

# Death in Service Guidance



**Last reviewed in:** March 2020

**Next review due by:** March 2021

**Reviewed by:** Head of HR

## **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 below is intended as guidance to ensure that processes are put in place as effectively and sensitively as possible. The guidance is in two parts. The first section outlines who should be notified within the Trust Central Team and by whom. Ideally, notification should take place within 24 hours of the Trust/School receiving news of the employee's death (or the next working day if informed during the evening, weekend or School closure).

The second part outlines in detail the responsibilities of each person/office. The summary table at the end of these guidelines supplies contact names and contact details of those that may need to be notified.

**Please note** that these guidelines are for dealing with the death of a current member of staff.

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 the Trust Central Team cannot be controlled but thereafter it is the responsibility of the school and Human Resources to coordinate the dissemination of information.

Whoever receives notification of the death should ensure that they:

- obtain the name of the person informing the school/Trust, their relationship to the deceased and their contact details;
- obtain the name of the deceased and place of work; and
- inform the notifier that the Headteacher or another delegated member of staff will be in contact with them.

The Headteacher (or their deputy in the event of their absence) will be responsible for the following:

- Contacting the person who notified the school/Trust of the death to express sympathy, obtain further details on date and cause of death (and if appropriate, details of the funeral, they should also ascertain if a representative from the Trust or colleagues can attend). They may also arrange for any personal effects to be returned (although this may be discussed at a later date if appropriate).
- If the person notifying is not the next of kin, contacting also the next of kin or someone the next of kin asks to talk on their behalf; the conversation to include when helpful an assurance that the trust's HR team will be in touch about pay and any payments and / or pension
- Informing the relevant Human Resources Business Partner of the date and cause of death, the name and address of the next of kin (if possible) and details of funeral arrangements (if appropriate).
- Informing colleagues within the school/Trust
- Informing the Director of Operations (if appropriate i.e. if death in the workplace)

The relevant Human Resources Business Partner will inform the Director of Finance and HR, Head of Human Resources and the Payroll Manager. They will also be responsible for informing the following, as appropriate:

- Human Resources Team

- Chief Executive with next of kin details to write a letter of condolence
- The Executive Team
- Head of Finance

## **Procedure**

The following procedure is to be followed in the event of the death of a member of staff. **It is essential that information is disseminated sensitively** in order to alleviate any further distress to relatives, colleagues and students.

### **1. Death whilst on school / trust sites**

If the death occurs on school / trust sites **or** as a result of a specific 'critical incident', then the Emergency Services should be contacted immediately, and the Director of Operations informed.

### **2. Headteacher\* Responsibilities**

*(\* or Chief Executive or Director depending on the staff member as appropriate).*

- The Chief Executive or Director will arrange for a letter of sympathy to be sent on behalf of the Trust to the next of kin.
- The Headteacher will inform staff and students as appropriate.
- The Headteacher may consider whether it would be appropriate to call a special staff meeting to inform colleagues. When colleagues are being informed of the death, they should also be reminded of the Trust Wellbeing Scheme, Care First on 0808 1682143, and the HR Team who can offer support should they require it [HRhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk](mailto:HRhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk), 01440 333401.
- The Headteacher should inform Governors of the death and invite them to write their own letter of condolence to the family.
- The Headteacher may also wish to consider whether any former members of staff and students need to be notified.
- Depending on the nature of the circumstances, the Headteacher may wish to consider removing photographs (and other references) of the member of staff concerned, from the school website and from notice boards, although please consider timing sensitivities.
- The Headteacher also may wish to consider ensuring that the member of staff's e-mail account and telephone are redirected to another nominated member of staff in the School with immediate effect.
- The Headteacher should ensure that the school's personnel and payroll records are amended so that no inappropriate contact is made.
- Arrangements should be made for representation at the funeral (if the family has agreed to this).
- The Headteacher will also be responsible for dealing sensitively with any personal belongings held within the school in conjunction with relatives of the deceased.
- The Headteacher will notify staff about funeral arrangements (if appropriate). Requests for time off to attend the funeral should be reviewed sensitively.
- The Headteacher in conjunction with the IT Service Help Desk will ensure that the employee is de-registered from local systems and other lists as appropriate (e.g. web pages, phone lists).
- Any student-related processes involving the staff member should be redirected.

- If there is likely to be press interest in a death, the Headteacher will liaise with the Executive Team and Press Advisor to agree a strategy for handling the media. No information should be given to any external enquirer; instead they should be referred to Trust's Public Relations Officer.

### **3. HR / Payroll Responsibilities**

- HR will amend the employee's personnel records, so that no inappropriate contact is made.
- The transactional HR team to be notified to withhold sending the standard leaver letter.
- HR will report the death to payroll.
- The Payroll Manager will ensure that the final salary is calculated along with any other entitlements (e.g. any expense claims in the system). This information together with the final pay slip will be passed to the relevant HR Business Partner/Manager. They will then contact the next of kin to arrange for payment to be made to the deceased's estate, normally to the Executives of the Estate.
- Where there is an overpayment of salary i.e. if the death occurs or notification is given after the payroll has been run, monies will not be reclaimed if it is equivalent to less than one month's salary. Where more than one month's salary has been overpaid, the Payroll Manager will inform the relevant HR Business Partner / Manager of the amount and any excess over one month's salary should be requested to be returned by the deceased's estate.
- The P45 issued to HMRC should state either the actual date of death if pay has been stopped at that date or the last day of the month that the death occurred if any overpayment has been made. The entire P45 is sent to HMRC; no part of the P45 is required to be passed to the deceased's estate.
- The Payroll Manager will ascertain if the deceased is a member of the Local Government or Teacher's pension schemes. If so, the Payroll Manager will then contact the next of kin (usually done after the funeral has taken place) and will liaise directly with them and the pension scheme administrators with regard to the benefits due and any requirements needed to settle them.