

End of Life Care

Support and guidance for families
when it's needed most



Four Seasons
HEALTH CARE GROUP

Here for all of you

When someone is approaching the end of their life, we understand what a heartbreaking and difficult time it can be for those close to them. Everyone experiences different thoughts and feelings; overwhelming sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, hopelessness, numbness, being scared and sometimes relief that your loved one will be at peace.

We hope this leaflet will help guide you through what to expect and explain how we can help you during your loved one's final days and beyond. We are committed to providing compassionate and individualised care for your loved one and to support you in any way we can. We are here for all of you.

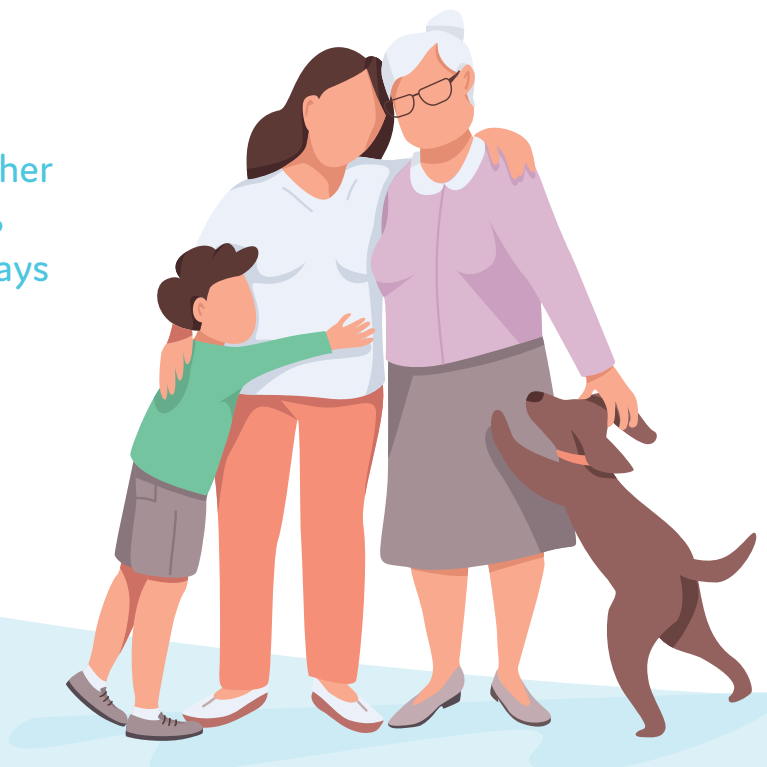
“ We would like to thank the staff for the care and compassion shown to my Mother in the last few weeks of her life. It was reassuring for the family to know she was as comfortable as possible and well looked after. Thank you.

Andrew B (Son of Resident)



“ As well as being a lovely place to live, the genuineness and positivity of the staff was so important. Unable to care for her needs ourselves, we had 100% faith in the home and will always remember your kindness.

Tracy H (Niece of Resident)



Preparing for the final days

Your loved one will already have an end of life care plan which details any prescribed medications and recommended medical approach. Their preferences and wishes will also have been recorded here.

Our approach to person-centred care doesn't stop when someone is coming to the end of their life. We can arrange a number of things that you or your loved one may feel appropriate. From spiritual and religious support, having favourite flowers or music in the room to creating a photo collage to aid reminiscence if you wish to spend time sharing favourite memories. Where possible, we can arrange an assisted visit to a place that may be special to them.

Our care team are dedicated to making your loved one's final days as comfortable as possible. We are also here to help you by keeping you fully informed and assisting with practical matters. Because we do the job we do and love doing it, we're naturally placed to offer emotional support, practical advice and comfort too.



Caring for people with dementia


In the later stages of dementia, people may be unable to communicate verbally and be less able to understand what is happening as they approach the end of their life.

Our care teams are highly experienced in using techniques to provide comfort and reassurance at this time. Physical contact such as holding hands or a hug may be appropriate and maintaining eye contact and using gestures and facial expressions can help provide a level of connection and human closeness.

“ I was very impressed with the people side of the home. The staff and management were caring and considerate and treated the residents as individuals. They were prepared to listen to them.

D.A (Husband of Resident)





Our carers are trained to recognise any non-verbal signals that may indicate someone is uncomfortable. Towards the end of life, those living with dementia can have difficulty swallowing tablets or liquid medication and we will liaise with medical professionals who may prescribe pain relief in the form of patches or injections if needed.

If your loved one is no longer communicative, we believe it may well be comforting for them to hear someone continuing to talk to them in soothing tones. This could be about things that are of interest to them, past experiences that we know they have enjoyed and of course family members who mean so much to them.

