The celebrant will lead the service and will help you plan it. There is no legal requirement for celebrants, so it can be anybody; a faith leader, a civil celebrant or even a friend or family member. Professional celebrants and faith leaders will usually charge a fee to officiate a service. If you're unsure who to ask, your funeral director will have a good range of contacts or you could also look online at

**www.independentcelebrants.com or
www.localcelebrant.com**

If you would like the Hospice to support you with the funeral service, our spirituality lead can work with you to plan and deliver a funeral or memorial service. St Helena charges a fee of £250 for this, which goes towards the running of the Hospice.

For more information please email
spirituality@sthelena.org.uk

“ I remember Mum saying to me, I was about 10 or 11, ‘when I go, I want this song’. It’s not something you would really say to a 10-year-old and her friends would say ‘why are you telling her this?’ and my mum would say ‘well now she knows’.

We ended up having that at her funeral; Be Still by The Killers. It’s a completely different song to have at a funeral but my mum was young, we didn’t want to have sad, dreary songs, so we played a lot of the songs that we had played in the Hospice. ”

Caitlin, family member

Planning a funeral with a funeral director

How to choose a funeral director

Unless you have a particular funeral director that you know well or your loved one wished to use, it is advisable to call or visit a few and ask for written itemised quotes. There may be other factors that influence your choice, such as their location and word of mouth recommendations.

We strongly recommend that you choose a funeral director who is a member of one of the following:

- National Association of Funeral Directors (www.nafd.org.uk)
- National Federation of Funeral Directors (www.nffd.org.uk)
- Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (www.saif.org.uk)

These organisations have codes of practice; they must give you a price list when asked.

The websites above may also be useful in helping you find a funeral director to approach.

The British Humanist Association can help with information on non-religious funerals.

For more information visit: www.humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/non-religious-funerals

What will a funeral director do?

Your chosen funeral director should support you throughout the process of organising the funeral. This could include; providing a coffin, transferring the deceased from the place of death to their premises, care for the deceased in preparation for transportation to the funeral (usually a hearse) and arranging the burial or cremation as appropriate.

When can you visit a funeral director?

You can contact and make arrangements with a funeral director before the death is registered but they will need to see some of the paperwork you received from the registrar before the funeral can take place.

Planning a funeral without a funeral director

If a funeral director is not involved, you will need to liaise directly with the cemetery or crematorium where the funeral is to take place.

Funerals can be held in a place of worship, a crematorium chapel, or at home. More information can be found at www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk and www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk

Natural burial grounds are an increasingly popular choice and are usually ecologically friendly. The body or ashes are buried in a woodland setting. Information and advice can be found at www.naturaldeath.org.uk

Our spiritual care team can offer you help and advice so you can plan the most appropriate funeral for your loved one. You can call them on **01206 845 566** or ask to see them at the Hospice.

Paying for a funeral

Costs may vary considerably from one funeral director to another. It is worth discussing with family and/or friends what is important and how the costs will be met before arrangements are made.

The person who signs the contract with the funeral director is responsible for paying for the funeral. It does not need to be the same person who registers the death.

Some funeral directors will ask for a deposit to cover some initial costs. These are the costs the funeral director will pay to others, for example, the crematorium fee, newspaper announcements or flowers. You can ask your funeral director for a written quote detailing all these fees.

Funeral plans

It is worth checking whether a pre-paid funeral plan exists, as some people prefer to make their own plans before they die.

Paying for the funeral from the estate

If there are funds from the deceased's estate (including life assurance payments), it is expected that this will be used to pay for the funeral. Most banks usually agree to release money for the funeral as quickly as possible. The bank will let you know which documents you need to provide but it is normal for them to ask for the death certificate and the invoice from a funeral director.

Help with funeral payment

If you are on a low income and you need help to pay for the funeral you are arranging, you could be eligible to receive a Funeral Payment from the state. You will be expected to pay the money back if you receive money from the deceased's estate at a later date. You can read more about this, including whether you are eligible, at [**www.gov.uk/funeral-payments**](http://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments)

When you cannot attend the funeral

Even if you cannot watch in real time, you can still set aside time to have your own private goodbye or memorial at home.

