

# What you need to do following the death of a friend or relative

**We are very sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and best wishes are with you, your family and your friends. We appreciate this is a very difficult time for you and we want you to know that support is available every step of the way.**

This pack provides information to help you through the key steps you need to take and directs you to more information and support. We have also produced a pack of Bereavement Support services to help you and we recommend you refer to this too.

When someone in the UK dies, information about what needs to happen next can be found at: [www.gov.uk/after-a-death](http://www.gov.uk/after-a-death)

## **Steps to take following a death of a friend or relative**

You'll need to think about the following four steps:

- 1. Registering the death**
- 2. Arranging a funeral**
- 3. Sorting out their affairs**
- 4. Caring for their pets**
- 5. Further support**

## 1. Registering the death

A death should be registered within 5 days with the Register Office in the district where the death occurred. The contact details for this can be found on the relevant local authority website.

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) - usually signed by the doctor who certified the death in hospital - needs to be scanned (or photographed) and emailed to the registrar as an attachment.

For people who die in the community, rather than a hospital, the GP or doctor who cared for the patient usually signs the death certificate, which can then be emailed to the registrar.

In the event the MCCD cannot be sent to the registrar electronically and the next of kin/informant is self-isolating, please arrange for an informant to collect the MCCD and deliver it to the registrar to complete the registration process.

An informant can be someone who was present at the death, a hospital official, someone who is 'in charge of a body', or a funeral director.

The register office will contact you by telephone to arrange the registration of the death and arrange for any death certificates to be sent to you by post.

Further details about how to obtain the certificate can be found from your local council by visiting: [gov.uk/find-bereavement-services-from-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-bereavement-services-from-council)

The register office will issue the burial or cremation form and forward this electronically to the funeral director so that everything is in place for you to arrange the funeral.

## What documents/information do I need to register the death?

The registrar will require the following information:

- the date and place the person died
- the person's usual address
- the person's first name, middle names and surname (maiden name, if this applies)
- the person's date and place of birth (including town, county, country)
- the person's occupation and the name and occupation of their husband, wife or civil partner (if the person was married or in a civil partnership)
- if the deceased received a pension or benefit from the Government
- the date of birth of their surviving husband, wife or civil partner.

Please don't worry if you don't have all the information listed above. It is worth checking with the registrar what information is acceptable.

## Who can register a death?

Certain people have a legal duty to give information for the registration of a death. Although a death is normally registered by a relative of the deceased, if there are no relatives, we accept the information from one of the categories listed below: (in order of preference)

- a relative of the deceased
- a person present at the death
- the occupier of a house if he/she knew that the death had happened
- the person carrying out the burial or cremation of the body (this does not include funeral directors)

## Unexpected deaths where COVID-19 is suspected

In these cases, a team called the Pandemic Multi-Agency Response Team (PMART) will get involved and you will have been informed of their involvement if this is the case. A helpline for families who are going through the PMART process is confirmed as:

Operated by The Coroners' Courts Support Service, helpline email is [helpline@ccss.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ccss.org.uk) and the telephone number is **0300 111 214**

## 2. Arranging a funeral

After you have registered a death, you will likely arrange a funeral. There are things that will be different than usual during this pandemic.

Information on funeral services can be accessed here:  
**UK Funerals Online** [www.uk-funerals.co.uk](http://www.uk-funerals.co.uk)

More information about funeral directors can be obtained from:  
**National Association of Funeral Directors**  
618 Warwick Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1AA  
Tel: **0121 230 1343**, [www.nafd.org.uk](http://www.nafd.org.uk)

**National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors** 3  
Bullfields, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9DB  
Tel: **0127 972 6777**, [www.saif.org.uk](http://www.saif.org.uk)  
Email: [info@saif.org.uk](mailto:info@saif.org.uk)

## Preparing for the funeral

If you have a nominated funeral director to collect your loved one, they will contact you to arrange the funeral. Funerals need to take place within ten days from the date your loved one died. Attendance at funerals must be limited to close family and friends and no more than ten people.

