

Following the loss of your child

Information for parents



*'You've just walked on ahead of me and I've got to understand,
You must release the ones you love and let go of their hand.
I try and cope the best I can but I'm missing you so much,
If only I could see you and once more feel your touch.
Yes, you've just walked on ahead of me, don't worry I'll be fine,
But now and then I swear I feel your hand slip into mine.'*

Joyce Grenfell



INTRODUCTION

The death of a child or young person is a very distressing and painful time. Even at this most difficult of times there are certain things that have to be dealt with; this booklet aims to provide some help and advice during the early days of your bereavement. We hope that it will help you at this sad time, particularly with some of the practical and official matters.

If you have any questions or want to discuss anything, please feel free to contact us using the numbers at the back of this booklet.

Every parent's experience is individual, and every circumstance is different, but the death of a child can bring a grief that is deeper and lasts much longer than most people realise.

You may find it hard to take in what has happened, and hard to remember what people are saying.

Many bereaved parents have physical reactions to grief. You may have palpitations or chest pains; you may have a lump in your throat or butterflies in your stomach. You may not feel like eating anything and you may feel exhausted but find it difficult to sleep. These reactions are common and normal.

At the back of this booklet there are contact details of some organisations that may be able to offer you advice and support.

Unexpected death in A&E

Following the sudden unexpected death of a child / young person in the Accident and Emergency Department a number of protocols must be followed. The Rapid Response Team (RR) will be notified of your child's death and may attend the department.

Rapid Response Team

The Rapid Response Team consists of specialist nurses and police officers who are there to ensure everything possible is done to support you. You and your family will be supported by a family liaison officer (FLO).

Skeletal surveys

In some cases, when the child / young person is sent for a post mortem, full body x-rays (known as a skeletal survey) are taken before transfer to the specialist hospital. Another set are then taken once the child / young person arrives at the specialist hospital.

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POST MORTEM EXAMINATION

In the case of an unexpected death the hospital doctor is legally required to refer the death to the Coroner. In the majority of cases this will lead to a Coroner's post mortem examination being requested.

Where the death was expected, such as in the case of a life limiting illness, a hospital post mortem may be able to answer any questions that you have regarding your child's condition or provide further information.

Any examination will take place at a hospital that specialises in paediatric post mortems.

Many families find post mortems helpful because they can provide important information about how a loved one died. Understanding the reason for the death of a child can often help families come to terms with their loss.

CORONER'S POST MORTEM

A Coroners post mortem is an examination that is required by the Coroner. The Coroner is a judicial officer (a lawyer or doctor) responsible for investigating deaths and **does not** need consent from the family

If your child died unexpectedly or unnaturally, the hospital doctor looking after them must, by law, refer the case to the Coroner. The Coroner will request a post mortem examination.

If this is the case the post mortem is a legal requirement and you will not be asked for consent; you will however be asked for your consent to take small tissue samples, as with a hospital post mortem (see next page). The Coroner's officer will contact you to explain the procedure and to make sure you understand why the post mortem has been requested. The Coroner's officer will contact you again once the post mortem

is complete, with the preliminary results and they will also issue the documentation allowing you to register your child's death and hold the funeral. This process can take between 2 – 3 weeks depending on the circumstances

HOSPITAL POST MORTEM

A hospital post mortem is an examination that is not required by the Coroner, but is carried out at the request of either the family or the hospital doctor to provide information about an illness or cause of death. This type of post mortem **cannot** take place without the consent of the next of kin.

Some parents want a hospital post mortem, others may not be sure. It is your decision (except in a Coroner's case). Take time to think it over and if you have any questions or concerns you can call and speak to a member of the bereavement team on the numbers given at the back of this booklet.

The doctor will ask you if you wish to consider a hospital post mortem. Unless it has been ordered by the Coroner, a post mortem cannot be done without your consent.

If you would like a hospital post mortem to take place the doctor and a member of the bereavement team will go through the consent form with you and there will be opportunities for you to ask questions and make sure your preferences are noted. Once you have signed the hospital post mortem consent form you will be given a period of between 24 – 48 hours to change your mind, should you wish to do so.

THE POST MORTEM PROCESS

Some questions you may wish to ask about the post mortem examination are:

When it might be carried out

Where it will take place

How long it will take

When the results will be given to you, and who you can discuss them with

When and from whom you can get a copy of the results

The post mortem will take place at a specialist hospital; usually within 1-3 weeks. Your child will be transferred to the specialist hospital by our contract funeral directors and will return to Lister Hospital once all examinations are completed. As part of the post mortem process, small samples of tissue from the organs may be taken for more detailed examination under a microscope. With your agreement these tissue samples will be kept as part of your child's medical record. This is so that they can be re-examined to try to find out more if new tests or new information becomes available. If you do not agree to this, all tissue samples will be returned with your child after examination.

