



NI
Bereavement
Network



Royal College
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RCN NORTHERN IRELAND
CONFERENCE

Care of the Deceased Adult in Care Homes

and Those Important to Them

Launching a regional guideline for care home staff
across Northern Ireland

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Dignity • clarity • partnership

Why a care-home specific guideline was needed

Care after death is more than “last offices”.

It brings together four responsibilities that staff must often manage at the same time:



Safe, sensitive care

Dignity, personal care, culture, religion and spiritual wishes.



Clear governance

Verification, certification, Coroner processes, RQIA and accurate records.



Coordinated roles

GPs, community nursing, PSNI, funeral directors and care home teams.



Support for people

Compassionate information for those important to the resident—and support for staff.

Built through collaboration

A shared response to the realities of care homes



Shared focus: the resident and those important to them

**Trust Bereavement
Coordinators**

**NI Bereavement
Network**

**Independent care
home sector**

PHA and RQIA

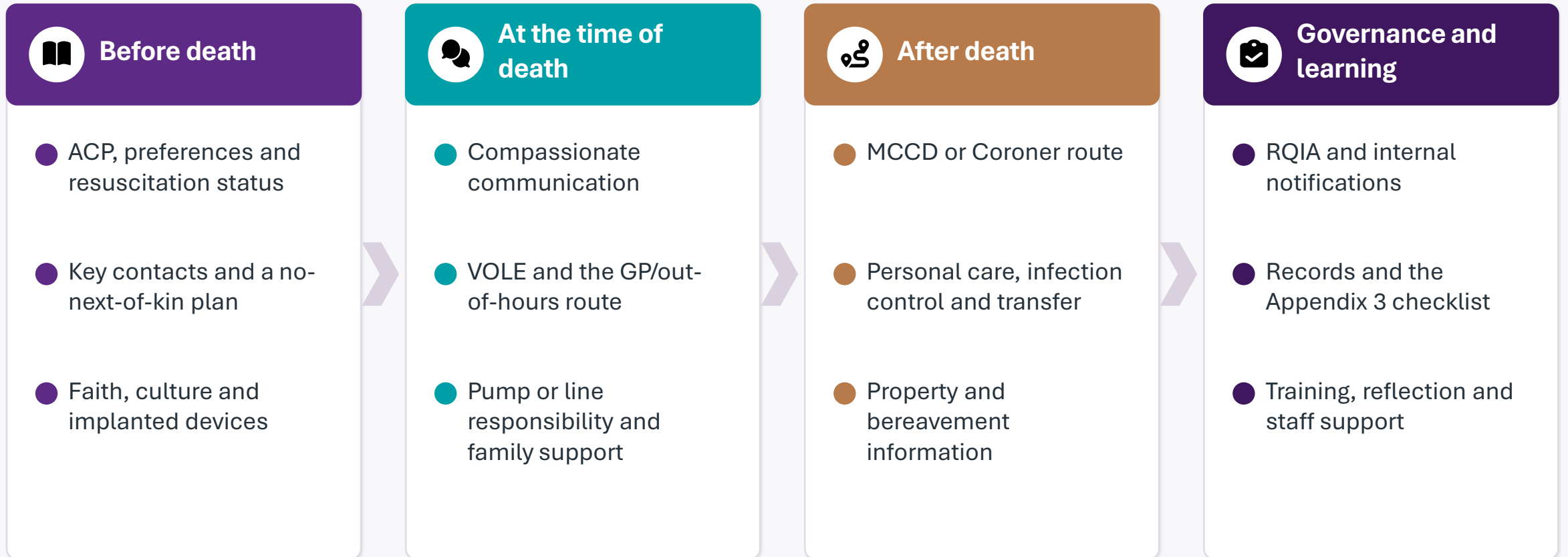
**Palliative Care in
Partnership**

**Health and Social
Care Trusts**

A regional framework, adapted to the realities of both nursing and residential care homes.

One pathway — before, at the time of and after death

The guidance joins the emotional, clinical, legal and practical parts of care into one sequence.



Planning before death reduces uncertainty after death—and gives staff a safer, more compassionate framework to follow.

Where the guidance gives critical clarity

Four situations where ambiguity can create delay, distress or risk.



1 | Coroner involvement

What must be preserved?

- Confirm the route through the GP and Coroner. If circumstances are suspicious, minimise handling; leave lines, pumps, catheters and contents in situ; do not wash.
- Follow PSNI/Coroner directions and record every action.



