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Public Health
Wales

Reference Number: PHW/SCD03

Version Number: 4

Date of Next review: Tachwedd 2026

DEATH IN SERVICE GUIDELINES

Introduction and Aim

The death of an employee can be a traumatic experience for those who are left to deal with the loss of a colleague. The information provided here is intended as guidance to ensure that processes are put in place as effectively and sensitively as possible for both colleagues and the next of kin, during this difficult and emotional time. It is accepted that every situation is different and careful consideration will be given to the appropriateness and circumstances surrounding the individual case in question.

As an organisation, we have a duty of care for our colleagues and, in line with our values of working together with trust and respect to make a difference, we want all colleagues to be treated with dignity, trust and respect, and with a kind and compassionate approach. It should be noted that these guidelines do not cover Death in Service for Pensions

Linked Policies, Procedures and Written Control Documents

Incident Management Policy; Incident Management Procedure; Special Leave Policy; Health & Safety Policy; Dying to Work Charter; Guidance for managers on supporting employees diagnosed with a terminal illness, Wellbeing sources of support; [Advice relating to NHS Pension.](#)

Scope

[All corporate policies and procedures are available on the Public Health Wales website](#)

This procedure applies to all employees of Public Health Wales (Public Health Wales)

Equality and Health Impact Assessment

An Equality, Welsh Language and Health Impact Assessment has been completed and can be viewed on the policy webpages.

Approved by

Leadership Team

Approval Date

02/11/2023

Review Date

02/22/2026

Date of Publication:	28/03/2024
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Disclaimer

If the review date of this document has passed please ensure that the version you are using is the most up to date either by contacting the document author or the [Board Business Unit](#)

Summary of reviews/amendments				
Version number	Date of Review	Date of Approval	Date published	Summary of Amendments
1	26 October 2017	30 July 2010	30 July 2010	Current Procedure in Place.
2	2018	19/03/18	16/05/18	<p>Reformat</p> <p>Objectives included in section 1</p> <p>Inclusion of provisions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Roles & Responsibilities ➤ Nominated Person ➤ Condolences to be sent to the next of kin on behalf of Public Health Wales Emotional support for staff ➤ Death in Work
3	05/08/20	22/08/20	07/10/20	<p>1. Inclusion of provision for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Language preference of next of kin ➤ Reference to 'Dying to Work Charter' which seeks greater security for terminally ill workers ➤ Supporting flowchart ➤ Appendix 1 – Ways to support management of a Bereavement in the workplace plus

				<p>additional support services for signposting</p> <p>➤ Appendix 2 - Checklist for the Family Liaison nominee & line manager</p>
4	2023	02/11/23	28/03/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated to reflect tone 2. Change terminology from staff/employee to colleague 3. Change terminology from line manager to People Manager 4. Removal of COVID information and updated the section on support services for signposting 5. Appendix 2 – removal of the checklist for the Family Liaison nominee, which is now incorporated under the roles & responsibilities section.

1. Introduction

The death of an employee can be a traumatic experience for those who are left to deal with the loss of a colleague. The information provided here is intended as guidance to ensure that processes are put in place as effectively and sensitively as possible for both colleagues and the next of kin, during this difficult and emotional time. It is recognised that the circumstances where a colleague dies in service will be different and may require individually tailored approaches within the guidelines set out. The objectives of this procedure are therefore to:

- Support People Managers and colleagues in the event of a colleague's death. It is essential that these situations are handled in both a sensitive and effective way, balancing sensitivity with the practical needs, such as pay arrangements, during a difficult and emotional time for the next of kin, to prevent any additional distress for relatives and colleagues.
- Support People Managers to make this situation as uncomplicated as possible, and to ensure that consistency is applied in all cases. As this process will not be the norm, these guidelines act as a guide on the steps to be taken and the responsibilities of managers and other colleagues involved depending on the different circumstances.
- Recognise the impact that the death of a colleague can have on other colleagues and to identify support available for the People Manager and colleagues to help in dealing with their loss.
- Prevent additional distress for the next of kin by ensuring they are treated in a respectful and sympathetic way, whilst also ensuring practicalities are dealt with in a timely manner and as soon as reasonably possible.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities outlined below should be followed in conjunction with section 3, which details the process to follow.

➤ **People Manager**

The People Manager is likely to be the first person within Public Health Wales to be informed of the death of a colleague. It is therefore the People Managers responsibility to notify key parties in a timely manner, including the relevant senior management, payroll, People & Organisational Development (People & OD), colleagues and IT. People Managers will be supported in this by their manager and People and OD.

