

When someone dies: a practical guide

When someone dies there are many practical issues that need to be sorted out.

If you were the person who was closest to the deceased, a lot of the responsibility may fall to you. This can be very overwhelming, especially when you will probably be dealing with many strong emotions at the same time.

Some people appreciate having lots of practical tasks to do when they're bereaved, while others find that they just can't cope in the immediate period after losing a loved one. Ask family and friends for help and don't try to cope with everything on your own.

This section explains the steps to take following a bereavement.

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What happens first?

If the death occurred in hospital or a care home

If the death occurs in hospital, the hospital or care staff will contact the person named by the deceased as the next of kin. They will also arrange for the nearest relative to collect the deceased person's belongings.

The hospital mortuary will keep the body until the executor (a personal representative of the deceased) makes arrangements for it to be taken away. You may also want to inform the deceased's minister of religion, or see the hospital chaplain.

Before a death can be [registered](#), a doctor will need to issue a medical certificate giving the cause of death.

In hospital, the hospital doctor will give you:

- the certificate in a sealed envelope addressed to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- a notice explaining how to register the death

If the cause of death is not clear the coroner will carry out an investigation before issuing a death certificate.

There is no charge to register a death or for the death certificate.

If the person has not been seen by a hospital doctor, their GP may be able to issue a death certificate instead. Where cremation is to take place, a second doctor will be needed to sign a certificate to say that the body has been examined. There will be a charge for this.

If you are aware that the person wished to [donate their organs](#) or to [donate their body to science](#) following their death it is best to inform staff as soon as possible.

If the death occurred at home

When someone dies at home, the first step is to call the GP as soon as possible. The GP will normally visit the house and, if the death was expected, issue a certificate giving the cause of death.

If the person did not have a GP or you do not know the name of the GP, you should call an ambulance instead.

A doctor is not allowed to issue a certificate if they are unsure about the cause of death. The death must instead be reported to a coroner and the body will be taken to a hospital mortuary, where a post mortem may need to take place.

If you are aware that the person wished to [donate their organs](#) or to [donate their body to science](#) following their death it is best to inform staff as soon as possible.

If the death occurred abroad

If a death takes place abroad it must be registered according to the law of that country. The death should also be reported to the British Consul, who may be able to arrange for the death to be registered in the UK as well.

Returning a body to the UK is expensive but the cost may be covered by any travel insurance taken out by the person. If the death was on a package holiday the tour operator should be able to help with arrangements.

When a body is returned to the UK, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the district where the funeral is to take place must be told and will need to issue a certificate before burial can take place. If cremation is to take place, the Home Office also needs to give permission.

If you are aware that the person wished to [donate their organs](#) or to [donate their body to science](#) it is best to inform staff as soon as possible.

[Funeral Services Guide](#) offers advice and information on official procedures for dealing with a death abroad.

Registering 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 at the Register Office.

See [Newcastle City Council Register Office](#). You will need to contact them first to make an appointment.

When someone dies at home, the death should be registered at the register office in the district where they lived.

If the death took place in hospital or in a care home it must be registered at the register office for the district in which the hospital or care home is situated. The hospital administrator can do this if there are no relatives.

A death should be registered within five days, but the deadline can be extended for another nine days if the registrar is told that a medical certificate has been issued. If a post mortem is being carried out, you can't register the death until the coroner's investigations are finished.

It is a criminal offence not to register a death.

The death should be registered in person by one of the following (in order of priority):

- a relative who was present at the death
- a relative present during the person's last illness
- a relative living in the district where the death took place
- anyone else 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 arranging the funeral (but not the funeral director)

If none of these options are possible, contact the Register Office for advice.

You must take the medical death certificate with you, as the death can't be registered until the registrar has seen this. If possible, you should also take the person's NHS medical card and birth and marriage certificates.

The registrar will ask you for the following information:

- the date and place of death

- the full name of the person and their last address
- the person's date and place of birth
- the person's occupation and, in the case of a woman who was married or widowed, the full name and occupation of her husband
- if the person was still married, the date of birth of their husband or wife
- whether the person was receiving a pension or other social security benefits

When you have registered the death, the registrar will give you a certificate for you to give to the funeral director or whoever is arranging the funeral. This allows the burial or cremation to go ahead.

The registrar will also give you a form to send to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to allow them to deal with the person's pension and benefits.

The death certificate is a copy of the entry made by the registrar in the death register. You may need several copies of the certificate as it is needed to deal with money or property left by the person, including dealing with the [Will](#).

Who to inform?

Following a [Bereavement](#) it is important that the affairs of the deceased are all settled. If left unchecked, outstanding bills, benefits and credit cards can add unwelcome pressure and stress during a difficult time.

Tell us Once Service

In the past, a grieving relative may have had to spend hours on the phone, often having to repeat the same information to different departments and organisations.

The [Tell Us Once](#) service means you only need to tell the government once of the bereavement and you won't have to send a copy of the death certificate in the post. The service will notify local and central government services of the death on your behalf, including:

- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) – to deal with tax and cancel benefits
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – to cancel benefits, eg income support
- Passport Office – to cancel a passport
- the local council – to cancel housing benefit, council tax benefit, a Blue Badge, inform council housing services and remove the person from the electoral register
- the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) – to cancel the deceased's driving licence.

How to use the Tell us Once service

Once you have registered the death, the registrar will tell you about your options for using Tell Us Once. These are:

- in person – by making an appointment with your local authority bereavement adviser
- by phone – the registrar will give you the phone number
- online – your registrar will give you a unique Tell Us Once log in number

Who Else Should I Inform?