The post mortem process can take between 1-3 weeks depending on the examinations required and what you would like to happen to the tissue samples after the examination.

We will contact you to let you know when your child is back from the specialist hospital.

The results can take between 6 -10 weeks depending on the type of examination you consented to.

Once the post mortem results are available (usually 6 – 10 weeks after the examination), your child's GP will arrange a follow up counselling appointment during which the results will be discussed with you.

If you have any further questions about post mortem examinations, the doctor, family liaison officer or one of our bereavement team will be happy to answer these for you.

REGISTERING YOUR CHILD'S DEATH

Deaths are normally registered in the county in which they occur. However, if for any reason you are unable to attend the area where the death occurred, please contact your local Register Office for advice regarding the registration.

To make an appointment at a registry office in Hertfordshire, please call 0300 1234 045. One of our bereavement team can do this for you if you wish.

No Coroner's Involvement

If there is no Coroner's involvement the death should be registered within 5 working days. You will be given the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death by the bereavement office. You will need to take this to the registry office once an appointment has been booked. The bereavement office can make this appointment for you or you can make it yourself if you wish.

Your appointment will last approximately half an hour, it will be helpful if you can take the child / young person's birth certificate to the registry office with you but don't worry if it's not available.

The registrar will keep the Medical Certificate and will give you a Certificate of Registration of Death. They will also give you one or more copies of the complete entry in the register, called the Death Certificate. There is a small fee for these.

The registrar will also give you a green form to permit burial or cremation. This form needs to be given to the funeral director so they can submit it to the cemetery or crematorium that you have chosen.

Coroner's Involvement

When there has been Coroner's involvement in the death, i.e. for unexpected deaths, the Coroner's office will issue the required paperwork to Hertfordshire register office. They will speak to you and let you know when you are able to make a registration appointment.

Please Note:

For unmarried couples, the father may register the death by himself as long as he has parental responsibility.

Further information is available on the GOV.UK website www.gov.uk/register-a-death

Stevenage Register Office

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 5pm

Thur: 9am – 5pm

Tue: 9am – 5pm

Fri: 9am – 4pm

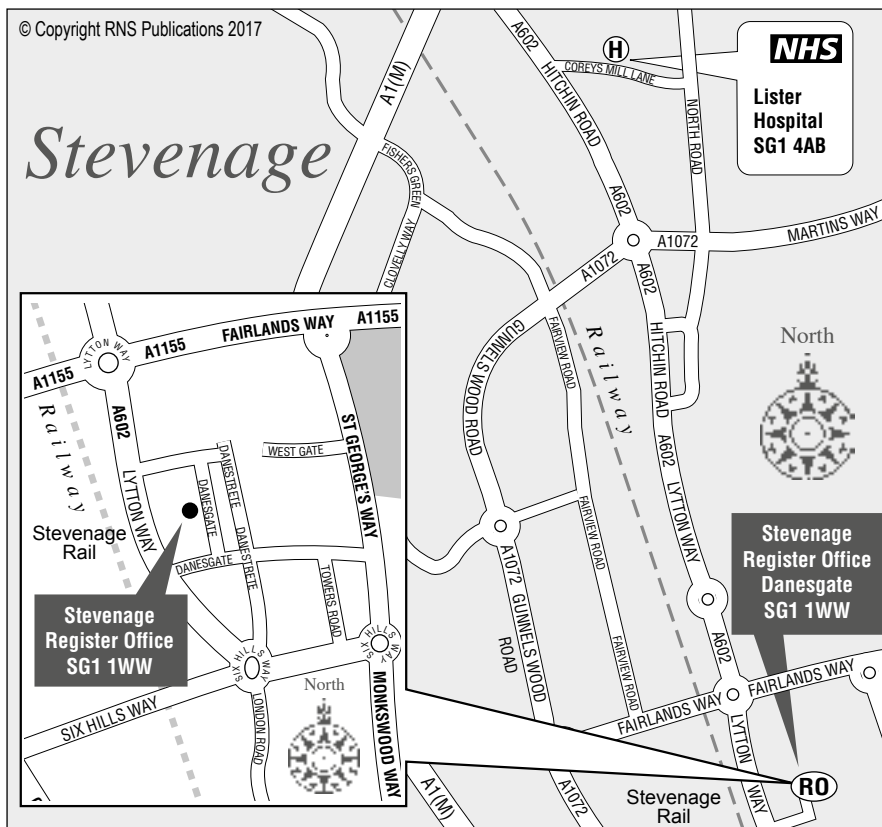
Wed: 9am – 5pm

Closed for lunch 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Address: Danesgate House, Danesgate,
Stevenage, SG1 1WW