If your loved one is suspected to have, or has been confirmed to have, Covid-19 when they died, as per Government advice, anyone who has had contact with your loved one will need to self-isolate for 14 days from their last time of contact, and anyone who is showing signs of Covid-19 should not attend. We know that this will be difficult and distressing for you and your family and friends, but these measures are needed to protect those who are attending the funeral service, the funeral directors and the staff at the crematorium or cemetery.

## Dealing with funeral costs

If you arrange a funeral with a funeral director you will be responsible for the costs. We recommend speaking to your funeral director about how much you have to spend and what services are possible.

The person who died might have paid for their funeral already. This is called a funeral plan. This information may be in the will, be known by close friends or relatives or with local funeral directors. You can also search for funeral plans on the Funeral Planning Authority's [website](#).

## Help with costs

If you receive certain benefits, you may be entitled to help with funeral costs if you receive certain social security benefits. Help and advice can be obtained from:

- The Government [website](#)
- The Citizen Advice Bureau [website](#)

## If you are in financial need

Down to Earth guides people in financial need to plan affordable and meaningful funerals with information on how to plan a funeral, support on making funerals affordable and accessing financial support to help with funeral costs.

Visit Down to Earth's [website](#)

Telephone: 020 8983 5055

Email: [downtoearth@qsa.org.uk](mailto:downtoearth@qsa.org.uk)

## Information and advice about funerals during the COVID-19 crisis

To protect you, your friends and your family and to prevent the spread of the virus, there will unfortunately be restrictions on numbers who can attend a funeral during the pandemic. We realise this is extremely difficult for people wishing to pay their respects. This is to help save lives and we are doing everything we can to support you through this process, in line with national guidance.

These guidelines will continue to be monitored and updated for your safety. Please note the following:

- guidelines around social distancing will also still apply to any gathering after a ceremony at any venue, including the family home
- wider guidelines around vulnerable groups and self-isolation also continue to apply, again to protect you, your friends and your family
- additionally, individual crematoriums may have their own guidance, to keep you safe such as no touching of coffin or venue door handles. Some may provide online broadcasting so mourners can watch the service and still pay their respects
- we recommend you look at our guidance pack on bereavement support services, so you can access the local support when you most need it.

## Funeral advice for different faith groups

### Muslim

The British Board of Scholars and Imams advice includes:

- Cremation must be avoided at all costs.
- There are several options for ritual cleansing from: full ghusl, minimal ghusl, tayammum, wiping over the body bag. Each should be considered in sequence, but if none can be done, burial without ghusl is permissible.
- The body bag may be considered to fulfil the role of the burial shroud (kafan).
- Funeral (janaza) prayers should be performed by a minimum of people; alternatives include the absentee funeral prayer (salat al-gha'ib).
- A number of options for burial can be considered, including shared graves, transferral to other sites, and delay in burial.

For the full advice visit this [website](#)

### Jewish

#### Liberal Judaism and Reform Judaism

- Physical attendance at all funerals restricted to solely the rabbi or cantor.
- No family members will be able to attend in person. Currently exploring possibility to join the service digitally
- Full info visit this [website](#)

#### Misaskim, and Orthodox

- Attendance at funerals is prohibited, other than immediate family.
- Families must observe Shiva in private.
- Full info visit this [website](#)

### Sikh

- Gurdwaras are still allowed to conduct funerals. However, some Gurdwaras have now decided not to allow the casket to come to the Gurdwara before going to the crematorium.
- Only immediate family should attend a funeral at the crematorium, limited to no more than 2 people. It should only be people who have not been in physical contact with the deceased for at least 14 days.
- As an absolute minimum, Kirtan Sohila and Ardas should be recited before committal. If a Granthi is unavailable to do this, any family member is able to carry this out.
- Sehaj Paths should be delayed for the foreseeable future.
- Full info visit this [website](#)

## