

Family Support

Help and Information
Following a Death in Custody

Following a Death in Custody

We are sorry that your relative has passed away in our care, and we hope this booklet helps you.

When a person passes away in prison custody, it can be difficult to understand what happened and to deal with the grief of the loss of a loved one in such circumstances. We want you to know that care and support is available for you and your family for as long as you need it.

In the first instance, support can be provided by the Prison Governor, who works closely with all the people inside the prison on a daily basis, and by Families Outside, an independent charity working with families affected by imprisonment. We have also arranged for our Prison Chaplain to call you in the next few days.

This booklet provides you with information about the help we can offer and details on what will happen because the death of your loved one occurred in custody.

About this Booklet

This booklet has been created by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), NHS Scotland and Families Outside.

You can get additional copies from:

Scottish Prison Service Headquarters,
One Lochside
1 Lochside Avenue
Edinburgh
EH12 9DJ

An interpretation service and alternative language translations of this Booklet are available on request.

You can view the latest version of this booklet, including clickable links to all the organisations mentioned, on Families page at www.sps.gov.uk

Please tell us your experience of using this booklet. Did you find it useful or were there any difficulties? Your suggestions will help us to improve the booklet in the future.

Please email SPSChaplaincyAdvisers@prisons.gov.scot or call 0131 330 3500 or write to the above postal address with your comments.

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Part One

Support

What support is available from the prison?

The **Governor** will be your **first point of contact** on behalf of the prison. They will offer you support and a listening ear and put you in touch with Chaplains and others who can offer you assistance.

Governor

Name:

Telephone:

Prison Chaplains can listen to your concerns and offer pastoral support (which can be non-religious if you prefer). They can arrange for your loved one's possessions to be returned to you and for you to visit the prison if you wish. They can also assist with funeral arrangements, whether of a religious or non-religious nature.

Chaplain

Name:

Telephone:

The **Healthcare team** can provide information and support regarding the healthcare that your loved one had been receiving and answer questions you may have in relation to this.

Health Centre

Name:

Telephone:

Family support

Families Outside

Telephone available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

- ∂ Families Outside can provide independent support and advice to family members in the community. They can listen and offer emotional and practical support via their Helpline, email, webchat or text. You can contact them on: 0800 254 0088 (*Freephone*)
- ∂ Email: support@familiesoutside.org.uk
- ∂ Website: www.familiesoutside.org.uk
- ∂ Text FAMOUT and your message to 60777

Support if you are feeling distressed

NHS inform

Available 24/7

- ∂ [NHS 24 Mental Health Hub](#) - phone 111 and choose the mental health option, you'll be connected to our team of psychological wellbeing practitioners (PWP's).
- ∂ These are specially trained advisors who work in mental health.
- ∂ If you use a textphone you can contact NHS 24 on 18001 111 or you can use the [Relay UK](#) app.

Samaritans

Available 24/7, 365 days a year

- ∂ Emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair
- ∂ Telephone: 116 123 (*Freephone*)
- ∂ Or try the Samaritans Self-Help App
- ∂ Email: jo@samaritans.org
- ∂ Website: www.samaritans.org

Cruse (Scotland) Bereavement Care

Telephone available Monday to Friday 9am-8pm,
Weekends 10am-2pm

- ∂ Advice, support, and counselling for people who have been bereaved.
- ∂ Telephone: 0808 802 6161 (*Freephone*)
- ∂ Email: info@crusescotland.org.uk
- ∂ Website: www.crusescotland.org.uk

Breathing Space

Available Monday - Thursday 6pm-2am, and Friday -
Monday 6pm-6am

- ∂ A confidential phoneline for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16, feeling low, anxious or depressed.
- ∂ Telephone: 0800 83 85 87 (*Freephone*)
- ∂ Website: www.breathingspace.scot

Dedicated Support for Children and Young People

SHOUT Mental Health Service

Available 24/7

- ∂ Shout provides free, 24/7 text support for young people across the UK experiencing a mental health crisis.
- ∂ Text YM to 85258.
- ∂ All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.
- ∂ Website: www.giveusashout.org

Childline

Available 24/7

- ∂ If you're under 19, you can confidentially call, chat online or email about any problem big or small.
- ∂ Sign up for a free Childline locker (real name or email address not needed) to use their free 1-2-1 counsellor chat and email support service.
- ∂ Freephone 0800 11 11
- ∂ Can provide a BSL interpreter if you are deaf or hearing-impaired.
- ∂ Hosts online message boards where you can share your experiences and get support from other young people in similar situations.
- ∂ Website: www.childline.org.uk

Support for Bereavement

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs (SFAD)

Helpline is open 9am-11pm weekdays and a call-back service on weekends, Telephone: 08080 10 10 11. Also available by email or webchat.