Tel: **0300 123 4045**

Location Map of Stevenage Register Office



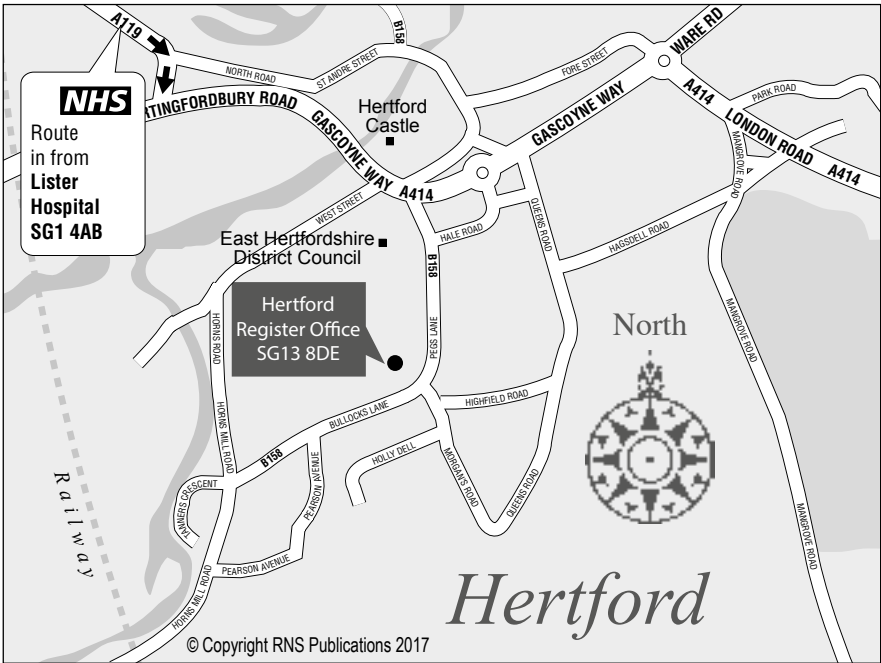
Hertford Register Office

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 5pm	Thur: 9am – 5pm
Tue: 9am – 5pm	Fri: 9am – 4pm
Wed: 9am – 5pm	

Address: County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DE
Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of Hertford Register Office



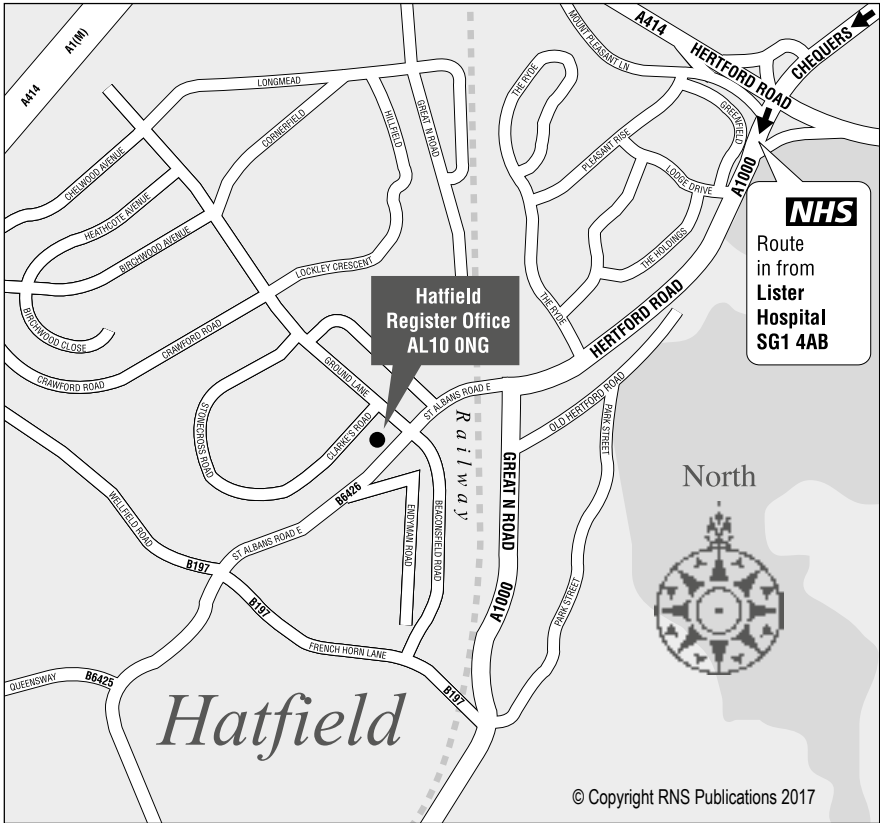
Hatfield Register Office

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 5pm	Thur: 9am – 5pm
Tue: 9am – 5pm	Fri: 9am – 4pm
Wed: 9am – 5pm	

