



Practical advice about what to do after someone dies



Image courtesy of Andrew Wilkinson Photography

People react in different ways following the death of a loved one, some want to spend time with them while others would prefer not to. It is important that you do what feels right for you.

There is no rush to do anything straight away.

Contents

	Page
What to do if your loved one dies at the Inpatient Unit	3
What to do if your loved one dies at home	3
Medical Examiner	4
The Coroner	4
Post-mortems	4
Registering a death	5
Who can register the death?	5
Appointments to register a death	5
What you will need to tell the Registrar	6
'Tell Us Once' Service	6
Paying for the Funeral	6
Medication	7
Equipment Collection	7
Stopping Junk Mail to the recently deceased loved one	7
Coping with grief	7
Grief Chat	7
Documents following Registration	8
A Green Certificate for Notification of Burial or Cremation	8
A Death Certificate	8
Checklist of things which might need to be done in the first few days and weeks	9

What to do if your loved one dies at the Inpatient Unit

If your loved one dies at the Hospice, the nursing staff will guide you through what happens next. They will organise for your preferred funeral director to collect your deceased loved one. If you have not yet decided on a funeral director, the Hospice can organise a local company to care for your loved one, until you are ready to transfer them to the funeral director of your choice.

What to do if your loved one dies at home

If your loved one dies at home you will need to contact your GP (daytime), or if it is the night, weekend or bank holiday, please dial 111, then choose option 4. Please tell the health professional it was an **expected** death, and they will arrange for a someone to attend the home to provide verification.

Do **NOT** call 999 as an emergency ambulance is not required.

Once this is completed, if there is a nurse or carer involved, they may offer to provide care after death. You or a family member can assist if you wish, or you may prefer the funeral director to do this. When you are ready, but within 12 hours of the death you will need to contact a funeral director of your choice, who will arrange to collect your deceased loved one.

You may have particular religious needs, which your spiritual adviser can help with. If any special arrangements are required regarding the care of the body immediately or very soon after the person has died it is advisable to contact a funeral director as soon as possible (or preferably in advance) to discuss what will be needed. This will assist the funeral director to make the necessary arrangements in a timely way.

Your funeral director can arrange for you to visit your loved one in their Chapel of Rest.

It is advisable not to arrange a date for the funeral until you have been informed that you can register the death. Once you have registered you will be given a green form to take to your funeral director. This form is needed to finalise all the arrangements, especially if the person who has died is to be cremated.

Medical Examiner

All deaths are now referred to the medical examiner. The medical examiner system is being introduced nationally. A senior independent doctor (medical examiner) will scrutinise your loved one's medical notes and a member of their team will contact you to ask your thoughts and feedback about the care they received. They will: explain the causes of death; help direct any concerns or feedback you may have and also explain to you how to move forward with registering the death.

The Coroner

In certain cases, the doctor has a legal responsibility to report a death to the coroner. There are a number of reasons why this may be needed and if a coroner's referral is required then the reasoning and next steps will be explained to you by the medical examiner team. After reviewing the referral, the coroner's team will contact you and explain whether they can support the doctors in issuing a medical certificate of the cause of death, or whether further investigations are needed.

If further investigations are needed this may include a post-mortem examination. The coroner's team will inform you if a post-mortem is felt to be necessary and explain why. The coroner may be able to close their investigation after gathering sufficient evidence or they may need to hold an inquest. You will be supported through this process by a coroner's officer who can answer any questions you have and will let you know when you are able to move forward with the funeral.

Post-mortems

Sometimes, the Coroner might decide that a post-mortem examination is necessary to establish the cause of death. Where this happens, the Coroner does not need to seek permission from the relatives to proceed.

You cannot object to a Coroner's post-mortem, but if you have asked, the Coroner must tell you (and the person's GP) when and where the examination will take place.

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

If the body is released with no inquest, the coroner will send a form to the registrar stating the cause of death. Where an investigation or inquest is triggered, the Coroner will issue an Interim Death Certificate and advise you on what the next steps are, together with their timescale.

Registering a death

Your GP surgery or the Hospice (if your loved one dies as an inpatient) will scan a copy of the Medical Cause of Death Certificate (MCCD) and send it to Registrations. You must ONLY book once you have been informed by the Medical Examiner or Coroner's office that it is ok to do so.

You will need to contact the Register Office in the registration district where the death occurred. Predominantly for our patients this will be the Cambridgeshire district (this does not include Peterborough), but for those on the county borders you can check your address on line at www.gov.uk/register-offices or telephone 0345 045 1363 and they can advise.

