**[company logo]**

**Customer End of Life Policy**

1. **Introduction**
   1. Context

At *[insert company name]*, we acknowledge the personal nature of bereavement and grief, and we are committed to supporting our customers during these challenging times. Whatever the circumstances, *[insert company name]*, acknowledges that bereavement impacts all individuals differently and therefore, we aim to support every customer with empathy and respect in practical and reasonable ways.

1.2 Reason for policy

This policy sets out our commitment to supporting bereaved customers, or those sorting their affairs before the end of their life, by creating guidelines for our staff to know how to respond efficiently and with understanding; avoiding any unnecessary steps and repetition for our customers to mitigate any distress when informing us of a death.

* 1. Scope

This policy applies to all permanent, temporary and contract employees of *[insert company name]* who interact with customers experiencing a bereavement.This policy also underpins future decisions made by our organisation concerning customer service.

* 1. Mission statement

*[Insert company name]* is committed to delivering excellent customer service, being approachable to all, is customer-focused and sympathetic to those experiencing bereavement.

1. **Language around end of life**
   1. It is not always easy to talk about death or dying, but when we do, it is important to maintain appropriate language around death, the deceased and the bereaved. It is essential to understand the benefits and potentially harmful impact of using direct or indirect language and to choose your words carefully, depending on your purpose and the audience with whom you are speaking.
   2. Using direct language around death such as *death, dead* and *dying* can be helpful when needing to be very clear, when speaking with those who might not fully understand indirect language or if there is a language barrier that might hinder understanding. However, these words may be considered too blunt or insensitive and so care should be taken when using them.
   3. Using indirect language may be considered to be a more gentle and sympathetic way to express death and dying. Phrases such as *passed, passed away, is no longer with us,* or *late husband/wife/partner* can avoid increasing the hurt and pain of the bereaved by being too direct since that could be interpreted as blunt or rude.
   4. Every individual will have their personal preferences on the language that is used to describe both themselves and the deceased. Extreme care and consideration should be given to each customer when discussing their end of life or bereavement to avoid unwarranted harm or upset.
   5. Do not assume the circumstances of the customer when discussing end of life or bereavement. For some, death can be a traumatic experience, and care should be exercised to treat each customer with respect and dignity.
2. **Guiding Principles**

3.1 A YouGov survey of over 1,600 adults who notified businesses after the death of a family member or friend found that almost a third (32 per cent) said it took them two weeks or longer to contact all the relevant companies to notify them of their loved one’s death, of which 12 per cent said it took longer than a month.

3.2 Almost three in ten (27 per cent) bereaved people said the process of contacting all the relevant companies was not straightforward. Almost half (44 per cent) said it was time-consuming, stressful (39 per cent), upsetting (30 per cent) and traumatic (16 per cent).

3.3 How we respond to bereaved customers can impact how they interact with our organisation in the future. Kindness and acknowledgement of their grief can result in loyal customers.

3.4 We recognise that many of our customers are trying to cope with difficult situations. As such, they may not be able to give unlimited time, energy or focus to interact with us.

3.5 We choose to make a difference and are committed to simplify our process and put our bereaved customers first through adherence to this policy, ensuring the practice of ongoing staff training programmes and regular monitoring and evaluation of business practices.

1. **Supporting Bereaved Customers**

4.1 To enable us to serve customers effectively, we need the customer to disclose their needs. Bereaved customers may approach the organisation with notification about a death in different ways. Some may be clear and concise, informing us of their bereavement using direct language. Others may use indirect language such as “I’m calling on behalf of my late husband”. Take care of the language you use as discussed in section 2 and show kindness and compassion for the customer’s loss.

4.2 We uphold a “Tell Us Once” policy which is achieved by a customer disclosing their bereavement and staff recording the death onto our customer database. Staff are required to check the customer database during all interactions to maintain consistent support for the individual without disclosed information needing to be repeated and causing further distress.

4.3 Some customers may be putting affairs in order, arranging for their end of life due to a terminal diagnosis. By planning ahead, they are seeking peace of mind by making the consequences of illness and death much easier on their next of kin. When discussing the end of life with a customer, be respectful and ensure we honour their final requests.

4.4 We aim to avoid causing any further stress during an already difficult time for our customers by streamlining our processes and procedures to avoid any unnecessary steps and repetition. If a customer notifies us of their end of life or a death, the following practices should be followed:

* *[insert company procedure here]*

4.5 Only relevant information that affects the ability to support that customer should be recorded and this should be kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018) *and [insert other company data policies here]*.

1. **Supporting Bereaved Customers**

5.1 This organisation endeavours to support bereaved customers by upholding the following practices:

* Checking and updating the customer database during all interactions to maintain our “Tell Us Once” policy
* Considering the potential barriers to accessing our services and how these can be addressed
* Introducing new systems, policies and processes that relate and adapt to bereaved customer’s needs
* Setting up discretionary options for support that can be applied in exceptional circumstances
* Providing training to all employees to ensure they know how to respond efficiently and with understanding
* Providing all employees with access to resources and support that empowers them to best meet the needs of our bereaved customers
* Having a system in place for front line staff to recommend changes to improve the customer experience
* Actively seeking feedback from a representative range of customers through survey and focus group approaches to recommend changes to improve the customer experience with our organisation
* Implementing changes based on frontline staff and customer feedback
* Being supportive and flexible with employees who are themselves facing difficulties, so that they can continue to deliver consistent and competent services
* *[Insert other organisation-wide initiatives here]*

5.2 Experiencing terminal illnesses and bereavement is a common trigger for mental health concerns such as depression. In some cases, you may be required to signpost an individual for additional support. Consider national and local organisations and charities that can provide appropriate professional help for their health and wellbeing, along with contact details wherever possible. National organisations are detailed below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organisation** | **Contact details** |
| **Cruise bereavement care**  UK leading national charity for bereaved people | 0808 808 1677  www.cruise.org.uk |
| **SAMM National**  Support after Murder and Manslaughter | 0121 472 2912  www.samm.org.uk |
| **Suicide&Co**  Supporting those bereaved by suicide | www.suicideandco.org |
| **Child Bereavement UK**  Supports families when a child of any age dies or is dying | 0800 02 888 40  www.childbereavementuk.org |

1. **Related Policies and Procedures**

6.1 The following are *[insert organisation name here]* policies and procedures that relate to this policy:

* Vulnerable Customer Policy
* Complaints procedure
* Data Protection Policy
* Privacy Policy
* Suicide Mitigation Policy
* *[Insert other related policies and procedures and rename above accordingly]*

6.2 The above list is directly relevant to our interactions with customers and employees are expected to familiarise themselves with all policies and procedures to maintain a safe and supportive environment. If you require any support with these, you are advised to speak with your line manager.