Address: 19b, St. Albans Road East, Hatfield, AL10 0NG
Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of Hatfield Register Office



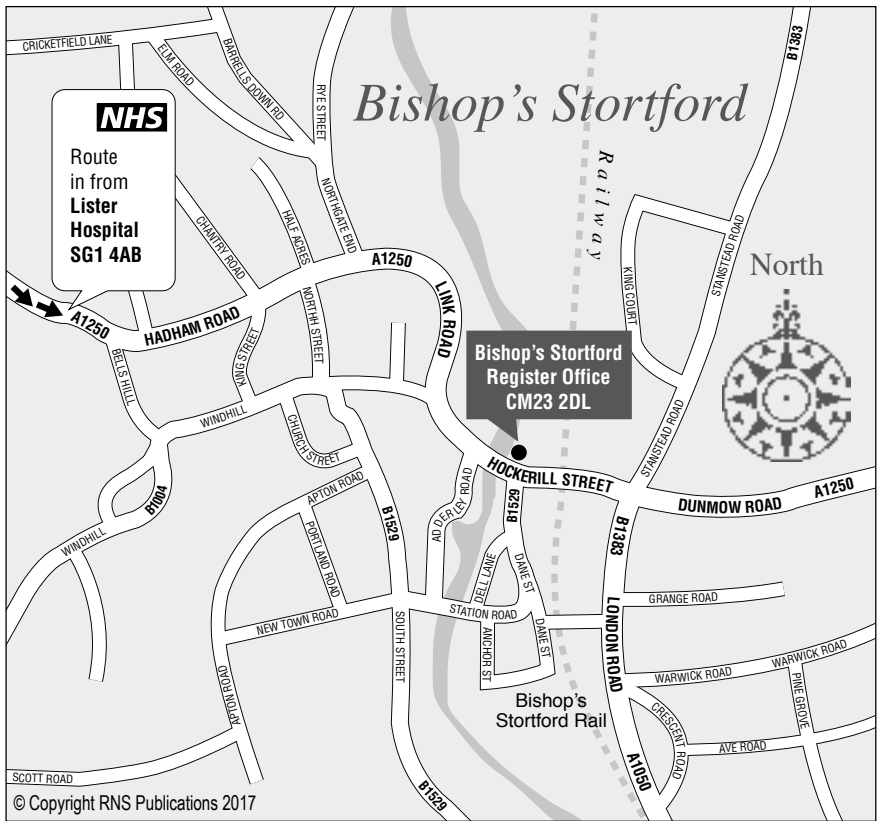
Bishop's Stortford Register Office

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 4pm	Thur: 9am – 12:30pm
Tue: 9am – 4pm	Fri: 9am – 4pm
Closed for lunch 12:30pm – 1:30pm	

Address: Riverside House, 2 Hockerill Street,
Bishop's Stortford CM23 2DL
Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of Bishop's Stortford Register Office