You must register a death within five calendar days of the death once you have been informed by the medical examiner or coroner's office that it is ok to do so. If there is a delay in the production of the MCCD, the registrar will be aware of this and you will not be held accountable for this delay.

Who can register the death?

- A relative (this does not include common law partners or co-habiting partners) of the deceased loved one.
- A person who was present at the time of death (this does not need to be a relative).
- A person who is arranging the funeral.

Appointments to register a death

Appointments are available Monday to Friday 0900 to 1530 at various offices across Cambridgeshire. You can go online 24/7 to book via Cambridgeshire County Council

Link: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths/registering-a-death>

[If for religious reasons, the physical burial will be taking place quickly, please refer to the website, link shown above, for more information.](#)

Or call 0345 045 1363 option 2 (lines open 09.00 to 17.00 Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays)

If you have checked availability online and are unable to find a space in any of the offices to register within five days please call 0345 045 1363.

What you will need to tell the Registrar

- The person's full name at time of death and any names previously used, including maiden surname
- The person's date and place of birth (town and county if born in the UK and country if born abroad)
- Their last address
- Their occupation
- The full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving spouse or civil partner
- If they were getting a state pension or any other state benefit

'Tell Us Once' Service

'Tell Us Once' is a service that reports a death to most government organisations in one go. After you register the death, you must use the service within 28 days. The registrar will give you a special reference number and the details of how to use the service.

Tell Us Once will notify:

- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)- to deal with personal tax and cancel benefits and credits such as child benefit
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – to cancel benefit entitlements such as Universal Credit or State Pension.
- Passport Office – to cancel British Passport
- The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) – to cancel a licence and remove the person as keeper of up to 5 vehicles and end the vehicle tax
- The local council- to cancel Housing Benefit, a Blue Badge, inform council housing services and remove the person from the electoral register
- Public sector pension schemes- to cancel future pension payments

You can find more about 'Tell us Once' on the gov.uk website www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once.

Paying for the Funeral

Funeral costs are normally recoverable from the deceased loved one's estate, but the person organising the funeral will be responsible for paying the bill. Your funeral director can guide you through this process. You may be eligible for financial assistance and details can be found at www.gov.uk/funeral-payments

Medication

It is the responsibility of the carer or family to return all medication to the local pharmacy for disposal. This should be done at your earliest convenience.

Equipment Collection

If you have any equipment that requires collection from NRS. Please telephone 0345 121 3456 and chose option as directed.

Stopping Junk Mail to the recently deceased loved one

There are several organisations who will assist with stopping unwanted marketing post being sent and these can be found through a simple internet search.

Coping with grief

Grief is a normal reaction to any major loss in our lives and there are many avenues of support available. Please refer to our website and/or our information leaflet. Another helpful website is www.cruse.org.uk

Grief Chat

Is a free, confidential service that provides instant chat support with a qualified bereavement counsellor and is available Monday-Friday, 9am-9pm (except Bank Holidays) via the Arthur Rank Hospice Charity website www.arhc.org.uk/griefchat

Documents following Registration

A Green Certificate for Notification of Burial or Cremation

Once you have registered you need to take this form to your nominated funeral director so that the funeral can take place, though this is often emailed from the Registry Office.

A Death Certificate

You will need a debit or credit card in your name to pay for each death certificate required. Each certificate is currently £12.50 (price correct as of June 2024).

It is advisable to purchase additional copies of The Death Certificate as they will be needed by any private institutions such as the deceased loved one's bank, building society, insurers etc. The Registrar can advise you further, but you are able to purchase further copies at a later date if required.

Checklist of things which might need to be done in the first few days and weeks

The UK government website has a checklist of what to do when someone dies
www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies

Task Checklist:

- ☐ Register the death (see above).
- ☐ Choose a funeral director and begin funeral arrangements.
- ☐ Tell government departments about the death ('Tell Us Once' service)
- ☐ Find the Will – there might be a copy with a solicitor. If there is no will, further information on applicable rules can be found online at www.gov.uk including guidance on probate.
- ☐ Notify the person's landlord and other organisations.

Organisations might include:

- | | |
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| ☐ housing association or council housing offices | ☐ landlord |
| ☐ banks & mortgage providers | ☐ insurance companies |
| ☐ telephone, water, electric, gas companies | ☐ child/young person's teacher |
| ☐ credit cards | ☐ solicitor (if involved) |
| ☐ social services/care agencies | ☐ car insurance |
| ☐ dentist, newsagent, hairdresser, milkman | ☐ relatives & friends |
| ☐ television licence | ☐ rental & loan companies |
| ☐ Inland Revenue (if self-employed) | ☐ cancel clubs and/or |
| appointments | |
| ☐ employer | |