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## 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 should be noted that these guidelines do not cover Death in Service for Pensions

### Linked Policies, Procedures and Written Control Documents

Incident Reporting Policy; Incident Reporting Procedure; Special Leave Policy

### Scope

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

### Equality and Health Impact Assessment

Integrated Assessment Tool (EHIA) completed.

### Approved by

Executive Team

### Approval Date

19 March 2018

### Review Date

19 March 2020

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16 May 2018

### Accountable Executive Director/Director

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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 [Corporate Governance](#).**

<b>Summary of reviews/amendments</b>				
<b>Version number</b>	<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>Date published</b>	<b>Summary of Amendments</b>
1	26 October 2017	30 July 2010	30 July 2010	Current Procedure in Place.
2	19 March 2020	19 March 2018	16 May 2018	a) Reformat b) Objectives included in section 1 c) Inclusion of provisions for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles &amp; Responsibilities</li> <li>• Nominated Person</li> <li>• Condolences to be sent to the next of kin on behalf of Public Health Wales</li> <li>• Emotional support for staff</li> <li>• Death in Work</li> </ul>

## **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.

The objectives of this procedure are therefore to:

- a) Support managers in the event of an employee's death. It is essential that these situations are handled in both a sensitive and effective way to prevent any additional distress for relatives and colleagues.
- b) Support 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 staff involved.
- c) Recognise the impact that the death of an employee can have on staff and to identify support available for these staff.
- d) 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.

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive will ensure appropriate condolences are expressed at a senior level from Public Health Wales to the next of kin and deceased member of staffs' team.

## **2.2 Line Manager**

The Line Manager is likely to be the first person within Public Health Wales to be informed of the death of a member of staff. It is therefore the Line Manager's responsibility to notify key parties in a timely manner, including the relevant senior management, payroll, People and Organisational Development, and colleagues. Line Managers will be supported in this by their Line Manager and People and Organisational Development.

## **2.3 People and Organisational Development**

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

## **2.4 Occupational Health Service**

The Occupational Health Service is available for members of staff who feel they need support and to provide advice to Line Managers This can be accessed either via a self-referral or by a managerial request.

## **2.5 Payroll**

The Payroll department are responsible for ensuring the timely administration of payment of salary and pensions, where appropriate, pension administration.

# **3. Procedure**

## **3.1 Death at Work**

If an employee has died as a result of a work related activity the Incident Reporting Policy applies.

If this scenario occurs the Line Manager must contact their Head of Service/Director, and the Chief Risk Officer immediately so that an immediate and appropriate action

can be taken and an urgent investigation can be undertaken.

### **3.2 Notification from the Next of Kin or Other**

In the event of the death of a member of staff, 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 Line 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 Line Manager should advise their Head of Service/Director and People & OD, providing details of the employee, their service, next of kin information, and date of death.

### **3.3 Dealing with the Next of Kin**

Departments should nominate an appropriate and reasonably senior member of staff 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).

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.

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 any departmental equipment, etc.
- Providing information about outstanding salary payments and death in service benefits

### **3.4 Notifying Colleagues**

The Line 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 employee first
- Communicate the news in a private environment if possible
- Allow staff time to grieve and attend the funeral
- Deal sensitively with distressed staff - offer support to staff that may be adversely affected by the death e.g. through the Care First employee assistance programme or other agency, Occupational Health, flexible working and so on

It is also important to ensure that those employees 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.

### **3.5 Notifying the Chief Executive or Chair**

The Director of Service shall notify the Chief Executive or Chair of the employee's death and provide details of the employee and their service with us.

The Chief Executive will arrange for a letter of condolence to be sent to the next of kin on behalf of Public Health Wales.

### **3.6 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 Line Manager in relation to the death of an employee.

The Line Manager should complete a termination form, 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. *Please note: the Line Manager should **not** record any overtaken leave on the termination form.*

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

- Suspend employees 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
- They will arrange either a meeting or provide telephone assistance to complete relevant documentation and relevant information;
- Follow appropriate payroll and pension procedures as necessary.

### **3.7 Notifying the Communications Team**

The Line Manager should advise the communications team of the employees 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 staff 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.

### **3.8 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 Line Manager will need to identify work related items e.g. lease car, mobile telephone, laptop, 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 employee's personal effects to the next of kin and the return of the work related items as noted above.

### **3.9 Further Considerations**

Line Managers will also need to:

- Arrange for the member of staff'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 employee's details are removed from circulation lists, rotas etc.



- Go through the member of staff'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**

### **4.1 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 employee's funeral. The Family Liaison nominee should discuss this with the family and assess whether or not it is appropriate. If so, the Director/Senior Manager's PA should be informed in good time to arrange attendance.

### **4.2 Colleague Attendance**

Colleagues wishing to attend a funeral can do so by submitting a Special Leave request. Line 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.

## **5.1 Employee Assistance**

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 staff 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 Care First employee assistance programme or Occupational Health.

## **5.2 Sharing Information**

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

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

## **5.3 Suggest an area where colleagues can go to take time out**

This suggestion allows all affected employees a chance to discuss the loss and share stories about the deceased. This aids the mourning process as it allows employees to deal with their shock.

Providing a private area also gives employees 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.

## **5.4 Support available**

- Employee Assistance Programme, Care First: 0800174319
- People & OD Team
- PHW Occupational Health Advisor
- Cruse Bereavement Care: 0808 808 1677