There may be occasion upon which there is prior notification that the colleague member is dying. In such cases as appropriate, maintain periodic contact with the colleague / identified relative. In such circumstances, the People Manager should seek guidance from People & OD and support should be given in line with the Welsh 'Dying to Work' charter and follow the guidance on supporting employees with a terminal illness.

Guide of duties to follow:

- Notify key parties including relevant senior management, payroll, People and OD following notification of the death of an employee, including their service, next of kin information, and date of death
- With support of the Head of Service/Director and People and OD, determine the most appropriate way to notify colleagues of the employee's death
- Advise the communications team of the employee's death, including date of death, department and area of work
- Arrange with Informatics for the member of colleague's email account to be assigned to them so messages can be dealt with in an appropriate way.
- Ensure that the employee's details are removed from circulation lists, rotas etc.
- Check colleague's calendar to cancel meetings, courses, events etc.
- If colleague had been on long term sickness, ensure any appointments made with Occupational Health have been cancelled

- Manage requests from colleagues of the deceased wishing to attend the funeral, referring to the Special Leave Procedure or advice from People and OD
- Share and signpost available information and support services to work colleagues of the deceased
- Complete a termination form, final timesheet (if applicable) including any outstanding overtime payments and identify any remaining annual leave and forward to People & OD. Any overtaken annual leave should **not** be recorded on the termination form.

➤ **People and OD**

People & OD will provide support to the relevant People Manager in the care of them and their colleague during this time, including the provision of advice on the process with regard to the administration of a death in service.

➤ **Family Liaison Officer**

The Family Liaison Officer is the nominated person to act as the point of contact with the next of kin.

Guide of duties to follow:

- Contact next of kin to make introduction as the point of contact, expressing PHW's condolences
- Establish when the funeral is to take place and the arrangements
- Establish the next of kin's language preference
- Advise PHW's and colleagues about letters of condolence, floral and other tributes
- Arrange for personal possessions to be forwarded or collected and the return of any equipment
- Provide information about outstanding salary payment and death in service benefits
- Establish with the next of kin whether it is appropriate for a director or Senior Manager to represent PHW at a senior level by attending the employee's funeral

- Following the funeral, advise next of kin that a member of colleague from NHS Payroll/Pension will arrange a meeting or provide telephone assistance to complete relevant documentation in respect of outstanding payments and pension entitlements.

- **Chief Executive/Director**

As soon as the Director is made aware of the death of a colleague in their directorate, they should make the Chief Executive aware.

The Chief Executive will ensure appropriate condolences are expressed at a senior level from Public Health Wales to the next of kin and deceased colleagues' team. Consideration should be given whether the letter should be in Welsh / English / other language / Braille or other method as appropriate.

- **Payroll / Pensions**

The Payroll department are responsible for ensuring the timely administration of payment of salary and pensions, where appropriate, pension administration. It is essential to notify Payroll as soon as possible. The benefits payable will depend on circumstances at the time of death and will be provided by NHS Pensions. It is essential that the Scheme is notified of a member's death as quickly as possible. This is to ensure the process of establishing whether benefits are due can be started without delay.

Contact information for Payroll and Pension services is available in Appendix 1.

- **Facilities**

Facilities should be contacted immediately for them to undertake an urgent investigation if someone died as a result of a work-related incident.

3. Process

➤ In the event of a Death in the workplace

If a colleague dies while at work as a result of an accident or natural causes, first call the emergency services and do not attempt to move the body before they arrive. If this scenario occurs the People Manager must contact their Head of Service/Director, and the Executive Director for Quality, Nursing and Allied health Professionals immediately so that the appropriate Incident Reporting Policy is applied, and an urgent investigation can be undertaken.

The organisation should inform the family or Next of Kin as soon as possible (if not already done by the police or other emergency service).

In the event of any incident occurring which requires immediate action, nothing in this procedure should prevent or delay any person taking any action required to save life, prevent harm or limit the damage caused by the incident.

➤ Notification from the Next of Kin or Other

In the event of the death of a colleague, it is important that all appropriate personnel are informed. The route by which the notification reaches Public Health Wales cannot be controlled but thereafter it is the responsibility of the People Manager and People & OD to coordinate the dissemination of information.

Whoever receives notification of the death should provide assurance to the caller that someone from Public Health Wales will be in contact.

The People Manager should advise their Head of Service/Director and People & OD as soon as possible following notification of the death of a colleague, providing

details of the employee, their service, next of kin information and date of death.

➤ **Communicating with the Next of Kin**

Departments should nominate an appropriate and reasonably senior colleague to be the point of contact within the service to avoid confusion at a distressing time for both the next of kin and colleagues (Family Liaison nominee). The Family Liaison nominee can be someone other than the People Manager and can work together.

