

## **Wiltshire Council Human Resources**

### **Death in service policy and procedure**

This policy can be made available in other languages and formats such as large print and audio on [request](#).

#### **What is it?**

The policy gives advice on the actions required if an employee dies or is injured whilst working for the council. This could include death by natural causes or as the result of an accident at work.

#### **Go straight to the section:**

- Main Points
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Who does it apply to?**

Employees of Wiltshire Council.

#### **What are the main points?**

##### Considerations

1. Dealing with an employee's death is one of the saddest and most difficult issues you will ever have to deal with and needs to be handled with great care and sensitivity to prevent any additional distress for bereaved relatives and colleagues and to ensure seamless administration
2. Managers will need to consider the welfare and emotional state of staff directly affected by the situation and consider how to support next of kin of the deceased or injured.

##### Initial Notifications

3. Any death in the workplace must firstly be reported to the Emergency Services. The person must not be moved before they arrive.
4. If an employee is seriously injured call the emergency services and a First Aider if the accident occurred within council premises.

5. Within the council the following people need to be notified:
  - appropriate manager
  - appropriate corporate director
  - occupational health and safety service
  - head of communications
  - designated HR business partner
6. Outside of normal office working hours individual directorates need to make their own arrangements for having out of hours emergency contacts.

#### Notifying next of kin of a staff fatality

6. The police may assume the responsibility of informing the next of kin and may ask the employee's manager to provide details of next of kin together with their addresses and telephone number.
7. If the police are not going to inform the next of kin then a manager who knew the employee well may be the most appropriate person to break the news or sometimes a colleague who knows the family well may volunteer.

#### Notifying Occupational Health and Safety

8. Occupational Health & Safety need to be notified in order for them to make sure the statutory reports for the Health and Safety Executive are completed.
9. OH can also provide access to trauma and bereavement counselling.

#### Media Enquiries

10. The extent of any media interest will depend on the circumstances surrounding the employee's death at work. Any enquiries from the media must be referred to the communications team.

#### Large Scale Incident

11. Where an employee dies as a result of a larger incident involving several people the police and Wiltshire Council are likely to set up aid centres. The type of aid centre that could be set up will depend on the nature and scale of the emergency but could include a Survivor Reception Centre, Friends and Family Centre and a Humanitarian Assistance Centre.
12. A casualty bureau may also be set up by the police to collate details of

dead, surviving and evacuated persons. The casualty bureau is set up to deal with enquiries from friends and family concerned about people possibly caught up in the incident.

13. The police may start an investigative process and employees will be expected to cooperate with any official investigation. Police officers trained in family liaison will obtain details of those persons involved in the incident to assist the Coroner in providing evidence of the deceased person's identity and for the senior investigating officer (SIO) who will deal with the police investigation.

#### Informing and dealing with staff members

14. Whatever the reason, when an employee dies, it is necessary for an appropriate manager to inform other members of staff. This will need to be done with sensitivity and compassion and should be done with as much honesty as possible about the cause of death. It is advisable to:

- inform those closest to the employee first.
- communicate the news in a private environment
- allow staff time off to grieve and attend the funeral taking into account service delivery.
- operate an open door policy to those staff members suffering from emotional distress.
- encourage employees to seek counselling if necessary which can be accessed through the Occupational Health Service.

#### Informing customers and suppliers

15. A decision will need to be made if customers and suppliers who dealt with the employee are to be informed and how this will be conveyed. The approach will largely depend on the relationship that each service or person had with the deceased employee. For some it may be appropriate to send a letter for others a telephone call would be preferable. Service users will need to be kept informed of any disruption or alteration to service provision.

#### Letter of condolence to the next of kin

16. A letter of condolence needs to be sent to the next of kin by the chief executive or corporate director. The letter should provide the next of kin with a named contact should they have any queries or concerns they wish to raise.

