

11. Returning deceased person's property to family/next of kin



- 11.1 NHS Lothian has a responsibility to provide safe custody for funds and valuables handed in by patients, or found in the possession of patients dying in hospital or dead on arrival.
- 11.2 Patients' funds and valuables are defined as any item of personal possession, which has financial and/or sentimental worth e.g. items of jewellery, cash, bankcards, passport, birth certificate etc.
- 11.3 Within service areas, the Head of Department has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the proper administration of patients' funds and valuables. Where tasks are delegated, responsibility will remain with the Head of Department. In the majority of clinical inpatient areas this responsibility will be borne by the ward charge nurse.
- 11.4 On the death of a patient, **who has no known next of kin**, any cash or valuables such as keys, bank cards, money, jewellery or mobile phone must be deposited with cashiers. The **Patient Cash and Valuables Book** must be used to make the deposit. A completed [Notification of Discharge/Death Form](#) should also be given to cashiers along with the valuables. Bereavement Service can be recorded as the next of kin or curator and if required, contact staff at the [Bereavement Service](#) for further advice.
- 11.5 On the death of a patient, who has funds and valuables **held in the safe custody of NHS Lothian** i.e. deposited with Cashiers or is being managed by the Patient Funds Department, family should be informed and arrangements made to ensure that these are returned. The nurse in charge must complete a [Notification of Discharge/Death Form](#) and send it to Cashiers or Patient Funds office as soon as possible. The Patients Funds Department will liaise with the deceased patient's next of kin on the return of all the funds and valuables in the possession of NHS Lothian in accordance with [NHS Lothian's Patients' Funds and Valuables Procedure](#).
- 11.6 On the death of a patient who has any cash or valuables that **have been handed in to the ward** for safe keeping professional judgement should be used regarding small amounts of cash and any items of value such as mobile phone or sentimental value, such as toys, cards etc. The nurse in charge can return the property to next of kin once a [Next of Kin Indemnity Form](#) has been completed listing each item being returned. This form must be signed by the next of kin receiving the property and witnessed by the member of staff returning it. The completed form must be returned to Patients Funds, Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside Place, Edinburgh, EH10 5HF.
- 11.7 On the death of a patient who has cash or valuables that **have NOT been handed in to the ward** for safe keeping the nurse in charge must ensure that a [Next of Kin Indemnity Form](#) has been completed, listing each item being returned. This form must be signed by the next of kin receiving the property and witnessed by the member of staff returning it. The completed form must be returned to Patients Funds, Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside Place, Edinburgh, EH10 5HF.

- 11.8 The deceased patients' property must be returned to the family sensitively. Clothes should be folded and placed in the patient's own suitcase / bag or the **purple thistle bags** available for this purpose. Damp and dry possessions should be placed in separate bags. Soiled clothing must be packed separately in a water-soluble bag. Family should be informed of this and their wishes regarding the clothing followed. If they wish anything to be disposed of, this should be documented.

NB. Purple Thistle Bags order codes:

Bags come in large size for belongings such as clothing or toiletries and a small size drawstring pouch for valuables such as mobile phones, glasses or jewellery.

PATIENT BELONGING BAGS	COST	NDC SKU
NHS DECEASED BELONGINGS BAG (LARGE) (W400mm X L400mm purple fabric bags with handles)	£18.50 (1 x 25) 74p per bag	241996
NHS DECEASED VALUABLES BAGS (SMALL) (W170mm X L250mm purple fabric drawstring pouches)	£5.50 (1 x 25) 22p per bag	242009

11.9 Legal Position:

NHS Lothian is required to follow the guidance detailed in NHS Circular GEN (1992) 33. This guidance states that despite the fact that the next of kin are identified, the position in law is that those items of the estate in the possession of NHS Lothian should be handed over only to the executor or executors named in the document known as the 'Confirmation of Estate'. Where the total amount of the deceased person's estate is not more than £30,000 there is provision for the Confirmation of Estate document to be obtained by an expedited procedure, but nevertheless a Confirmation of Estate document should still be obtained. The executor or the next of kin can obtain a Confirmation of Estate document from any sheriff clerk for a small fee. When any items of the estate are handed over to the executor an [Executor Indemnity Form](#) should be completed. The completed form is filed along with the Patients' Funds and Valuables withdrawal form. If the executor wishes a copy of the form a photocopy of the original should be provided.

11.10 Next of Kin:

If however, the next of kin decides not to obtain a Confirmation of Estate because, for example, the value of the estate is too small (less than £2,500), NHS Lothian should hand over, if possible, all the items of estate in its possession. A [Next of Kin Indemnity Form](#) must be completed before any funds and valuables can be released. Once the form is received and the funds and valuables are handed over, the form should be filed along with the Patients' Funds and Valuables withdrawal form. If the next of kin wishes a copy of the form a photocopy of the original should be provided.

- 11.11 The Patients Funds department will liaise with the deceased person's next of kin on the return of all the funds and valuables in the possession of NHS Lothian.