You could ask those attending to film the funeral service or some people arrange a live stream of the funeral. If you cannot make the service, you could look at pictures, play some of the person's favourite music, write a message to them, light a candle or follow any of your own cultural rituals.

You could also ask those who have been able to attend the funeral to call you afterwards so you can hear their account of the event and take the time to share your memories of the person together.

If you would like to make a donation in memory of a loved one, please refer to the 'in memory' section further on in this booklet.

Funeral donations

You may wish to ask family and friends attending your loved one's funeral to donate to St Helena instead of buying flowers.

Requesting donations for St Helena is a touching way to celebrate the life of your loved one and will ensure their memory lives on in the help we provide to others. All donations we receive are put into the Hospice and the other services St Helena provides, such as our SinglePoint service and community teams.

Our in memory donation boxes can be requested by visiting the St Helena website or contacting the fundraising team. You can request Gift Aid envelopes both with the box and on their own, to ensure any money donated can go even further.

If you would like to discuss the options available email **memories@sthelena.org.uk** or call **01206 931 468**.

Bereavement

The grieving process

The death of a family member or friend can be devastating and can bring about stronger emotions than you have previously experienced.

For some people, grieving starts at the time of death. For others, it can start much earlier, even during your loved one's life.

Grieving is part of bereavement and is unique and personal to you. It can be a stressful time which you will experience in your own way, and support from others may help.

Grief comes in waves. Some waves are small; you can feel them, but they don't engulf you. Other times the wave is huge and overwhelming. Waves of grief will come and go and are a normal part of bereavement.



Here are some of the feelings and thoughts you may have encountered already or may encounter:

- Numbness, shock and difficulty accepting the person has died
- Thinking you have seen or heard the person, or searching for them
- Difficulty in sleeping or eating
- Feeling physically low and worrying about your health
- Sadness, guilt, anger, anxiety or feeling nothing at all
- Loneliness
- Feelings of relief
- Depression or low mood
- Finding everyday situations and relationships difficult to cope with
- Disappointment that plans and dreams may not be fulfilled
- Difficulty in remembering their voice

It is important to look after yourself after the death of a loved one. Here are some tips to help you:



Do

- Talk to others about who has died and your feelings
- Tell others what you need and how they can help you
- Make time to sleep, eat, rest and think
- Give yourself permission to grieve
- Tell yourself that whatever emotion you experience right now is ok

Don't

- Isolate yourself
- Feel guilty for needing support
- Use drugs or alcohol to 'cope' - the relief will only be temporary
- Make major life decisions, if avoidable, for at least a year

Traumatic loss

Sudden and/or traumatic death can affect grief. Many people are affected by images, sounds and smells. Often, we avoid reminders because they feel so awful. This is not uncommon and usually improves with time. Symptoms can be eased by talking over events with a trusted adult.

Sometimes trauma symptoms do not get better over time and this may lead to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). You should discuss this with your GP who may suggest treatment, usually a talking therapy.

When trauma is experienced, you may feel numb. Numbness is your mind's way of protecting you from pain to help you cope.

Do talk about your thoughts and feelings and seek advice from your GP, or the Samaritans on 116 123 urgently if you feel depressed or suicidal.

How St Helena can support you

Many people manage their grief with the love, help and support of the people around them. However, some people may find they benefit from support from someone who is not closely involved in their life. Our goal is to support you, helping your life to go on after a bereavement.

Bereavement support

We help adults in north Essex who have been bereaved, regardless of how or where their loved one died. We also offer bereavement support to children and young people up to the age of 17 in north east Essex for those whose loved one has died - no prior connection to the hospice is required. Support can either be individual or as a family group.

Bereavement support for adults

Each person is affected differently by bereavement, and our aim is to support you emotionally; while helping you adjust to your 'new' life in grief.

We offer bereavement support from 12 weeks after the death in the form of one-to-one counselling for individuals, as well as groups designed to provide support, information and coping strategies for people who are adjusting to living with grief. Our groups are welcoming and run by experienced staff including counsellors and volunteers.

