

Care in the final days

Over time as medical conditions change, more support and advice to help meet a person's wishes will be needed for them as well as their carers. A person's wishes regarding their future care may also change. The professionals involved will help them to review any decisions about their care as part of their care plan in line with their changing needs. Any changes will be recorded and communicated to all people and agencies providing care. Wherever the person is being cared for, the aim is to maintain their comfort, wellbeing and dignity.

The principles in the last few days of life for professionals providing care are to recognise when someone is nearing this stage, ensure effective symptom control, review medications, avoid unnecessary interventions, and importantly ensure good communication with family and carers.

Dying at home

Primary care i.e. district nurses and GPs are the key workers when someone is dying at home. The district nurse will monitor the patient's comfort and manage their symptoms, as well as support and advise family and carers. Care assistants can also be arranged to provide personal care and practical help in the home. In Redbridge, the Marie Curie service can provide carers overnight according to need and availability.

The Redbridge Macmillan specialist palliative care team works in the community and may be involved if a person's needs are complex. Often as specialists they will not be directly involved but provide advice and guidance to professionals, such as district nurses and GPs.

As with any illness some people may experience new symptoms outside of normal GP practice hours, for which they require medication but do not necessarily need to be admitted to hospital. District nurses and GPs can arrange anticipatory medications which are kept in the home for the nurses to administer as a contingency to ensure there is no delay in providing treatment.

St Francis Hospice in Havering-Atte-Bower provides specialist hospice care to Redbridge residents including in-patient services, day therapy, family support services and other therapies. Their Hospice at Home service is also being expanded to support Redbridge residents remain at home in their final days.

For more information on the wide variety of support available visit:

 [St Francis Hospice website](#)

For people living in a residential or nursing home, nursing care and GP support is also provided in addition to the 24 hour care being received. Where needed, the specialist palliative care team again provide additional expertise to ensure the person's comfort is maintained.

What to expect when someone is dying

When someone important to us is dying, it is a profound and individual experience and one which is difficult to prepare ourselves for. Often it is a time of mental and physical exhaustion for us and we are trying to manage the unknown. However by knowing more about the physical process of dying we may be able to ease some of our fears and worries and prepare ourselves in some way. It may help to know that although it is an intensely individual experience, many of the emotions and feelings are common to us all.

For helpful information visit:

 [Dying Matters website](#)
[The National Council for Palliative Care website](#)

Where the person has registered to be an organ donor the medical staff caring for them need to be notified in advance to ensure their wishes can be carried out.

For more information visit:

 [NHS Blood and Transplant website](#)

Faith at end of life

It is important that professionals acknowledge and respect the spiritual needs as well as the physical needs of the people they are caring for at the end of life.

The faith directory 'To Comfort Always' has been developed in Redbridge to help professionals with essential information regarding individual faiths and cultures.






 Download '[To Comfort Always' faith directory](#) or [visit MyLife website](#)

Public Health England also has a document that explains the importance of faith at the end of life for professionals, providers and commissioners working in communities.

For more information, visit:

 [GOV.UK website](#)

Other end of life, death and dying factsheets which may be of interest

Factsheet 1: About end of life care 	Factsheet 4: Care in the final days 
Factsheet 2: Planning ahead 	Factsheet 5: After death 
Factsheet 3: Supportive care for end of life 	Factsheet 6: Bereavement support 