- ∂ SFAD offers free counselling services to anyone in Scotland who is bereaved through alcohol or drugs.
- ∂ Their local and national Family Support Services include a Helpline, Bereavement Support, one to one Telehealth Support and Holding On.
- ∂ SFAD - Sudden-and-Unexplained-Deaths-Booklet.pdf
- ∂ Email: helpline@sfad.org.uk
- ∂ Website: www.sfad.org.uk

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Telephone available Monday and Tuesday 9am to 5pm

- ∂ A national helpline run by a self-help group for people bereaved by suicide.
- ∂ Telephone: 0300 111 5065
- ∂ Email: email.support@uksobs.org
- ∂ Website: uksobs.org

Petal Support

Telephone available: Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 4pm

- ∂ Counselling and support services for people affected by the loss of a family member or partner to homicide or suicide in Scotland.
- ∂ Telephone: 01698 324502
- ∂ Email: info@petalsupport.com
- ∂ Website: www.petalsupport.com

Advisory Support & Resources

Good life, good death, good grief

- ∂ www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk provides resources and support relating to bereavement and planning a funeral.

NHS Inform Bereavement and grief self-help guide

- ∂ [Bereavement and grief self help guide at www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)

Quakers Social Action

- ∂ [Funeral Support Payment for an adult \(Scotland\)](#)

Part Two

Reviews

DEATH IN PRISONS LEARNING, AUDIT AND REVIEW (DIPLAR)

The death of a loved one can be difficult at any time. When it happens in prison, it is only natural to want to know the circumstances surrounding the death. The Scottish Prison Service takes steps to understand what has happened and takes care to review each death individually through a process called DIPLAR (Death In Prisons Learning Audit & Review).

The DIPLAR helps us to learn from the experience of each death in prison and contributes to the development of our policies and procedures. It also offers a means of sharing learning points and communicating areas of good practice.

As members of the family, you will be given the opportunity to put forward any questions or information that you wish the DIPLAR to consider. Within a few days of the DIPLAR being completed, a senior staff member will call to discuss this with you.

Some facts about DIPLAR

- ∂ The DIPLAR is a formal meeting chaired by an independent person or by the prison Governor or Deputy, depending on the nature of the death.
- ∂ The meeting is made up of Prison and Health staff.
- ∂ Most DIPLARs take place within 12 weeks of the death.

- o The circumstances surrounding the death of your relative are discussed including the immediate actions taken; how your relative was being cared for in prison; if joined up services were in place; how the death of your relative has impacted those involved, including family, other people held in prison and those known to your relative; and prison management processes and practices.
- o A report is produced after the DIPLAR has taken place. In the case of apparent suicide and drug-related deaths, a summary of the DIPLAR findings and actions are sent to the National Suicide Prevention Management Group.

Where to find more information

More information on the DIPLAR process can be found on the SPS website:

- o https://www.sps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/DIPLARGuidance_Aug2023_Healthcare.pdf

The Governor or Chaplain and Families Outside can also help answer questions you may have and point you in the direction of other resources.

NHS SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EVENT REVIEW

NHS Boards are committed to delivering care that is safe, effective and person centred. Significant Adverse Event Reviews (SAERs) are carried out following events that have resulted in unexpected death or harm. These are focused on analysing factors that have contributed to the circumstances of the adverse event.

Aims of this review are to:

- ∂ Promote the sharing of learning points following adverse event reviews
- ∂ Support a consistent approach to being open with people following an adverse event
- ∂ Provide assurance on the appropriate management of adverse events through progress meetings.

A single point of contact for families should be clearly identified, and families should be asked if they have any questions they would like raised.

A SAER should be commissioned within 10 working days of the death being reported. The findings report should be submitted within 90 days after this and then approved within 30 days. Once approved, the report should be shared with families.

FATAL ACCIDENT INQUIRY (FAI)

A Fatal Accident Inquiry is mandatory into the death of a person who passes away in prison under the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths etc. (Scotland) Act 2016. The decision to hold an FAI (and the timing of a Sheriff Court being petitioned to hold an FAI) is a matter for the Lord Advocate/Procurator Fiscal. It can take some time before an FAI is held, and in some circumstances, it could be a number of years after the death.

Where can I go for support and information on FAI?

An FAI can be an upsetting time, especially for family and friends. Further information about the FAI process is available on the following links:

- ∂ <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/services/bereavement-support/guide-for-bereaved-family-members/>
- ∂ <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/about-copfs/our-role-in-investigating-deaths/>

Information concerning details of any FAI preliminary hearings and inquiry dates can be found on the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service website at:

- ∂ <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/sheriff-court/preliminary-hearings-and-dates-of-inquiry>

Although specific to England and Wales, you may also find useful information here: www.inquest.org.uk

We offer our sincere condolences for your loss, and we will do our best to support you at this difficult time.