2 | Nursing or residential?

Who manages pumps and lines?

- Nursing home: the RN may stop the pump; after VOLE and no Coroner referral, manage lines in line with policy. Residential home: responsibility remains with community nursing.
- Agree an out-of-hours plan before it is needed.



3 | No family or next of kin

Who coordinates the next steps?

- Plan before death: involve the named nurse, care manager/social worker and GP; record any key worker, solicitor or funeral director.
- Document who will coordinate arrangements after death.



4 | Verification and transfer

What can happen—and when?

- VOLE must be completed before transfer; the doctor decides whether an MCCD can be issued or a Coroner referral is required.
- Explain timing, delays and what happens next.

The checklist makes the pathway usable

A practical prompt for staff to confirm the clinical, legal, family and governance actions after a resident dies.

Use it to standardise:

- 1

Verification and GP notification

VOLE carried out, date/time recorded and GP or out-of-hours route confirmed.
- 2

Family support and cultural wishes

Family informed, time with the resident facilitated, spiritual or cultural needs documented.
- 3

Legal and procedural route

Coroner referral, MCCD status, funeral director arrangements and transfer actions tracked.
- 4

Governance and learning

RQIA notification, staff names/signatures and any local learning recorded.

Adapt locally • keep accessible • use after every death • audit for learning

Appendix 3

Checklist Following the Death of a Resident

Name of Resident:

Room No:

Date of Birth:

Verification of life extinct	YES	NO	N/A
<i>Please tick box</i>			
Has Verification of Life Extinct been carried out?			
Date and time of verification of death recorded in the resident's care record?			
GP informed of the death of the resident by nurse/care home staff?			
If no, delegated to: Name.....			

Designation Date

Care of the Family of the Deceased Resident's	YES	NO	N/A
<i>Family refers to all those important to the patient</i>			
Family informed of the death?			
Family facilitated to spend time with the resident?			
End of life Care Symbol displayed in the immediate area?			
Resident or family's spiritual advisor contacted, if requested?			
Religious/cultural requirements for care of the deceased resident discussed and documented?			
Does the family want cremation?			
If yes, please inform the doctor			
Verbal and written bereavement information, including link for the Bereaved NI website, provided to family?			
If Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) not completed, was the family informed?			
Resident's belongings returned to legal next of kin?			
Procedures after death	YES	NO	N/A
Have Funeral Directors been contacted to collect the deceased resident?			
Has the death been reported to the Coroner?			
MCCD completed and emailed to the General Register Office (GRO) by the GP?			
If deceased resident does not have a next of kin - Key Worker / Care Manager/ Nominated Solicitor informed?			
Notification of death sent to RQIA?			
Care after Death procedure carried out by:			
Name: (print).....	Designation:		
Name: (print).....	Designation:		

Staff member completing the checklist:

Print Name:

Designation:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3: Checklist following the death of a resident

Care of the Deceased Adult in Care Homes | RCN Northern Ireland Conference launch

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The launch is the beginning

Consistency will depend on local preparation, clear partnerships and confident staff.

- 1 Adapt the guideline into local policy and use the Appendix 3 checklist.
- 2 Map the different responsibilities in nursing and residential homes.
- 3 Agree GP, community nursing and out-of-hours escalation routes.
- 4 Train staff through practical scenarios—especially Coroner cases and pump or line management.
- 5 Create space for reflection, staff support and shared learning after a death.

Every resident deserves dignified care. Those important to them deserve clear, compassionate support. Staff deserve guidance they can use.



Care of the Deceased Adult in Care Homes and Those Important to Them

A Guideline for Care Home Staff
in Northern Ireland

DIGNITY • CLARITY • PARTNERSHIP

Links to Care of the Deceased Adult in Care Homes and Bereaved NI

Care of the Deceased Adult in Care homes

A practical framework to support consistent, compassionate and safe care before, at the time of and after a resident's death, with clear guidance on communication, responsibilities, family support and governance.



Scan to open

Open: Care of the Deceased Adult in Care Homes

[Care of the Deceased Adult in Care Homes](#)

Bereaved NI website

Bereaved NI is a central Northern Ireland resource for people who are bereaved and those supporting them. It brings together practical guidance before and after a death, information on grief, and a searchable directory of support services and helplines.



Scan to open

Open: bereaved NI website

<https://bereaved.hscni.net/>