Watford Register Office

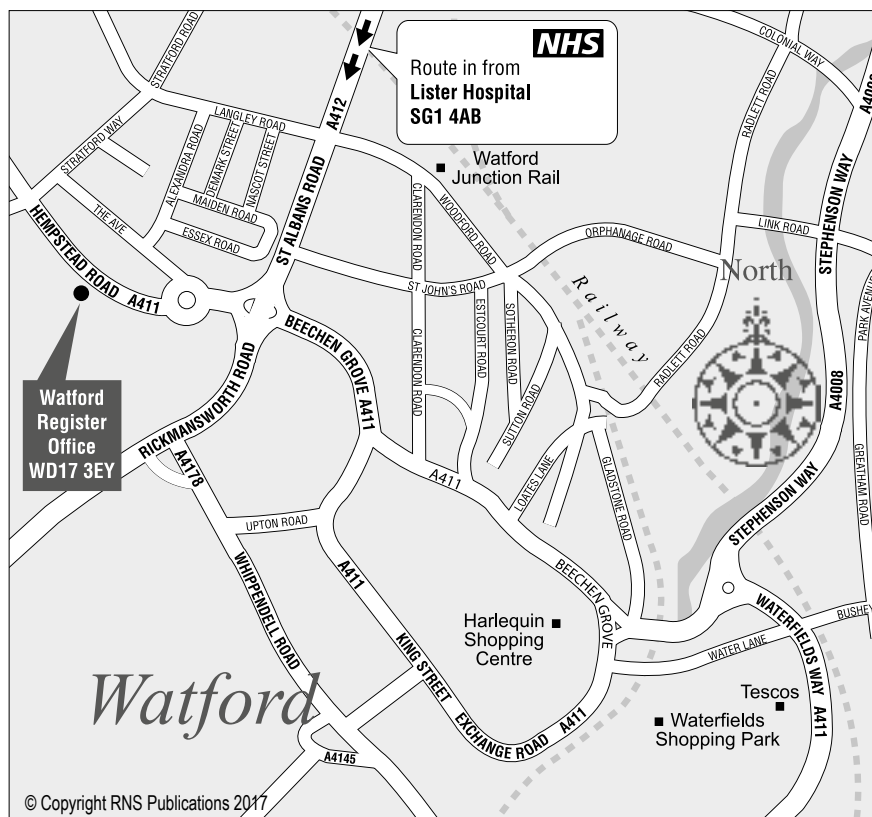
Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 5pm	Thur: 9am – 5pm
Tue: 9am – 5pm	Fri: 9am – 4pm
Wed: 9am – 5pm	Closed for lunch 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Address: 31 Hempstead Road, Watford WD17 3EY

Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of Watford Register Office



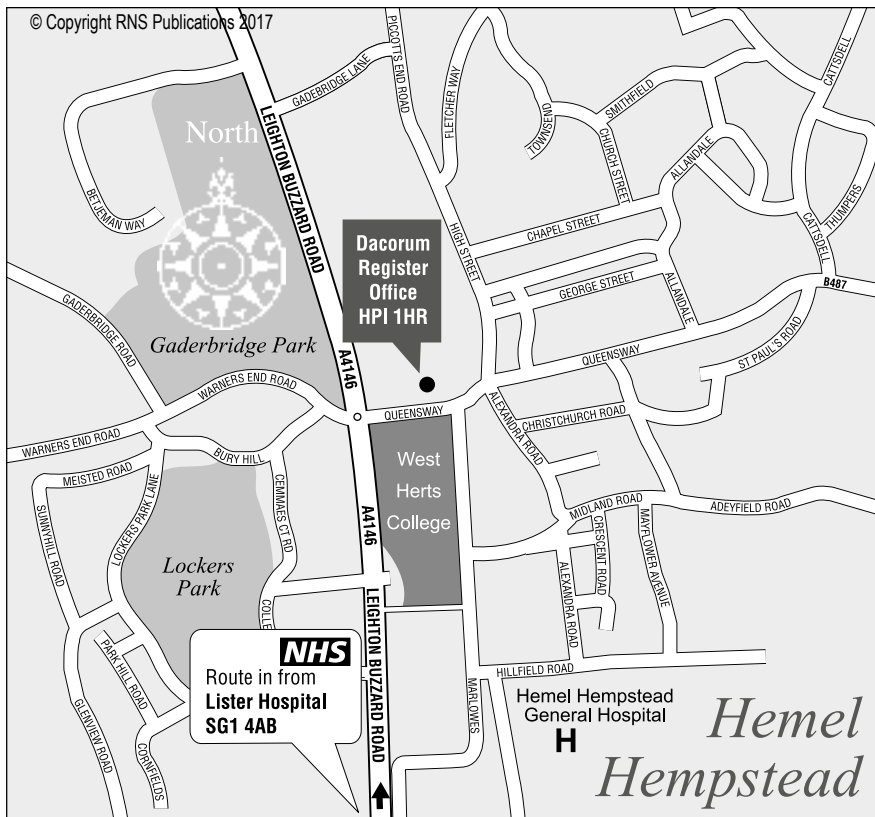
Dacorum Register Office, Hemel Hempstead

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 5pm	Thur: 9am – 5pm
Tue: 9am – 5pm	Fri: 9am – 4pm
Wed: 9am – 5pm	Closed for lunch 1pm – 2pm

Address: The Bury, Queensway,
Hemel Hempstead, HPI 1HR
Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of Dacorum Register Office



