

Talking to relatives

A hospital guide to compassionate phone calls during Covid-19 outbreak



- 1 Introduce**
- My name is
I am a
 - # **hello** my name is...
- Speak slowly**
- I'm calling to give you an update on your relative.....
- Open with a question**
- Are you okay to talk?
- Establish what they know**
- Can you tell me what you know about his/her/their condition?

- 2 Share information in small chunks**
- ✓ Use** Pauses, simple language
- ✗ Avoid** Euphemisms, jargon

- 3 Helpful concepts**
- **Honesty and uncertainty**
There are treatments that might help your relative get better, such as giving him/her/them oxygen to help with his/her/their breathing. But if his/her/their heart stopped we wouldn't try to restart it as this wouldn't work
 - **Hope for the best but plan for the worst**
We hope improves with these treatments but we are worried he/she/they may not recover
 - **Sick enough to die**
Your relative is very sick and getting very tired. He/she/they is/are now so unwell he/she/they could die in the next hours or days. I'm so sorry to have to tell you this over the phone, but sadly your relative died a few minutes ago

- 4 Comfort and reassure**
- *Is there anything you can tell me/us about your relative to help us look after him/her/ them. What matters to him/ her/ them?*
 - *We've been looking after him/her/them making sure he/she/they is/are comfortable*

- 5 Allow silence**
- **Listen**
I am so sorry please take your time
 - **Empathise**
I appreciate it must be very hard to take this news in over the phone
 - **Acknowledge**
I can hear how upset you are. This is an awful situation

- 6 Ending the call**
- **Don't rush**
Before I end the call do you have any questions about?
 - **Next steps**
Do you need any further information or support?

- 7 After the call**
- **Debrief** by chatting to a colleague and these situations are hard

Signposting for bereavement support for Hospital

- Please advise they make contact with the bereavement suite the next working day (not a weekend or BH) **York 01904 725445 / Scarborough 01723 385178** (08:30 to 16:30) – appointments for death certificate will be completed over the phone they WILL NOT be asked to attend the hospital.
- Please follow the SOP for appropriate after death care and sensitive removal of belongings.

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| ● Cruse Bereavement | 0808 808 1677 | ● Samaritans | 08457 90 90 90 |
| ● Dying matters | 08000 21 44 66 | ● Macmillan Cancer support | 0808 808 0000 |
| ● Mariecurie.org.uk/supporting-children | | ● Winston's Wish | 08452 03 04 05 |