You should ensure that the following people and agencies are informed of the death, if relevant. If you use the [Tell Us Once](#) Service you do not need to inform the agencies marked with an asterisk*:

- Relatives and friends
- Employer
- School
- Solicitor/accountant
- Landlord or Local Authority if the deceased rented their property
- Any private organisation/agency providing home help
- General insurance companies – contents, car, travel, medical etc
- Pension providers/life insurance companies
- Bank/building society
- Mortgage provider
- Hire purchase or loan companies
- Credit card providers/store cards
- Utility companies, if accounts were in the deceased's name
- TV/Internet companies with which the deceased had subscriptions
- Any other company with which the deceased may have had rental, hire purchase or loan agreements
- Royal Mail, if mail needs re-directing
- [The Bereavement Register](#) and
- [Deceased Preference Service](#) to remove the deceased's name from mailing lists and databases
- Clubs, trade unions and associations with seasonal membership for cancellation and refunds
- Church or regular place of worship
- Social groups to which the deceased belonged
- Dentist
- Creditors – anyone to whom the deceased owed money
- Debtors – anyone that owed the deceased money
- *The deceased's Tax Office
- *National Insurance Contributions Office if they were self-employed (to cancel payments)
- *[Child Benefit Office](#)
- *[UK Passport Agency](#), to return and cancel a passport
- *[DVLA](#), to return a driving licence, cancel car tax, return car registration documents and/or change ownership
- *Local Authority if the deceased paid Council Tax, had a parking permit, was issued with a Blue Badge for disabled parking, received social services help, or attended day care

The following documents should be returned, with a note explaining the date of death:

- Order books/benefits
- Passport
- Driving licence
- Registration documents for the deceased's car (if necessary)
- Season ticket and membership cards of any clubs or associations, as a refund may be due
- Benefit/pension books and any unused cheques/vouchers should be returned to the benefits office
- Library books and tickets
- National Insurance papers

The [Money Advice Service](#) have information on [how to deal with money matters after someone dies](#), including what to do with someone's pension, tax, debts, insurance, benefits and estate.

Checking your Benefits

[The Bereavement Service](#) is a telephone service that lets you:

- End a benefit claim for someone who has died
- Find out if you are eligible for benefits because your husband, wife or civil partner has died
- Make a claim for [bereavement benefits](#) or a claim for help with funeral costs, known as a Funeral Payment

Bereavement benefits include the following benefits:

- Bereavement Allowance
 - Bereavement Payment
 - Widowed Parent's Allowance
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Arranging the Funeral

There are many different types of funerals to choose from and financial help may be available. You should always consider what the preferences of the deceased person may have been when arranging a funeral.

See [Arranging a funeral](#) for detailed information on arranging a funeral, costs and memorials.

Other Useful Information

- [When someone dies: A step-by-step guide to what to do](#) – Age UK guide
- [Money Advice service](#) – provides information about dealing with money after a death in their 'When Someone Dies' advice.
- [Final Fling](#) – a website dedicated to end of life decisions.

- **Patient Information Centre** has a range of easy to read [mental health self help guides](#) available to download for free.

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Useful Organisations

Patient Information Centre – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)

Website: www.cntw.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0191 246 7288

Address: St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

DVLA

Website: www.dvla.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 790 6802

Address: Vehicle Customer Services DVLA , SA99 1AR

Newcastle City Council: Council Tax Enquiries

Website: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/council-tax/how-pay-your-council-tax/council-tax-who-has-pay>

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Council Tax Section, NE1 8QH

HM Passport Office

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/find-regional-passport-office>

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Durham Passport Office, DH1 1SL

Child Benefit Office

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-child-benefit-office>

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Child Benefit Office, NE88 1AA

Bereavement Services Office – Newcastle City Council

Email: bereavementservices@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths-funerals-and-cremations/register-a-death>

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: 2nd floor, NE1 8PB

Tell Us Once

Email: TELLUSONCE.COMMUNICATIONS@DWP.GOV.UK

Website: www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once

Telephone: 0800 085 7308

Money Advice Service

Email: enquiries@maps.org.uk

Website: www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 085 7308

Address: Holborn Centre, EC1N 2TD

Final Fling

Email: info@finalfling.com

Website: www.finalfling.com

Telephone: 0845 200 1132

The Bereavement Register

Email: help@thebereavementregister.org.uk

Website: www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 082 1230 - 24 hour automated registration service

Address: FREEPOST RTEU-JSHJ-LCTZ, SE1 3UZ

Deceased Preference Service

Website: <http://www.deceasedpreferenceservice.co.uk/>

Telephone: 0800 082 1230 - 24 hour automated registration service

Address: Deceased Preference Service DDC OS, S80 2RT

Funeral Services Guide

Email: info@funeralservicesguide.com

Website: <http://www.funeralservicesguide.com>

Telephone: 0800 082 1230 - 24 hour automated registration service

Address: Funeral Services Guide Ltd, N1 7GU

Newcastle City Council Register Office

Email: registrars@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths/register-death>

Telephone: 0191 278 7878 and ask for Registrars

Address: The Register Office, 2nd Floor, , NE1 8QH

Related Articles

[Bereavement Benefit](#)

[Wills](#)

[Where to get legal advice](#)

[Power of Attorney](#)

[Bereavement and grief](#)

[Arranging a funeral](#)