“ From the moment (my father in law) was there we noticed a change in him, he became settled and happy. The staff were very attentive to his needs in all areas during this difficult time up to the end of his life. When my father-in-law passed away we went to see him at the home, he was wonderfully presented, clean, and dressed with dignity.

Marilyn T (Daughter-in-law of Resident)



Understanding what may happen

Of course, everyone is different, but the following are some common signs that someone is nearing the end of their life, these are all natural progressions so please try not to be alarmed or too distressed. We are here if you would like to talk these through, for your peace of mind:

Reduced food & fluid intake

The desire to eat or drink may be lost as the body needs less energy and this can cause rapid weight loss.

Changes in appearance

Skin can become pale and have a bluish tinge and look mottled just before death.

Withdrawal from the world

This can be a gradual process where your loved one becomes less interested in what's around them. They may engage less and spend a lot of time sleeping.

Changes in breathing

You may notice that breathing becomes loud and patterns change. This could be due to a build-up of mucous which can't be cleared by coughing and is unlikely to be distressing for the person themselves.

Loss of consciousness

Many people lose consciousness near the end of their life but may well be able to hear people talking or feel someone holding their hand.



Our care team will administer medication that has been prescribed to make your loved one feel more comfortable and manage any sickness or breathlessness.

We will keep you informed at every step so that you can spend time with your loved one at the home if you so wish. We understand that it isn't always possible to be with a loved one constantly at this time. Rest assured, our care team will be exceptionally attentive, ensuring that your loved one is well cared for throughout and will contact you with any changes.

“ When my late husband was being transferred from hospital to the care home I was apprehensive. I had no previous experience with care homes and did not know what to expect. However, I need not have worried, from day one the care and attention he received from the staff was first class. They looked after him as if he was a member of their family and I have the utmost respect for them.

W.M (Wife of Resident)



Saying goodbye

If you are unable to be there when your loved one passes away, we will contact you as soon as possible. You are welcome to come to the home and will always be given the privacy and time to say your goodbyes. If you prefer someone from the team to be with you, that's fine too.

Members of the care team may also wish to say goodbye and we will always ask permission before quietly paying our respects while your loved one is still at the home.

“ I can only praise the whole staff for the care that (my dad) received in his final weeks, but especially his last days. They were kind and compassionate to Dad and also to his family, something which we are extremely grateful for.

L T (Daughter of Resident)

“ The staff have shown my mother and my family very compassionate and friendly care and dignity at such a difficult time.

Dennis R (Son of Resident)



What happens next?

At such a sad and upsetting time, the practicalities of what happens next, can be overwhelming. Don't worry, we are here to support you. Here are the three key stages that follow the passing of a loved one that you need to be aware of.

Certification of death

We will notify the GP so they can certify the death. If the death was unexpected (sudden or of an unknown cause), the doctor will contact the coroner (or procurator fiscal in Scotland) who may arrange a post mortem examination or inquest to determine the cause of death.

Arranging a funeral director

When you have chosen a funeral director, and our team can help with this if needed, your loved one will be moved to their chapel of rest facilities. Our team will liaise with the funeral director to arrange this. Once the death has been registered you can make the funeral arrangements and remember, we are here to help answer questions and provide any insights into your loved one's later life if needed. Where possible, a member of the care team may wish to attend the funeral.

Registering the death

The GP will issue a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death once this has been established. You will need this to register the death at your local Registry Office, more details can be found at: www.gov.uk/register-a-death

Personal items

Comfort can often be gained as you collect your loved one's personal items: a happy memory may be triggered by seeing or holding something familiar. We know this can be a highly emotional task so don't rush and talk to the team about how and when it's best to collect things. They may have advice on what to do with clothing or any knick-knacks that you no longer need.



Staying in touch

We think of our residents, family members, friends in the community and our care team as a big family who look after each other so we'd love it if you would like to stay in touch. You are always most welcome in our home and you may take great comfort from keeping in touch with friends of your loved one.

As well as being here to offer practical information, if you simply feel a cuppa and a chat with a member of the team who knew your loved one well would be helpful, we'll pop the kettle on. Many families appreciate us sharing anecdotes, stories and insights gained through caring for your loved one; hearing these can be a real comfort and provide treasured memories.

We hope you have found this leaflet useful and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. We will always be open and honest with you.



Further reading and support

Age UK

Tel: 0800 055 6112

www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/legal-issues/what-to-do-when-someone-dies/

Bereavement Support Payment

Tel: 0800 731 0469

<https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment>

Citizens Advice

Tel: 0800 144 8848

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/death-and-wills/what-to-do-after-a-death

Cruse Bereavement Care

Tel: 0808 8081677

www.cruse.org.uk/

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

Tel: 0808 802 6161

www.crusescotland.org.uk/



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