

# Supporting family members and loved ones

## Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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It's always a difficult time when a person who uses our services dies. Being contacted by family members, partners or carers who want to understand more about the treatment and support their loved one was receiving, can help to process the loss.

We want to support you to have compassionate and meaningful conversations with those closest to the person, so you can decide when, how and what information you should share.

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### How to share information

Due to current social distancing measures, it's likely that family members, partners or carers will get in touch with our services by telephone. It's important to think about how you can help them get the most out of this contact.

If you're in a busy office, try to find a quiet space to make the call. If you're working from home, try to pick a quiet room that you feel comfortable in, so you can talk freely without distraction.

- Offer your condolences to the person and ask if they need any further support, for example from bereavement and family services.
  - Give them space to speak so they can express their emotions. The call with you will be an opportunity for them to talk about and remember their loved one without judgement.
  - Listen to their questions and provide information based on the facts. Be compassionate in your responses and provide assurance, letting them know you and the service cared for their loved one.
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### What can I talk about?

Check the legal guidance section of this document below. This should help you to know what treatment and care information you can share and with whom. Share details about any progress and positive changes the person made.

If you knew the service user, then you can talk about what you remember about them – positive character traits and behaviours.

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## What do I tell families about take home medication?

Family members may have questions about decisions that were made about their loved ones' treatment.

If you are asked about changes to prescribing during Coronavirus:

- Try to use language and medical terms that families will understand.
- Explain the reason we made changes to their loved ones' prescribing plan.
- Tell them about the additional support and information that was offered.

Here is a useful explanation you might want to use as a guide when you're talking to families about changes to the person's medication or prescribing plans:

*'We needed to actively reduce (insert name of loved one) chances of being exposed to the Coronavirus. This meant that we needed to change how we prescribe. We didn't want people to go out when they didn't have to so we did what we could to try and keep their access to medication as stable as possible to keep them safe.'*

If you do get asked any questions which you don't feel able to answer, be honest and say that you'll escalate these questions to the appropriate person who can answer them.

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## Legal guidance to support you

Please think about the following, before deciding whether to share information about someone who has died who used our services:

- Is there any evidence that they would have been happy for us to share the information?
- Is there any evidence that they would not have wanted the information to be shared? For example, was there abuse within their personal relationship or had the relationship broken down?
- Would sharing the information cause harm to anyone else? We can decide not to share information if doing this is likely to cause harm to somebody else.
- Would sharing the information have the potential to affect an ongoing police investigation?

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## Self-care for you/ looking after yourself

Take time to check in with yourself.

What emotions are you experiencing about what's happened?

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Do you have someone to talk to?

How are you feeling about talking to the person's family?

It might be helpful to talk to a colleague or manager about how you feel and take time to review the record of the situation together. After you've talked to the family member, set up a call or Skype with someone at work so you can share how you're feeling.

Remember to always be compassionate towards yourself.

## Who you can share information with

	Information can be shared <b>unless</b> there is any evidence the service user would not have wanted it to be disclosed / it could cause harm	Discuss with legal services team
Spouse / parent / partner who lived with service user	X	
Parent or legal guardian of a child who has died	X	
Grandparents / siblings or other relatives / friends		X
Executor of the deceased service user's estate (written confirmation required)	X	
Next of kin as listed on the service user's record	X	
Those with whom the service user had provided consent to share	X	

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