

Death in the digital age



What to do with your, or your loved ones, social media accounts

This short guide is designed to help you navigate the available options of social media sites when faced with a palliative illness or experiencing a bereavement. The internet and social media have revolutionised the way we live our lives and the way we interact with each other. We've never lived in a time where we have been both so fragmented – with families dispersed across the country and globe – and at the same time so connected with most of us walking around with a super-computer in our hand. Death and bereavement

are as old as time and one thing's for sure – we are now living and dying in a digital age and our use of social media and the web has created an opportunity for us to plan for our deaths and also grieve and commemorate our lost loved ones differently. For better or worse, knowing how to navigate this new virtual landscape is becoming ever more relevant and necessary.

rowcrofthospice.org.uk

Telephone
01803 210800

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Facebook

[Facebook's help centre](#) provides an up-to-date guide on how to put these steps into action. Here is a simplified version covering some of the most requested topics.

- Your Facebook's help centre will provide you with in-depth information on what will happen to your page when you die and will also give you advice on how you can manage this alongside a loved one or family member. You are able to set a legacy contact in your settings to allow someone close to you to manage your page. This person is then responsible for carrying out the plans you have discussed. If you decide to have your page turned into a memorial page, your legacy contact does not have the authority to log into your account and will therefore not be able to access any of your private

messages, keeping your privacy as secure as before. But they will have the authority to accept friend requests, change your profile picture and cover photo.

- If you have been selected as a legacy contact, you are eligible to remove and delete posts and images if this is necessary. Some images and posts will be happy and memorable, and therefore you may want these to stay. But there may be images or posts that you no longer wish to be visible after the person's death, and as a legacy contact you are authorised to remove these posts if these are the wishes of the deceased person or perhaps the bereaved family or loved ones. To find out more about legacy contacts and what they are able to do on your account after your death, please visit the Facebook help centre.

- Facebook gives you an option to memorialise a deceased person's Facebook account. This allows your loved one's account to stay visible on the social platform but acts as a 'digital gravestone'. This can be an effective way to have a digital reminder of the memories that your loved one holds with not only yourself but with their other friends and family. If a page has been memorialised, the content that the deceased person has shared will be visible to the original friends on their account.

Memorialising a Facebook account may not be the right thing for you and your loved ones. Some people feel comfort in being able to see kind supportive messages posted on the deceased person's memorial page but others understandably do not. Facebook gives you another alternative which is to request to remove a deceased family member's account. To do this you must provide Facebook with the correct documentation to confirm that you are a loved one or an executor of the account holder, alongside a scan of your loved one's death certificate.

"I never really thought about how social media brings people together until mum died...being

able to connect with friends and family near and far, sharing our stories and memories about her, has really helped."



- Twitter does not provide you with a memorial page option as most of the other social platforms do. However, you are still able to report this person's account so that it can be deactivated. Twitter is happy to work with the person authorised to act on behalf of the estate or a verified immediate family member of the deceased to make this happen. After you submit your request for this to happen, you will be emailed with instructions of how you can provide more details to the site to verify the deceased person's death and to verify who you are.

For further information, please visit [Twitter's help section on accounts for deceased individuals](#).



- Instagram has made two simple steps for reporting a deceased person's account. You are able to report an account to Instagram for memorialisation, or if you are an immediate

family member you are able to request that the account is removed from the site.

- Instagram agrees to memorialise an account after receiving a valid request. You must contact Instagram to go forward with this option and also provide Instagram with proof of death, an obituary or a news article to do this. Once an account is memorialised, Instagram explains that it will try to prevent the account from appearing on Instagram in ways that may be upsetting to the person's loved ones and family.
- If you decide to memorialise an Instagram account, it will reassure you to know that to keep your account secure and private, Instagram will not provide anyone with your log in details.
- If you wish to remove a loved one's account, immediate family members are able to do this by submitting a request for removal, followed by proof of the deceased person's death certificate and the birth certificate of the loved one taking this action. To find the online forms to take these steps

on Instagram, please refer to our helpful resource links that will guide you in the right direction.

Please visit [Instagram's help section](#) for further information about how to report a deceased person's account.

If you would like to access more information about handling your own, a patient's, or a loved one's online accounts and information, we recommend visiting the [Digital Legacy Association](#) designed to support people further in this area. Their [social will template](#) is a good place to start in thinking about your accounts and how you would like them to be managed.

Scan here to visit the [Planning for the Future Hub](#):



Or visit www.rowcrofthospice.org.uk/planning-for-the-future-hub

If you require this information in an alternative format please call 01803 210800