#### Payroll and pension considerations

17. A leavers form for the deceased employee needs to be completed by the manager and sent to the Shared Services HR/Payroll team promptly. Human Resources can provide assistance with this. As soon as this form is received the processing can begin by payroll for any salary owing and by pensions for any entitlement to death in service benefits and pension entitlement.
18. As this is a worrying and upsetting time for the next of kin the named contact can allay some of their concerns by keeping the next of kin informed when they can expect to receive final salary payment and pension benefits.

#### Funeral arrangements

19. When a date for the funeral is set it is best to check with the next of kin whether colleagues of the deceased are welcome to attend and if it would be fitting to organise a floral arrangement or arrange some other tribute and allow employees to contribute towards this.
20. It may also be pertinent to arrange a memorial service especially if the funeral was a small, private service. It is always necessary to consult with the next of kin and to be aware of any religious sensitivities before making any arrangements.

#### Staffing Issues

21. Skill shortages will need to be determined and available options considered in order to maintain services.
22. In the short term this could mean reallocating work to existing staff or taking on a temporary member of staff.
23. In the long term this could be following the current recruitment process to find a replacement.

#### Roles and responsibilities

##### Employee responsibilities

24. Though no one likes to think this situation will happen to them it is important that you enter your next of kin details on SAP. There is a question and answer in Frequently Asked Questions if you are unsure how to do this.
25. If you are a member of the Wiltshire pension fund make sure you have completed a nomination form for who you want to receive your death

grant. <http://www.wiltshirepensionfund.org.uk/expression-of-wish-form.pdf>

#### Line manager responsibilities

26. Make sure you have next of kin details and/or emergency contact details for your staff and keep these secure.
27. Notify appropriate managers within your department and set up out of office manager communication channels.
28. Make sure your employees have entered their next of kin details and/or emergency details on SAP by using the SAP portal which is accessible through the Wire.
29. Offer to help your staff input their next of kin and emergency details on SAP or get them to complete a Change of Employee Details form.
30. Check and, if necessary, arrange who will notify next of kin – is this the police, appropriate manager or work colleague?
31. Complete the accident/near miss report and investigation form available under forms on HR Online. Liaise as necessary with Occupational Health and Safety.
32. Arrange counselling for colleagues through Occupational Health if appropriate.
33. Inform work colleagues and if necessary notify customers, suppliers and service users.
34. Arrange for a letter of condolence to be sent.
35. Complete leavers form for payroll and pensions.
36. Check with the next of kin what the funeral arrangements and if there are any restrictions on attending.
37. Deal with staffing implications.

#### Frequently asked questions

38. Who should have details of my next of kin?

Prior to the formation of one council there were various systems for recording details of next of kin. Because of the many changes and to

standardise procedures you should make sure your immediate manager has details of your next of kin and, if different, your emergency contact details.

With the installation of SAP there is the facility for your next of kin details to be entered on the system. You can enter these details by using the SAP portal. The information will be pulled through from the SAP portal on to the main SAP data system.

If you are in the Wiltshire Pension fund you should complete a form designating who should benefit from your death grant.

### 39. How can I enter or change my next of kin details?

Guidance is given in the SAP User Guide on how to enter or change personal information on SAP through inputting the information into SAP Portal. In the personal information section the addresses section allows you to enter a new next of kin address. The user guide can be accessed through the Wire. <http://thewire.wiltshire.council/ess-workbook.pdf>

Alternatively, a HR Change of Details form can be completed and returned to the Shared Services HR/Payroll team. This form is available on HR Online under HR forms <http://hr.wiltshire.gov.uk/employee-personal-information.rtf>

### **Equal Opportunities**

This policy has been Equality Impact Assessed ([link to EIA for policy](#)) to identify opportunities to promote equality and mitigate any negative or adverse impacts on particular groups.

Managers will make any necessary adjustments to ensure that all employees are treated equally. For further information see the guidance on equal opportunities in ([link to equal opps guidance](#))

### **Further advice and information**

There are a number of related policies and procedures that you should be aware of including:

For further information please speak to your supervisor, manager, service director or contact your HR advisor.

There is also a **toolkit** including manager guidance and supporting documents to use when following this policy and procedure.

Policy author	HR Policy and Reward Team – <b>(MR)</b>
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