

# WHAT TO DO FOLLOWING A DEATH

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When a death occurs it is naturally a time of grief and there can also be some confusion. The information given here is designed to be of practical help to friends and relatives.

## After a death

### DEATH AT HOME

- Call a Doctor to request a home visit to confirm the death and determine the cause.
- The Doctor issues a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.
- If the cause of death cannot be determined, the doctor will refer the death to the Coroner.
- If you are uncertain if someone is dead, call the doctor or 999 for an ambulance.

### DEATH IN A HOSPITAL, HOSPICE OR NURSING HOME

- If not present at time of death, the family will be notified by nursing staff.
- The relevant Doctor issues a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.
- The deceased's personal possessions will be given to the family.
- The hospital may issue a 'Release Form' to be signed by next of kin, releasing the deceased into the care of the chosen Funeral Director.

### DEATH ELSEWHERE

- If a death occurs away from home, the initial formalities listed above will be carried out by the doctor or hospital staff in that area.
- If the deceased is to be brought home for the funeral, contact the Funeral Director who will make the necessary arrangements in both areas, including transport.

### REGISTERING A DEATH

- The death must be registered WITHIN 5 DAYS at the Register Office for the sub-district in which the death occurred.
- The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death must be given to the Registrar. The death cannot be registered without it.
- If possible, also take the deceased's Medical Card, Birth and Marriage Certificates.
- The person registering the death will need the following information about the deceased:
  - Full name and address (and maiden name if applicable)
  - Date and place of death
  - Date and place of birth
  - Occupation
  - Name, address and date of birth of next of kin
- The 'Death Certificate' (and copies) will be issued by the Registrar on payment of the prescribed fee.
- These Certificates will be needed for obtaining Probate or Letters of Administration, closing bank accounts and making claims on insurance policies.
- The Registrar will issue a green Registrar's Certificate for Burial or Cremation, which will be needed by the Funeral Director.
- The Registrar may issue a white Certificate of Registration of Death - Form 344/BD8 - which is for Social Security purposes to cancel the payment of pensions and allowances from public funds.

## 'Tell us once' service

- Most local councils run a service called 'Tell Us Once' - it lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go such as the Passport Office, DVLA and Department for Work and Pensions. Your local Registrar will tell you about it and give you a unique reference number to access the service online or by telephone.
- For more information visit [www.gov.uk/after-a-death](http://www.gov.uk/after-a-death) and click on 'Tell Us Once'.

## The Coroner

The main duties of the Coroner are as follows:

- To investigate all sudden and unexpected deaths.
- To give permission to remove the deceased out of England and Wales.
- Decide what action is necessary following initial investigations of the facts surrounding the death.
- If necessary, arrange a post-mortem examination to establish the cause of death.

## If there is a will

- The Executor(s) named in a Will, or the deceased's personal representative, is responsible for arranging the funeral.
- The Will may give instructions concerning the funeral arrangements but the Executor is not bound by this.
- The Executor is responsible for looking after and subsequently disposing of the deceased's assets and property.

## Probate / Letters of administration

- The Executor(s) must provide 'proof' of a Will in order to obtain Probate.
- If there is no Will, the deceased's personal representative should apply for Letters of Administration.
- A Solicitor may be needed to deal with some, or all aspects of the deceased's estate.

## Transplants

- Organ donation in England is now an 'opt out' system. This means that all adults in England will be considered to have agreed to be an organ donor when they die unless they have recorded a decision not to donate or are in one of the excluded groups.
- Your family will still be approached and your faith, beliefs and culture will continue to be respected.
- For more information visit: <https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/uk-laws/organ-donation-law-in-england/>
- If the deceased wished to donate his or her body for medical research, it is only likely to be accepted if arrangements had been previously made.