St Albans Register Office

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 5pm

Thur: 9am – 5pm

Tue: 9am – 5pm

Fri: 9am – 4pm

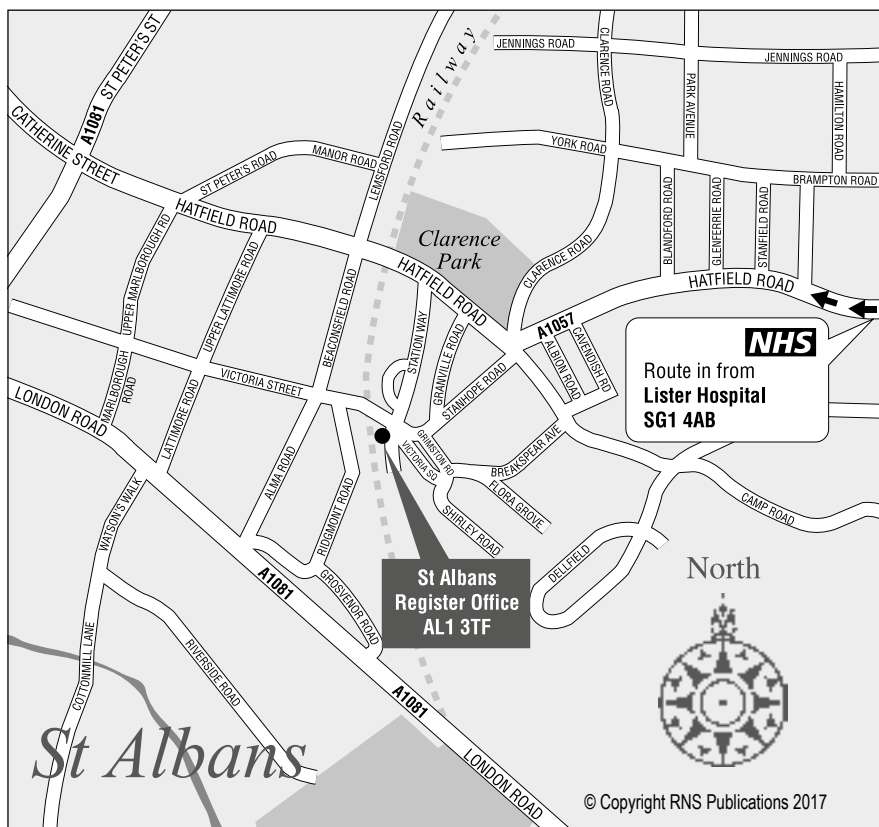
Wed: 9am – 5pm

Closed for lunch 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Address: The Gatehouse, 1, Victoria Square,
St Albans AL1 3TF

Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of St Albans Register Office



Broxbourne Register Office

Opening Times

Mon: 9am – 3pm

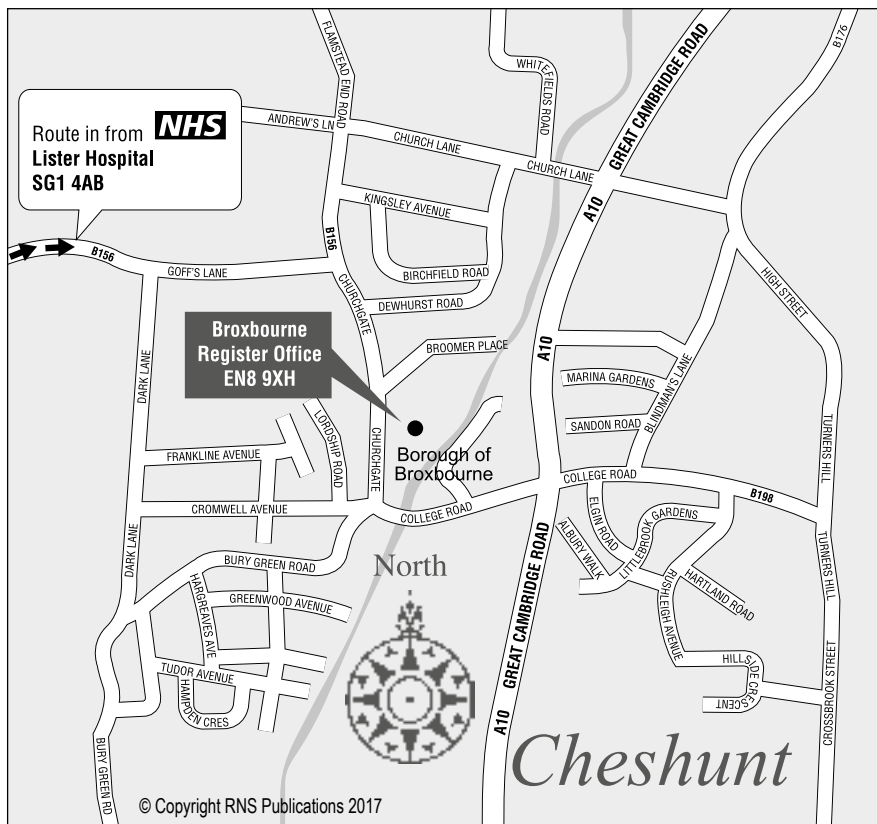
Wed: 9am – 3pm

Tue: 9am – 3pm

Fri: 9am – 4pm

Address: Bishop's College, Churchgate, Cheshunt, EN8 9XH
Tel: 0300 123 4045

Location Map of Broxbourne Register Office



KEEPSAKES

Keeping mementos of your baby can help the grieving process. We can provide these for you at your request. Some of the keepsakes we can provide are:

