

What to do when someone dies

Most of the information that follows was an extract from the government's webpage <https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death>. More detailed and more up to date information is always available online via that webpage, and a booklet "What to do after a death" is currently available from the Bereavement Services Office. (Tel: 01642 817725)

1. Overview

There are 3 things you must do in the first few days after someone dies.

1. Get a medical certificate from a GP or hospital doctor. You'll need this to register the death.
2. [Register the death](#) within 5 days. You'll then get the documents you need for the funeral.
3. [Arrange the funeral](#). You can use a funeral director or arrange it yourself.

You may be able to use the [Tell Us Once](#) service to report a death to most government organisations in one go. The Middlesbrough Register Office (Tel: 01642 729004) can offer more information about this service.

You don't need to deal with the [will, money and property](#) straight away.

2. Register the death

If the death has been [reported to a coroner](#) you can't register the death until the coroner gives permission.

Otherwise use the [register a death tool](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death>), or www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-marriages/register-death to find out if you can register the death yourself and to see what you need to do.

3. When a death is reported to a coroner

A doctor may report the death to a coroner if the:

- Cause of death is unknown
- Death was violent or unnatural
- Death was sudden and unexplained
- Person who died was not visited by a medical practitioner during their final illness
- Medical certificate isn't available
- Person who died wasn't seen by the doctor who signed the medical certificate within 14 days before death or after they died
- Death occurred during an operation or before the person came out of anaesthetic
- Medical certificate suggests the death may have been caused by an industrial disease or industrial poisoning

The coroner may decide that the cause of death is clear. In this case:

1. The doctor signs a medical certificate.

2. You take the medical certificate to the registrar.
3. The coroner issues a certificate to the registrar stating a post-mortem isn't needed.

Post-mortems

The coroner may decide a post-mortem is needed to find out how the person died. This can be done either in a hospital or mortuary.

You can't object to a coroner's post-mortem - but if you've 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 ('Pink Form - form 100B') to the registrar stating the cause of death.

The coroner will also send a 'Certificate of Coroner - form Cremation 6' to the family or to the funeral director if the body is to be cremated.

The Coroners Service for Teesside (Tel: 01642 729350) or the Middlesbrough Register Office (Tel: 01642 729004) can be contacted for further information.

If the coroner decides to hold an inquest

A coroner must hold an inquest if the cause of death is still unknown, or if the person:

- Possibly died a violent or unnatural death
- Died in prison or police custody

You can't register the death until after the inquest. The coroner is responsible for sending the relevant paperwork to the registrar.

The death can't be registered until after the inquest, but the coroner can give you an interim death certificate to prove the person is dead. You can use this to [let organisations know](#) of the death and [apply for probate](#).

When the inquest is over the coroner will tell the registrar what to put in the register.

4. Arrange the funeral

The funeral can usually only take place after the death is registered. Most people use a funeral director, though you can arrange a funeral yourself. You do not have to arrange the funeral with the funeral director who initially holds the coffin.

Funeral directors

The Department for Work and Pensions recommends that you choose a funeral director who's a member of one of the following:

- [National Association of Funeral Directors](#)
- [National Federation of Funeral Directors](#)
- [Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors](#)

These organisations have codes of practice - they must give you a price list when asked.

Some local councils run their own [funeral services](#), for example for non-religious burials. The [British Humanist Association](#) can also help with non-religious funerals.

Arranging the funeral yourself

Contact the Cemeteries and Crematorium Department of your local council for further advice on arranging a funeral yourself.

Funeral costs

Funeral costs can include:

- Funeral director fees
- Things the funeral director pays for on your behalf (called 'disbursements' or 'third-party costs'), for example crematorium or cemetery fees, or a newspaper announcement about the death
- Local authority burial or cremation fees

Funeral directors may list all these costs in their quote.

Paying for a funeral

The funeral can be paid for:

- From a financial scheme the person had, for example a pre-paid funeral plan or insurance policy
- By you, or other family members or friends
- With money from the person's estate (savings, for example) - getting access to this is called applying for a 'grant of representation' (sometimes called ['applying for probate'](#))

You can apply for a [Funeral Payment](#) if you have difficulty paying for the funeral.

Moving a body for a funeral abroad

You need permission from a coroner to move a body for a funeral abroad. Apply at least 4 days before you want the body to be moved.

Find a local coroner using the [Coroners' Society of England and Wales website](#).

There is a different process in [Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

7. What to do if a child or baby dies

You must [register the death](#) in the normal way, but you may also need to report the death of a child to other organisations depending on your circumstances.

8. Death abroad

You must register a death with the local authorities in the country where the person died.

In many countries you can also [register the death with the UK authorities](#).

[Contact the International Pension Centre](#) if the person was getting a pension or other benefits.

You can use [Tell Us Once](#) if the person died in:

- a [Commonwealth country](#)
- a [European Economic Area \(EEA\) country](#)
- Switzerland

Find out more about [coping with a death abroad](#).

There are different rules for bringing the person's remains home, depending on whether you:

- bring the body home for burial or cremation
- have the person cremated abroad and bring their ashes home

These rules apply to England and Wales. There are different processes for [Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

When a coroner will be involved

A coroner will usually hold an inquest in England or Wales if the cause of death is unknown or if it was sudden, violent or unnatural.

You need a certificate from the coroner (form 'Cremation 6') if the person is to be cremated.

Bringing ashes home

When leaving a country with human ashes you will normally need to show:

1. the death certificate
2. the certificate of cremation

Each country has its own rules about departing with human ashes and there may be additional requirements. Contact the country's [British consulate, embassy or high commission](#) for advice. You'll need to fill in a standard customs form when you arrive home.

Contact your airline to find out whether you can carry the ashes as hand luggage or as checked-in luggage. They may ask you to put the ashes in a non-metallic container so that they can be x-rayed.

You shouldn't have the person cremated abroad if you want a coroner at home to conduct an inquest into their death.