

## When someone dies: a practical guide

When someone dies there are many practical issues that need to be sorted out. If you are the person who was closest to the deceased person, a lot of the responsibility may fall to you. This can be overwhelming, especially when you are dealing with grief and shock at the same time.

Some people appreciate having lots of practical tasks to do when they're bereaved. 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. [Grief and bereavement support is available.](#)

This page explains step by step what to do after someone close to you dies.

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### What happens first?

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#### Death in hospital or a care home

When someone dies in hospital or a care home the staff will contact that person's named 'next of kin' (this is a close family member such as a partner or child). They will help return the person's belongings.

The body will be kept safely in the hospital mortuary until the executor (a person named to represent the deceased) arranges to take the body away, usually when funeral arrangements are made.

You can ask to speak to the hospital chaplain or tell the person's religious leader that they have died

Tell staff as soon as possible if the person wanted to [donate their organs](#) or to [donate their body to science after their death.](#)

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#### Death at home

When someone dies at home, the first step is to call the GP (doctor). The GP will normally visit if the death was expected, and confirm the death.

If you don't know the GP or the death was unexpected, call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

Tell staff as soon as possible if the person wanted to [donate their organs](#) or to [donate their body to science after their death](#).

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## What happens next

A doctor will write a [Medical Certificate of Cause of Death \(MCCD\)](#). This says what caused the person's death, the doctor who writes it is called the attending practitioner, the certificate is then checked by a medical examiner.

The medical examiner:

- Is an independent doctor who reviews the certificate.
- Talks to the family to explain what's written and answer questions.
- Makes sure the cause of death is correct.
- Sends the certificate to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

If the cause of death is unclear:

The medical examiner or doctor will refer the case to a coroner. The coroner may order a post-mortem (an examination of the body). The death can't be registered until the coroner finishes their investigation. The coroner will let the family know when the investigation is complete.

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## Death abroad

When someone dies abroad, the death 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 will take place must be told and will need to issue a certificate before burial can take place. If cremation is planned, 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.

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## How to register a 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 in the district in which it occurred. In Newcastle this is [Newcastle City Council Register Office](#).

Families will be contacted by the medical examiner's office to be told when they can book an appointment to register the death. You must contact the register office to make an appointment, they will not contact you.

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 care home manager, hospital administrator or a representative from social services can do this if there are no relatives.

Once you have been given notice to register the death you must register the death within 5 days (unless the coroner is involved).

### **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 because 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.

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## 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](#).

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## Who to inform?

Following a bereavement it's 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.

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## Tell us once service

[Tell us once](#) is a government service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. This includes:

- the local council
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
- Passport Office

[Find out all the services that can be notified and the information you need to provide on GOV.UK.](#)

## How to use the Tell Us Once service

First you should [register the death with the registrar](#).

The registrar will provide you with a unique Tell Us Once reference number. This reference number allows you to [access the Tell Us Once service at GOV.UK](#)

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
  - online using a unique Tell Us Once log in number
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## 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 such as, contents, car, travel, medical
- 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 Identity Protection service](#) help to reduce the risk of identity fraud and 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 or anyone to whom the deceased owed money
- Debtors or 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
- 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](#) has 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.

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## Check 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 Support Payment](#)
  - Child Benefit if a child or parent dies
  - Get help with funeral costs (Funeral Expenses Payment)
  - Guardian's Allowance
  - Support for child funeral costs (Children's Funeral Fund for England)
  - Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay and Leave
  - Universal Credit
  - War Widow(er) Pension
  - Bereavement Allowance
  - 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.

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

**[Bereavement Services](#)** at Newcastle City Council can provide you with help and advice about arranging a funeral, choosing a memorial, and information about cemeteries, graves and crematoria in Newcastle. They can provide information about cemeteries, graves, crematoria and the associated costs.