- Hand and foot prints
- Hand and foot impressions (for small babies and toddlers)
- Photographs
- Lock of hair (if appropriate)
- Name bands

Please inform either the nurse or one of the bereavement team if you would like some of these keepsakes and we will arrange for them to be taken. Alternatively you may wish for the keepsakes to be taken by siblings, grandparents or you may wish to take them yourself.



If your consent is not obtained in the paediatric emergency department it can be done in the bereavement office.

You may also be offered a memory box in the paediatric emergency department or on Bluebell ward. If you do not wish to take your keepsakes immediately, they can be kept in the bereavement office or with your family liaison officer if you have one, until you feel ready to have them.



VIEWSINGS

Saying goodbye to your child is a painful process and you may find it helpful to spend time with them.

This can be arranged with the bereavement office during working hours (Mon – Fri, 8am – 4pm) or outside these hours by contacting the nurse looking after you (who will be able to contact the on-call mortuary team through switchboard). The contact numbers are in the back of this booklet.

Please be aware that it may not always be possible to arrange a viewing out of hours but the mortuary team will do their best to accommodate you where possible.

Viewings take place in the bereavement office viewing suite. This can comfortably accommodate 4 – 5 members of family and friends.

If other members of the family, including brothers and sisters, wish to see your child they are welcome to do so at your discretion.

You are welcome to bring in anything that you may wish to leave with your child, we will ensure that anything left with your child stays with them at all times. You can bring clothes to dress your child in or even their favourite bedding.



The Bereavement Office Viewing Suite

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES

If there are any religious or cultural practices that you want to be performed / need to carry out for your child please tell us and we will help you to ensure that everything is done as you wish.

Our hospital chaplains are available 24 hours a day to provide help and support with any needs you have. They can be contacted by the hospital staff through switchboard should you wish to speak to them.

The hospital chaplains are also able to conduct a blessing for your child if desired. There is a chapel, a Muslim Prayer room and a Jewish Shabbat room situated on level 3 which are accessible 24 hours a day.

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

This is an important part of the process of saying 'goodbye' to your child.

You can contact a funeral director before or after you have registered the death. They will arrange an appointment to meet with you either at their office or in your own home if you prefer. They will need to know if you wish to make arrangements for a burial or a cremation so that they can make the necessary preparations. You may find it helps to talk this over with other family members; the important thing is that your wishes are made known.

It is a good idea to get an estimate of how much you will have to pay, as these expenses can be more than you would expect. The majority of funeral directors however will carry out children's funerals for a reduced rate or for free.

Your chosen funeral director will discuss with you the type of service you want and the options available, they can contact your local religious leader or help you make arrangements for a non-religious service.

Your religious leader / humanist will talk with you about the service you would like and they and the funeral director will help to arrange the service and ask whether you would like flowers or donations.

If you choose to have a cremation you will be asked what you wish to do with the ashes. Take your time to think about what you would like to do, do not feel that you must rush in to a decision. You can even make your decision after the funeral has taken place.

All children, if they wish, should be allowed to attend the funeral. They are grieving too and also need the chance to say goodbye. If they do not wish to go, don't pressurise them or make them feel that they must attend. If they do wish to go it can help if the person conducting the funeral comes and

talks to them and explains what will happen. It is a good idea if someone close to the children is given the responsibility of looking after them, both during the service and after.

Following the funeral, friends and family are often unsure about what to say when talking about the child you have lost, but just being there and talking about your child and memories that you share can help.

If you feel that you are struggling or that you would like to talk to somebody 'neutral' we have listed some support groups and helplines at the back of this booklet. Alternatively contact your local GP who can refer you for counselling if needed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Organisations you may need to inform following the death of your child:

➤ Child Benefit Office

You should tell the Child Benefit Office (www.gov.uk/child-benefit-child-parent-dies) as soon as possible if you're claiming Child Benefit. Child Benefit payments will usually carry on for 8 weeks after a child's death. You may still be able to claim Child Benefit if your child died before you made a claim.

