

Designed to help at a difficult time

What  
To  
Do  
When  
Someone  
Dies



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*This booklet should provide you with the practical steps you will need to take when someone dies.*

### **When someone dies in hospital**

they will be moved to the hospital mortuary until the doctors have completed the required paperwork. Staff from the bereavement team will contact you and ask who your chosen funeral director is. The staff will then arrange collection by the funeral director.

### **When someone dies in a Hospice**

and the death has been expected, the staff will usually have had a conversation with you about who your chosen funeral director will be. After the doctor at the Hospice has completed the required paperwork, the staff will contact the funeral director to arrange collection.

### **When someone dies at home or in a residential or nursing home**

and the death has been expected, their GP should be called as soon as possible. A doctor or nurse will carry out a visit. When the death has been confirmed, you will need to contact a funeral director to arrange for them to take the person into their care. Outside of normal surgery hours you can still phone your GP surgery, you should then be directed to an out-of-hours service.

**Unexpected deaths** will involve a coroner, this is explained further on the next page.

# What to do next

## I. Get a medical certificate of cause of death

When someone dies in hospital, staff there will tell you how to obtain the cause of death certificate.

When someone dies in the Hospice, a doctor from the Hospice will usually issue the cause of death certificate.

When someone dies at home or in a residential or nursing home, it is the responsibility of the GP treating the person to issue the cause of death certificate.

If the death occurred outside of normal working hours and an out of hours doctor confirmed the death, it is still the responsibility of the deceased patient's GP surgery to issue the certificate.

The cause of death certificate records the main illness which led to the death. This certificate has to be signed by the doctor who was responsible for the person who has died.

### Coroner

In some cases, before being able to issue the cause of death certificate, the doctor may need to discuss the case with the coroner. If the coroner has any concerns over how the death has taken place, the coroner may arrange for a post mortem, this will usually take place at your nearest hospital.

A doctor may report the death to a coroner if:

- the cause of death is unknown or uncertain

- the death was violent or unnatural

- the death was sudden or unexplained

- the person's doctor had not seen them in the previous 14 days

- the death took place during surgery or recovery from anesthetic

- the death took place in prison or police custody

- the death may have occurred due to an industrial disease

The coroner will release the body for a funeral once they have completed the post mortem examinations and no further examinations are needed.

A coroner must hold an inquest if the cause of death is still unknown, or if the person died a violent or unnatural death, or in prison, or in police custody. An inquest is a legal inquiry into a death. Only a coroner can order an inquest and relatives have no right to insist on one.

You cannot register the death until after the inquest. The coroner is responsible for sending the relevant paperwork to the registrar. The coroner can give you an interim death certificate to prove the person has died. You can use this to apply for probate.

In most cases a post mortem is not necessary as there is sufficient information available for the doctor to establish the cause of death.

## 2. Register the death

The registration of the death is the formal record of the death. It is done by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. A death should be registered within five days. This can be done at any register office, but it is recommended to use the one in the area where the person died: otherwise the process can take longer.

It is a criminal offence not to register a death.

The death should be registered by one of the following:

- A relative or executor

- A person present at the death

- An owner or occupier of the building where the death took place and who was aware of the death

- The person making the funeral arrangements  
(but not the funeral director)

## **You will need to take the following with you to the Register office:**

Medical certificate showing the cause of death  
(unless the coroner is involved)

The death cannot be registered until the registrar has seen this

### **If available:**

Birth certificate

Passport

NHS medical card

Driving license

Marriage or civil partnership certificate

Proof of address (utility bill)

## **You will need to tell the registrar**

The date and place of death

The person's full name (including maiden name)  
and their last address

The person's date and place of birth

The person's occupation

The full name, date of birth, and occupation of a surviving or  
late spouse or partner

If they were receiving a state pension or any other benefits

## **'Tell Us Once'**

The registrar should offer you a service called Tell Us Once, this allows you to inform authorities of a bereavement just once – rather than contacting a series of different government branches.

This covers:

Local Authorities

DVLA

HMRC

HM Passport Office

DWP

## Documents you will receive:

### **A Certificate for Burial or Cremation (green form)**

This gives permission for burial or an application for cremation.

You will need to pass this on to your funeral director.

### **A Certificate of Registration of death (BD8)**

You will need to fill this out and return it to the Department of Work & Pensions, if the person was getting a state pension or other benefits.

### **Death Certificate**

The death certificate is a copy of the entry made by the registrar in the death register. This certificate is needed to deal with money or property left by the person who has died; including dealing with the will. You may need several copies of the certificate, for which there will be a charge.

You can obtain more copies at a later date if necessary.

**Arranging an appointment at your local register office,  
Please telephone 0345 155 1002**

## Offices of Registration

### **EXETER**

Exeter Registration Office  
Larkbeare House  
Topsham Road  
Exeter EX2 4NG

### **MID DEVON**

Mid Devon Registration Office  
Old Heathcoat School Community Centre  
King Street  
Tiverton EX16 5JJ

### **EXMOUTH**

East Devon Registration Office  
Town Hall  
St Andrews Road  
Exmouth EX8 1AW

### **OKEHAMPTON**

West Devon Registration Office  
Okehampton Town Council Offices  
Fore Street  
Okehampton EX20 1AA

### **NEWTON ABBOT**

Devon Register Office  
Old Forde House  
Brunel Road  
Newton Abbot TQ12 4XX

### **TAVISTOCK**

West Devon Registration Office  
West Devon Borough Council Offices  
Kilworthy Park  
Tavistock PL19 0BZ

### **HONITON & EAST DEVON**

East Devon Registration Office  
East Devon Business Centre  
Heathpark Way  
Heathpark  
Honiton EX14 1SF

### 3. Arrange the funeral

The funeral can usually only take place after the death is registered. Most people use a funeral director to carry out the arrangements.

The person may have left instructions (usually in their will) about the type of funeral they want and/or whether they want to be buried or cremated. If there are no relatives, or friends, to arrange a funeral, in England and Wales the local authority or health authority will arrange a simple funeral.

#### Funeral Directors

It is important to find a funeral director who belongs to a professional association, such as the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) or the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF), since these organisations have codes of practice and complaints procedures.

#### Funeral Costs

The person who arranges the funeral is responsible for paying the final bill and it is important to know where the money for the funeral will come from.

Funeral costs can include:

- funeral director fees
- disbursements, or third party costs. These are fees paid by the funeral director on your behalf
- local authority burial or cremation fees


Your funeral director should supply you with a written estimate of costs of the funeral.

Your funeral director will go through everything they think you need to consider when arranging the funeral.

Please contact us if we can be of any further help.

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