In the first instance the Family Liaison nominee should contact the next of kin, to introduce themselves as the point of contact, expressing Public Health Wales's condolences, offer support and advice, with sensitivity to any religious or cultural beliefs or practices. Establish what the next of kin's preferred language and any communication needs. Respond appropriately to the requests of the next of kin, bearing in mind the need to be respectful and considerate towards any religious or cultural beliefs or practices.

At an appropriate time, this person will need to deal with questions, provide information and assist with what will be sensitive matters including:

- Establishing when the funeral is to take place and asking whether colleagues of the deceased are welcome to attend.
- Advising Public Health Wales and colleagues about letters of condolence, floral and other tributes
- Arranging for personal possessions to be forwarded or collected and for the return of any departmental equipment, etc.
- Providing information about outstanding salary payments and death in service benefits, taking advice from P&OD / People Manager

- Communicating the next of kin's preferred language

- **Notifying Colleagues**

The People Manager, together with their Head of Service/Director, and with support from People & OD, should determine the most appropriate way to notify colleagues of the employee's death.

It is advisable to:

- Inform those closest to the deceased colleague first.
- Communicate the news in a private environment if possible.
- Allow colleagues (of the deceased) time to grieve and attend the funeral.
- Deal sensitively with distressed colleagues - offer support to colleagues that may be adversely affected by the death e.g., through the employee assistance programme or other agency, Occupational Health, flexible working etc.
- Communicate the news via colleague news bulletin.

It is also important to ensure that those colleagues who are temporarily away from work e.g., on holiday or on maternity leave, where it is thought to be appropriate, are communicated with.

Colleagues should also be advised of the name of the nominated contact and the wishes of the next of kin in relation to contact.

- **Notifying the Chief Executive or Chair**

The Divisional or Executive Director shall notify the Chief Executive or Chair of the death of a colleague and provide details of the employee and their length of service with PHW. The Chief Executive will arrange for a letter of condolence to be sent to the next of kin on behalf of Public Health Wales.

➤ **Notifying Payroll and Pensions**

On notification from the service, People & OD should contact both Payroll and Pensions to advise that they have received relevant information from the People Manager in relation to the death of an employee.

The People Manager should complete a termination form, recording the reason as 'death in service', final timesheet (if applicable) including any outstanding overtime payments and identify any remaining annual leave. This should be forwarded to the People & OD Department without delay. The People Manager should inform payroll of any language preference, if applicable. *Please note: the People Manager should **not** record any overtaken leave on the termination form.*

Upon receipt of initial information and confirmation of the funeral date from the People Manager and People & OD, Payroll will:

- Suspend the deceased colleagues pay in ESR from date of death
- Identify if pension benefits are payable
- After the funeral, contact next of kin, regarding payments due in respect of NHS Pension Scheme benefits
- Arrange either a meeting or provide telephone assistance to complete relevant documentation and relevant information
- Follow appropriate payroll and pension procedures as necessary.

➤ **Notifying the Communications Team**

The People Manager should advise the communications team of the colleague's death, including date of death, department and area of work.

All calls, correspondence or queries in person relating to the death in service must be dealt with in a confidential and sensitive manner.

Where there is likely to be press interest or it is appropriate for colleague obituary, press releases etc. please contact a member of the Communications team immediately to brief them on the circumstances and agree a strategy for dealing with queries.

No information should be given to any external enquirer; instead, they should be referred to the Communications team.

➤ **Following the Funeral**

Following the funeral, the Family Liaison nominee should contact the next of kin to advise them of the procedure which will be followed by the Payroll and Pension Department, in respect of outstanding payments and pension entitlements.

The People Manager will need to identify work related items e.g., lease car, mobile telephone, laptop, tablet, keys etc. which had been issued to the deceased employee, which must be returned to Public Health Wales.

The Family Liaison nominee should make arrangements regarding the return of the deceased colleague's personal effects to the next of kin and the return of the work-related items as noted above.

➤ **Further Considerations**

People Managers will also need to:

- Arrange for the member of colleague's email account to be assigned to them so that messages can be dealt with in an appropriate way and a sensitive out of office message put on.
- Ensure that the colleague's details are removed from circulation lists, rotas, disable email/Team accounts etc.

- Go through the deceased colleague's calendar to check for meetings, training courses or events.
- In situations where there has been long term sickness, inform Occupational Health so that any appointments are cancelled, and no further correspondence is sent.

4. The Funeral

➤ Public Health Wales Representation

It might be seen as appropriate for a Director or Senior Manager to represent Public Health Wales at a senior level by attending the deceased colleague's funeral. The Family Liaison nominee should discuss this with the family and assess whether it is appropriate. If so, the Director/Senior Manager's PA should be informed in good time to arrange attendance.

