

SHEFFIELD BENEFITS SERVICE

Bereavement Factsheet

The period following the death of a partner or death of a household member can be one of the most stressful and traumatic times for people to cope with. In this factsheet we have tried to offer straightforward advice about the steps that need to be taken, and provide some useful information. For many bereaved people, dealing with practical situations such as arranging the funeral and notifying relevant organisations can help them begin to work their way through the grieving process. We accept however, that for other people the whole experience can be very traumatic and they do not feel that they are ready to cope with anything at all. We hope that this factsheet will offer some support and guidance.

Death of a Partner

If your partner was claiming Council Benefits (Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support), you will need to notify the Benefit Service.

If you are pension age and wish to continue to claim these, or want to claim them for the first time, you will need to make a claim. Providing you make your claim not more than one month after your partner has died you will not need to ask for backdating.

If you are working age and need help with your housing costs then you may need to claim Universal Credit. You can find more information at www.gov.uk/universal-credit. If you want to continue to claim Council Tax Support then you need to claim this with the Council's Benefit Service.

Once the death has been registered, Council Tax will send you a revised Council Tax Bill. If you now live on your own this bill will include a 25% Single Person Discount. If you have made a claim for, and are awarded Council Tax Support, you will be sent another bill once your entitlement has been worked out.

If you live in a Council property you should notify them that your partner has passed away.

If you receive Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, or Universal Credit you will need to inform the Jobcentre Plus of your bereavement.

You should inform the Pension Service if you are in receipt of Pension Credit, by telephoning 0800 7310469. If you wish to make a new claim for Pension Credit, ring the Pension Service on 0800 991234 for further help.

In addition the Pension Service also offers help and advice about making a will, inheritance tax, and funeral and bereavement payments.

You may also be entitled to a Government Bereavement Benefit.

The Bereavement Benefits are

- Funeral Expenses Payment – this is a one-off payment to help with funeral costs
- Bereavement Support Payment – if your partner was under pension age, you may get a first payment and then up to 18 monthly payments

Help the Aged also offers information about Bereavement Benefits and other financial issues for widows and widowers.

Death of a household member

Dealing with the death of someone close is one of the most difficult things that many people will experience. Although we realise that you may need time to come to terms with what has happened it is important that you notify us, as soon as you possibly can, that someone in your household has passed away.

If you are now the sole adult living in the property you can reduce your Council Tax bill by 25%, this is known as Single Person Discount.

Even if there are other adults in your household you may still be able to get a reduction in your Council Tax bill. This is because in some circumstances certain people, such as students, are not counted when we work out the number of occupants of a household.

Bereavement – further help and advice

There is a wealth of information on the internet about coping with bereavement. Below we have provided information about just a handful of sites that offer practical and emotional help and support for people who are bereaved.

Sheffield Area Bereavement Forum has created a directory of Bereavement Services in the Sheffield area. You can get more information by calling (0114) 273 7797.

The Gone Forever project is a partnership between Sheffield Hallam University School of Education and Sheffield Area Bereavement Forum. The project sets out to help children and young people cope with loss and bereavement.

The charity Mind has produced an online booklet entitled Understanding Bereavement. Their website also has links and contact details for many useful organisations which may be of use to someone experiencing bereavement.

The Child Death Helpline is a freephone helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child. It is staffed by trained volunteers who are themselves bereaved parents. The helpline operates from Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Alder Hey Hospital's Alder Centre in Liverpool.

Information about Benefits and Bereavement can be found on the Citizens Advice Bureau website. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) website provides a wealth of information about a wide range of topics. Online CAB advice is available in a range of languages, including Urdu, Punjabi and Chinese.

Advice about Inheritance Tax can be obtained by visiting HM Revenue and Customs website. Information about probate is available from the Probate Service.