If a newborn baby dies you're entitled to up to 8 weeks of Child Benefit if you claim within 3 months of the death.

If the child died before the end of the week they were born in, the 8 weeks starts from the Monday following the death.

➤ Tax Credits

If you're claiming tax credits and your child dies, your payments may change. You'll need to tell the Tax Credit Office (www.gov.uk/changes-affect-tax-credits) within one month of the death. If you don't you might:

- have to pay back overpayments
- not get all the money you're owed

You can continue to get tax credits for up to 8 weeks following the death. If your child died before you claimed tax credits, you can still claim. Call the tax credits helpline (www.gov.uk/contact-the-tax-credit-office) to get a claim form.

Leave and payments you may still qualify for:

➤ Sure Start Maternity Grant

You can still get the grant if you qualify. You must make a claim (www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant) within 3 months of the birth.

➤ Maternity & Paternity Leave and Pay

You'll still qualify for leave and pay if your baby dies after being born.

➤ Child Trust Fund Payments

When a child dies, any money in their Child Trust Fund account – including any payments from the government – usually passes to whoever inherits the child's estate.

WHERE TO FIND FURTHER SUPPORT

Stand By Me – Provides bereavement support to children, young people and their families in North Hertfordshire.

- Helpline **0800 0116 115** (Tuesdays between 18.00 – 20.30)
- Email **info@stand-by-me.org.uk**
- **www.stand-by-me.org.uk**

Chums - Offers support in a variety of ways to children, young people and their families across Luton and Bedfordshire.

- Helpline **01525 863 924**
- Email **info@chums.uk.com**
- **www.chums.uk.com**

SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charity)

- Helpline **0207 436 5881**
- Email **helpline@uk-sands.org**
- **www.uk-sands.org**

Child Bereavement UK

- Support line **0800 028 8840**
- Email **support@childbereavementuk.org**
- **www.childbereavementuk.org**

Child Death Helpline

- Helpline **0800 282 986 / 0808 800 6019**
- Email **contact@childdeathhelpline.org**
- **www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk**

Tommy's

- Helpline **0800 014 7800**
- Email **info@tommys.org**
- **www.tommys.org**

Cruse Bereavement Care

- Helpline **0808 808 1677**
- Email **helpline@cruse.org.uk**
- **www.cruse.org.uk**

The Samaritans

- Helpline **116 123**
- Email **jo@samaritans.org**
- **www.samaritans.org**

Winston's Wish (the charity for bereaved children)

- Helpline **0808 802 0021**
- Email **info@winstonswish.org.uk**
- **www.winstonswish.org.uk**

The Lullaby Trust

- Helpline **0808 802 6868**
- Email **support@lullabytrust.org.uk**
- **www.lullabytrust.org.uk**

Child Funeral Charity

Provides help with funeral costs. Takes referrals from professionals who have knowledge of the bereaved family and their circumstances.

- Tel **01480 276088**
- Email **enquiries@childfuneralcharity.org.uk**
- **www.childfuneralcharity.org.uk**

Bereavement Advice Centre

Practical information and advice on what needs to be done when someone has died. Will find answers to less common questions such as taking ashes abroad.

- Helpline **0800 634 9494**
- Email **info@bereavementadvice.org**
- **www.bereavementadvice.org**

The Money Advice Service

- Helpline **0300 500 5000**
- **www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk**
- **www.gov.uk**

Compassionate Friends - International organisation run by bereaved parents for bereaved parents.

- Helpline **0345 123 2304**

Baby Mailing Preference Service (MPS)

Free site where you can register online to stop or reduce baby-related mailings of samples, advertisements etc.

- Tel **0207 291 3310**
- Email **bmpps@dma.org.uk**
- **www.mpsonline.org.uk/bmpps**
- Address: **DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London, W1W 8SS**

Funeral Payment from the Social Fund

- Available if you are claiming benefits due to low income.
- You can claim at any time up to three months after the funeral.

England, Scotland and Wales

Online: **www.gov.uk/funeral-payments**

(download and fill in form SF200 and take it to your local Jobcentre Plus)

Tel: **0345 606 0265** (Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm)

Bereavement Office,
Lister Hospital
Level 3
Lou Thomas
01438 288462
Jackie Head
01438 288463
Mon-Fri 8am to 4pm

Chaplaincy Team,
Lister Hospital
Level 3
01438 285519
Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm
Can be contacted out of
hours by staff through
switchboard

*‘Although we seem so far apart,
You’re always here within our hearts.
You filled our lives with joy and pleasure
You were to us a precious treasure.
Loved, remembered and held so dear,
In minds and hearts you’re always here.’*

Notes

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