Bereavement support for children

We offer bereavement support free of charge to children and young people in north east Essex up to the age of 17 who are grieving the death of a loved one, regardless of how or where their loved one has died – no hospice connection is required to receive bereavement support from St Helena.

Bereavement support can begin from six weeks after the death. We initially offer a bereavement assessment to determine what support would be best in your family's circumstances.

Support can either be individual or as a family group depending on the age of the child/young person. However, children under five will be supported with their parent or guardian or within their family unit and not individually.



We also:

- Offer talking therapy and creative ways in which to support children
- Help children and families create memory boxes
- Support children to 're-visit' their bereavement as they develop and transition through life

How to refer to us

If you or anyone you know would like access to our bereavement services, either now or in the future, please contact us.

Adults (over 18s) - To access our bereavement service please refer yourself online at **www.sthelenas.org.uk/referrals**

This will take you between 10-15 minutes to complete, so please ensure you have plenty of time available to answer all the questions in detail. If you do not have access to the internet, please call **01206 984 274** to refer yourself.

Children or families - If you would like to refer your child or your family as a group, please call SinglePoint on **01206 890 360**.

Young people can refer themselves if competent to do so.



Bereavement support in the community

A number of other organisations offer bereavement support in the local area. Please visit the To Live With Dying website for further information;
www.tolivewithdying.co.uk.

If you need immediate support, please contact:

Samaritans

Telephone: **116 123**

Website: **www.samaritans.org**

or

The Crisis Line

111 option 2

“The team said they’re there for my family too so if they feel they can’t speak to me, then there are team members they can speak to and they will support them. To me, that is everything because when I pass, I will have no knowledge of anything. My family will have to deal with the sadness and their grieving process.

**To know the support continues on,
gives me great peace of mind. ”**

Catherine, St Helena patient

Remembering someone special

Spiritual care

We understand that times of illness might raise questions about meaning, identity, consciousness and connection.

Our spiritual care team is here to give you time to talk through whatever is most important to you. Share cherished memories, connect with your faith or culture, or just enjoy some company when you need it - our team listens, offering empathy and understanding. We can also offer assistance with religious practices and rituals and help with planning life events like weddings and funerals. Our team can talk to you over the phone, visit you at home, or spend time with you at the Hospice. Just past the main entrance to the Hospice, you'll find The Oasis, a room which can be used for reflection, prayer, meditation or just to find some peace and quiet. You'll also find our Book of Remembrance here. You can have your loved one's name and a short tribute added to it, free of charge, by completing the form on the last page of this booklet.

Spiritual care is an essential part of our hospice services. Our spiritual care team will honour your beliefs and support you in making meaningful connections. If you'd like to talk to one of the team, please get in touch by phoning the hospice or asking one of our nurses to make a referral.

To request support from the spiritual care team, call SinglePoint on **01206 890 360**.

Ways to support

However you choose to honour your loved one, we'll be here to walk alongside you. Whether you have questions about remembrance options or simply want to talk through your own ideas, our fundraising team is ready to listen and help.

You can reach us at **memories@sthelena.org.uk** or call **01206 931 468**. Your comfort and wishes are always our priority.

St Helena's online memory pages

St Helena's online memory pages, hosted through the MuchLoved platform, offer a meaningful way to honour and remember someone special. These pages create a space where friends and family — no matter where they are in the world — can come together to share memories, pay tribute and celebrate a life well lived, and can also be a fundraising tool.

Setting up a page is free, simple and personal. You can upload photos, videos, music and stories that reflect your loved one's life and legacy.

To create a page visit **sthelena.org.uk/memorypages**, or go directly to **MuchLoved.com** and select St Helena Colchester as your chosen charity.

For more information email **memories@sthelena.org.uk**



Memory Tree

St Helena's Memory Tree is a beautiful hand-carved oak sculpture adorned with over 500 bronze, silver and gold leaves - each one a lasting tribute to someone dearly missed. You can choose to have a leaf engraved with a loved one's name and displayed for one, two or three years, with the option to renew and continue supporting the Hospice. The Memory Tree is also available to view online, allowing you to visit your leaf from anywhere at any time.

