



END OF LIFE CARE IN JEWISH CARE HOMES

JEWISH CARE

LIVING WELL UNTIL THE END

In Jewish Care we believe that life in its entirety, should be lived well, with dignity and with as much comfort as possible. We encourage people to make decisions about the way they live their lives, and how and where they would like to be cared for when they are very ill and nearing the end of their life.

Having conversations about end of life care, expressing personal wishes and preferences and planning ahead can give residents and their family a sense of control and helps those providing care. Jewish Care's staff together with the homes' GPs have an important role in assisting those living in our homes and their families to engage in such conversations, when they are ready to do so. The GP will also inform residents and their relatives of different options regarding available care and treatment as well as the right to 'opt out' of certain interventions. If no legal documentation is in place, decision about care for a person who is not able to express their wishes will be made by the GP and the care team together with relatives in a way that is believed to match the person's wishes.

It is best to document such decisions when in good health and whilst having full capacity. These can be in a will, advanced wishes document or a 'living will'. You may want to appoint a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) for Property & Affairs and or Health & Welfare. An LPA is a legally binding document and provides peace of mind to you and those you have chosen enabling them to act in your best interests if and when needed, but only when you have lost mental capacity.

CARE AND SUPPORT DURING THE FINAL DAYS

When a resident nears the end of their life, staff will aim to follow any advanced wishes that have been documented as much as is possible under the given circumstances. If the staff or GP are unable to follow the plans fully, they will consult the resident or family, keep them informed and explain the reasons for any changes that may be necessary. When someone's condition worsens we will aim to contact the next of kin as soon as possible to enable them to be with their loved one. We would rely on the next of kin to inform the rest of the family.

Our staff will try to spend as much time as possible with the resident and support them and their family in a way that is appropriate to them. There are no restricted visiting times in our homes and relatives can stay throughout this time. If a resident expressed a wish to have a Rabbi or a particular community member called we would follow these wishes too.

WHEN A RESIDENT PASSES AWAY

When a resident passes away in one of our homes, a senior member of staff will contact the next of kin (if they are not already there) and in accordance with Jewish tradition family members may watch over their relative until the body is taken from the home if they wish. Alternatively, the family can arrange for someone from one of the burial societies to stay with them and we will support them to do this.

The resident's doctor will be informed and asked to sign a death certificate as soon as possible. Jewish Care's agreement with homes' GPs expects the death certificate to be provided within six hours after a death occurring during the day, and the next morning if the death occurred in the evening or during the night. Our doctors make every effort to adhere to this, however there may be circumstances, including deaths occurring on weekends and bank holidays when the GP practice is closed or when the doctor is not able to attend within this timeframe and delays may occur. If the resident dies in hospital, the hospital doctors will sign the death certificate and the family will need to contact the hospital in order to obtain it.

Once the death certificate has been signed, the family will be able to arrange for the body to be removed from the home by the undertakers and register the death with the Registrar. This will be required in order to arrange for the funeral. The funeral would need to be arranged by the family with the appropriate Burial Society. Contact numbers for these can be provided by senior members of staff in the home.

We ask that a member of the family please inform a senior member of staff of the funeral arrangements. If the family wishes to sit Shiva (or part of it) in the home, we will try and accommodate this as far as space in the home permits.

BURIALS AND THE LAW – AND HOW IT CAN AFFECT YOUR WISHES

Staff in our homes do their utmost to enable burial according to Jewish laws and traditions and the resident's and families' wishes. However, we are obligated to comply with UK laws and other professional regulations. Therefore there could be circumstances where this may not be entirely possible.

Homes are not permitted to hold the body of a deceased person for longer than twelve hours (less in very hot weather), unless in a mortuary. None of our homes have mortuaries and therefore non-Jewish undertakers may need to be called if Jewish undertakers are not available, such as on Shabbat and over the Chagim. This is likely to incur an additional cost to the family. Once the Jewish undertakers are open again the body can be transferred to them.

In the case of sudden or unexpected death, police or the coroner may restrict the handling and moving of the body and delay burial. There may be a decision by the coroner to perform a post mortem. This may be very distressing for the family and our staff will do all they can to offer their support during this time.

SUPPORT FOR RELATIVES

We know how difficult it is for families of our residents to contemplate what may happen in the future. We also know that when one of our residents becomes frailer, or passes away, that the family will have many questions around what to do.

Please be assured that we aim to treat our residents and their families with the sensitivity and dignity that these very difficult times deserve, and that at all times our staff are here to help you as much as possible.

Here are just a few telephone numbers that families may find useful at these difficult times:

Jewish Care's Family Carers Team 020 8922 2222
The Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service 020 8951 3881
Cruse Bereavement Care 0844 477 9400

For more information about end of life care look out for our other booklets:

