(12) Death of an Adult whilst in the care of a Shared Lives Host

It is the policy of Kent Shared Lives to ensure that, in the event of the death of an adult whilst in the care of a Shared Lives host, the Shared Lives host knows what to do and understands his/her legal and regulatory responsibilities. Shared Lives will ensure that the Shared Lives host receives the practical and emotional support that they need over this period, which may include bereavement counseling.

Procedure
If the adult dies whilst at the home of the Shared Lives Host

Shared Lives will ensure, through training, advice and ongoing support that the Shared Lives host knows what to do should the adult placed with them die as the result of a serious illness or accident. In that event:

a. The Shared Lives host must respond to the illness or accident in the same way as he/she would with any family member and contact the doctor or emergency services.

b. Where the Shared Lives host has had time to contact a doctor or the emergency services, the doctor or member of the emergency services may already have been in attendance when the person died. If, however, this is not the case the Shared Lives host should contact a doctor immediately on discovering that the adult has died.

c. The doctor will confirm the death of the adult. S/he will either:
   i. Sign the death certificate (where the death is expected and the doctor has been in attendance throughout the illness) or
   ii. Arrange for a post mortem (in the case of an unexpected death).
      The doctor may also call the police where the death is unexpected.

The Shared Lives host has no legal responsibility for the person after their death. S/he should contact the person’s next of kin as soon as possible after the person has died. If no post mortem is required, the next-of-kin will arrange for an undertaker of their choice to remove the person’s body. If the person has no relatives the local authority is responsible for making the funeral arrangements. In that situation the Shared Lives host should ask the doctor or police officer to ring an undertaker to collect the person’s body.

If the adult dies whilst in hospital

1. If an adult dies in hospital the doctor at the hospital will confirm their death. The doctor will also make arrangements for the post mortem if one is needed.
2. The Shared Lives host may have been named as the contact person when the adult was admitted to hospital. In that case, the hospital will contact them if the adult dies in their absence. The hospital may ask the
Shared Lives host to contact any relatives of the person as this may be seen as more appropriate.

**Wherever the adult dies**
1. The Shared Lives host should contact Shared Lives as soon as possible after the death of the person placed with them and anyway within 24 hours of the death. Shared Lives may contact CQC within 24 hours of the notification from the Shared Lives host. Shared Lives will also contact the purchaser and the benefits agency (if the person was placed on a long term basis and claims benefits).
2. If the person was placed on a long term basis with the Shared Lives host:
   a. Shared Lives and Shared Lives host will liaise with the person’s next of kin to ensure that everyone important in the life of the person is informed of their death. Where there is no next of kin Shared Lives will support the Shared Lives host to ensure that everyone is informed.
   b. Once immediate arrangements have been made, Shared Lives will support the Shared Lives host to register the death of the person in the placement if required.

**Benefits and funeral expenses**
Family members, if they are still in contact with the person placed with Shared Lives, will usually wish to pay for and arrange the funeral.

Where there is no close family, then if the person placed:
  a. Is receiving benefits and has died in hospital, the health authority or health trust has a responsibility to cover the cost of the funeral.
  b. Is receiving benefits and has died anywhere other than in hospital, the local authority has the responsibility to arrange and cover the cost of the funeral.

**The Limits of the Shared Lives Host’s Legal Responsibility**
Shared Lives will ensure that the Shared Lives host understands the limits of their legal responsibility and the pitfalls that they need to avoid. In particular Shared Lives will ensure that the Shared Lives host knows that they should not:
  - Contact a funeral director directly (it should be left for the family, doctor or local authority to do so). If hosts contact a funeral director they are voluntarily taking personal responsibility for any funeral or other costs.
  - Sign anything. To do so means taking personal responsibility for the adult after their death.
  - Return the adult’s benefits book to the local benefits office until they are requested
  - Cash any benefits or withdraw cash on the adult’s behalf after their death.
  - Give the adult’s benefits books to anyone else (e.g.: the hospital or next of kin) even if they request them.
Support to the Shared Lives host
Shared Lives recognises that it is always traumatic and difficult when someone dies, but even more so when the person has lived as part of the family.

Shared Lives hosts may find that they are giving support to grieving relatives and friends and need to ensure they take time for themselves and ask for the help and support that they need.

Shared Lives will ensure that the Shared Lives host has both the practical and the emotional support they need at this difficult time. The Shared Lives worker will also engage the support of other agencies if that is appropriate and helpful to the Shared Lives host.