➤ Colleague Attendance

Colleagues wishing to attend a funeral can do so by submitting a Special Leave request. People Managers may also wish to consider other flexible arrangements. It might be appropriate for the Service to nominate a representative who would attend the funeral.

In case of several team members attending, special dispensation can be sought from People & OD to waive the completion of numerous Special Leave forms for attendance at the funeral. For all queries on Special Leave please refer to the Special Leave Procedure or contact HR.

5. Support for Colleagues

Colleagues of the employee may experience problems in coming to terms with the death. Recovery of individuals and teams can be aided by providing support as soon as possible after the incident.

➤ Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Grief is a normal emotional reaction to loss, in many cases the most supportive actions in the immediate aftermath of a death is peer support – colleagues sharing their grief with colleagues – and not professional help. However, if a colleague member feels that their grieving is prolonged or they feel that the intensity of their emotions has not reduced with time, they can refer themselves to the Employee Assistance programme or Occupational Health.

It is recognised that the news of a colleague's death may be difficult for team members who are directly impacted, and we want to ensure staff feel supported during this difficult period.

Appendix 1 details the support available.

➤ **Sharing Information**

The sharing of information will provide comfort to colleagues. It is therefore important to ensure that as much information is provided to colleagues, in as timely a manner as possible ensuring colleagues are provided with as much information as possible.

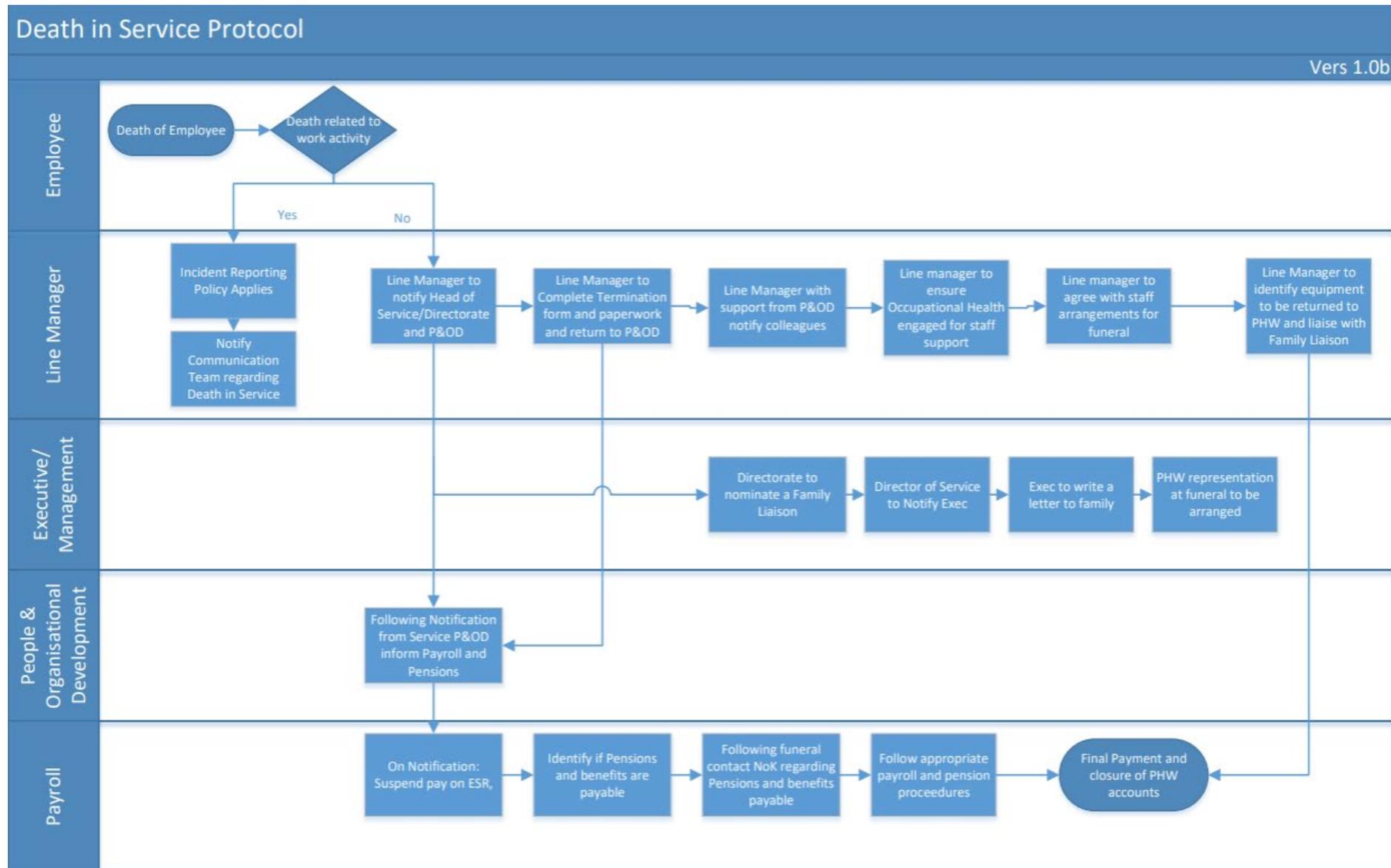
If People Managers or the nominated contact are unable to get the required information, they can simply communicate this to colleagues as this will be more comforting than being told nothing.