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

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## Personal possessions

Sorting and removing items from a house after a death can be a challenging and emotional experience for you and others. There are some things you should think about before removing items and clearing a house:

- You may want to give yourself some time to process your loss before dealing with personal possessions and household items. You may also want to have family, friends or others help you practically and emotionally with this task.
- Household items go through the probate process as they are seen as probate assets. It is best to wait until probate is complete before removing items or personal possessions.
- If the deceased person mentioned what should happen to their possessions in their will or letter of wishes, this should be followed.
- The executor(s) named in the will are responsible for using any funds from the deceased person's estate to pay for a house clearance. If there are no funds then the cost of a house clearance would normally be paid by relatives.
- You may want to get some possessions or household items valued by an auction house or a professional appraiser. If there are valuable items this could change your inheritance tax, or you may be able to use the value of an item to pay towards funeral, estate, household clearance or other costs

There are charities that have house clearance and furniture collection services within Tyne and Wear

- [British Heart Foundation](#)
- [Emmaus](#)
- [Salvation Army](#)
- [Shelter](#)
- [St Oswald's Hospice](#)
- [Foundations Furniture](#) offer a free collection service within Tyne and Wear for any donated furniture that is in good condition and can be passed on to another home

**[Checked and Vetted](#)** provide a free list of verified tradespeople who have had their work histories, company details and job reports checked and verified. They also have customer reviews you can read. This includes house clearance and removal companies.

There are many private services that offer household clearances after a death. Some services also offer a probate value or professional appraiser service as part of this. You should always check if the business is legitimate, this could be checking their Companies House details, Financial Services Register (FCA) details, proof of their HMRC registration if they are a sole

trader, checking the website address seems correct, checking for a padlock symbol in the URL website address bar, visiting the businesses physical location or shop, reading popular review sites such as google reviews & TrustPilot,

[Money.co.uk has guidance on checking if businesses are legitimate](#)

Read more about [Practical help to move items from a home](#)

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## 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.
- [Bereavement Services at Newcastle City Council](#) can provide you with help and advice about arranging a funeral, choosing a memorial, and information about cemeteries, graves and crematoria in Newcastle. They can provide information about cemeteries, graves, crematoria and the associated costs.

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## Useful Organisations

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

**Website:** [www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 246 7288

**Address:** St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

### DVLA

**Website:** [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://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/counciltax>

**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:** 0300 200 3100

**Address:** HM Revenue and Customs - Child Benefit Office , NE88 1AA

## Bereavement Services at Newcastle City Council

**Email:** [bereavementservices@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:bereavementservices@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.newcastle.gov.uk/BereavementServices](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/BereavementServices)

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

**Address:** Newcastle Civic Centre, NE1 8PB

## Tell Us Once

**Email:** [tellusonce.communications@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:tellusonce.communications@dwp.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once](http://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once)

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

## Money Helper

**Email:** [pensions.enquiries@moneyhelper.org.uk](mailto:pensions.enquiries@moneyhelper.org.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en>

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

**Address:** Holborn Centre, EC1N 2TD

## Final Fling

**Email:** [info@finalfling.com](mailto:info@finalfling.com)

**Website:** [www.finalfling.com](http://www.finalfling.com)

**Telephone:** 0845 200 1132

## The Bereavement Register

**Email:** [help@thebereavementregister.org.uk](mailto:help@thebereavementregister.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk](http://www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0800 082 1230 - 24 hour automated registration service

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

## Deceased Identity Protection Service

**Website:** <https://www.deceasedidentityprotection.com/>

**Telephone:** 0800 082 1230 - 24 hour automated registration service

**Address:** 5th Floor,, E1 8QS

## Funeral Services Guide

**Email:** [info@funeralservicesguide.com](mailto:info@funeralservicesguide.com)

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

**Telephone:** 0800 082 1230 - 24 hour automated registration service

**Address:** Funeral Services Guide Ltd, N1 7GU

## The Register Office at Newcastle City Council

**Email:** [registrars@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:registrars@newcastle.gov.uk)

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

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

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

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## Related Articles

[Bereavement Benefit](#)

[Wills](#)

[Where to get legal advice](#)

[Lasting Power of Attorney and Deputyship](#)

[Bereavement and grief](#)

[Arranging a funeral](#)