You are warmly welcome to visit the Hospice to see your leaf in person and spend time in The Oasis - but if you'd prefer to keep your leaf closer to home, we can engrave it and send it directly to you.

To purchase a leaf, simply pick up one of our leaflets or visit **sthelena.org.uk/memorytree**

Community memory leaves

Our Community Memory Leaves can be engraved with the name of a loved one, or a message, to create a lasting tribute for you to keep at home or in a memorable place. To purchase a leaf visit sthelena.org.uk/memoryleaves



Virtual Memory Tree

Once a Memory Tree leaf or Community Memory Leaf has been purchased, you will be offered a place on our Virtual Memory Tree at no extra cost. This online memorial space is hosted by the MuchLoved platform and enables you to view your loved one's leaf anytime from anywhere.

In memory events and appeals

For many, attending an in memory event is a meaningful part of the grieving process - a chance to pause, reflect and honour the memory of someone special. These gatherings often bring comfort, offering a space to share memories and feel supported by others who understand.

St Helena in memory events are informal and welcoming, creating moments of togetherness during significant times of year. They also offer an opportunity to support the hospice by making a donation in memory of a loved one, helping us continue our care for others.

If you'd like to be kept informed about upcoming in memory events and appeals, please contact our fundraising team at **memories@sthelena.org.uk** or call **01206 931 468**.

Sponsor a nurse

We're deeply grateful for every donation we receive at St Helena. By choosing to give a regular monthly gift, you're helping to ensure our nurses can continue providing vital care and support to those who need us - now and in the future. Regular donations give us the stability to plan ahead, so we can continue to be there for patients and families with confidence and compassion.

Our services run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year across north east Essex, offering end of life care and bereavement support. No matter the amount, your ongoing support makes a real difference to those seeking comfort, guidance and care.

To set up a direct debit or learn more, call 01206 931 468, email fundraising@sthelena.org.uk or visit www.sthelena.org.uk/donate

Gifts in Wills

We believe that everyone living with an incurable illness deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion and choice. We're also here for families - providing support and guidance with bereavement with care and understanding.

Leaving a gift in your Will is a meaningful way to help us continue this vital work. It ensures we can meet the growing demand for our services and plan confidently for the future. Your gift will help us care for the people you love and support your community for years to come.

Find out more at sthelena.org.uk/wills.

Share your story

Many people find comfort in speaking openly about their experiences and these personal reflections may reassure others who may be uncertain about hospice care.

They also help us show how St Helena Hospice supports local people through dying, death and bereavement.

If you would like to share your story, please contact stories@sthelena.org.uk or call 01206 931 464.

“Grief is the last act of love we have to give to those we loved. Where there is deep grief, there was deep love.”

Ellie Sommer
(author of Feeling is the Secret)

St Helena and your privacy

We help local people face incurable illness, supporting them and their families, friends and carers. We also support adults and children who are facing bereavement, regardless of the cause or place of death.

We reach out to members of our community, helping them make their own choices and live with dignity. By focusing on their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, we aim to bring comfort and relief to all those who need it, offering the people of north east Essex individual care and total support, regardless of their diagnosis or personal circumstances.



Privacy notice

We process personal data in order to provide care to patients and their families. Legally, everyone has certain rights over their information, such as the right to see what data is held about them or to ask to correct it when it is wrong.

To learn more about these rights, please read our Privacy Policy online at sthelena.org.uk/privacy or ask staff for a hard copy.

At St Helena

we all share a common goal:

to be here for everyone who
needs us, helping life to go on
in the face of dying, death and
bereavement.

StH



Book of Remembrance

To have your loved one's name added to the Book of Remembrance, which is on display in The Oasis, please fill in this form, detach it, and give it to the Hospice receptionist. You can also find an online version of this form at www.sthelenahospice.org.uk/book

Full name (as you wish it to appear in the book):

Date of birth:

Date of death:

Tribute (max 40 characters, including spaces):



Your details

The following details will not be included in the Book of Remembrance, they are just for us to get in touch with you if needed.

Your name:

Your phone number:

Your email address:

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St Helena
Hospice

For the people you love

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