Provide colleagues with the opportunity to discuss the loss and share stories about their deceased colleague. This aids the mourning process as it allows colleagues to deal with their shock.

Providing a private area also gives colleagues a place to go if they become tearful whilst working. This can stop them feeling like they are on display to others in the workplace.

In the event that individuals need to use this Policy/ Procedure/ Scheme, advice and guidance can be sought from PeopleSupport.PHW@wales.nhs.uk

We are continually looking to improve our employment practices and welcome any feedback you may have in relation to this Policy. Feedback can be provided by emailing, PeopleSupport.PHW@wales.nhs.uk You may also wish to feedback via your Trade Union representative.



Appendix 1

Ways to Support Management of a Bereavement in the Workplace and Support Services

Approach

Bereavement in the workplace can be challenging to manage. Employees may need to take time off unexpectedly, find their performance is impacted, or be temporarily unable to perform certain roles.

However, a compassionate and supportive approach demonstrates that the organisation cares about and values its people; helps build commitment and reduces sickness absence.

Every Bereavement is Different

Showing compassion, empathy and being mindful that we all grieve differently is vital to any colleague feeling supported and valued at a difficult time.

Listening, expressing understanding and patience will encourage colleagues to access support and challenge the stigma around asking for help.

An employer has a duty of care to employees generally and should consider the effect bereavement might have on the employee in undertaking their duties.

The relationship with the person who died, and the circumstances of the death will all have an impact on the employee, particularly if the death was sudden or traumatic.

It is often difficult for bereaved employees to judge how they will feel in the workplace; sometimes grief is not expressed at the time of the event but can be triggered by anniversaries, certain events, meetings etc.

Don't make assumptions that you know how someone is feeling and what they need - enquire with compassion and empathy.

Communicate

Communicating the news of the death to other employees is key and the method of communication should be personal and sensitive. There may be areas of the organisation, for example the team where the person who died worked, that are particularly affected, and they may need more support.

Be mindful that some employees may be affected more than others and may need time to talk individually. Find a quiet and uninterrupted space to talk and ensure when you have arranged this that you have the time to listen.

Maintain an open dialogue with employees, being both sensitive and mindful of how grief and loss can also trigger an employee's previous experience of loss both inside and outside of the workplace. Be aware that some colleagues will not want to talk.

Be open to revising and reviewing the situation and keep the team updates as appropriate (taking into consideration the wishes of the family).

Monitor your own response to the situation and how you are managing the loss, seek support for yourself if needed and discuss any concerns with your People Manager.

Consider the wishes of the individual, team and family to acknowledge, commemorate and remember the person. Consider religious or cultural beliefs.

Remember to offer information and signposting to in-house support and external support organisations.

Support Information and Services

[PHW Employee Wellbeing Pages](#)

[Employee Assistance Programme](#) – **Vivup: 0800 023 9387 (Available 24/7)**

Payroll Services/Pensions

[Payroll Services](#), including e-expenses, are managed by the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) and all enquiries should be sent directly to them.

Payroll: NWSSP.Payroll.PHW@wales.nhs.uk

Pay Returns: NWSSP.payreturnsSE@wales.nhs.uk

Pensions: Pensions.Department@wales.nhs.uk

Contact number: 02920 903908

External Support Information and Services:

Cruse Bereavement Care – offers support through a network of local services and helpline

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/about-grief/bereavement-at-work>

0808 808 1677

Mind – Provides information on Bereavement, where to go for support, and suggestions for helping yourself and others through grief

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/about-bereavement/>

Samaritans – Confidential support helpline for NHS Wales and Social Care Workers,

Free confidential call line in English (7am – 11pm, 7 days a week): 0800 484 0555

Free confidential call line in Welsh (7pm-11pm initially, 7 days a week): 0808 164 2777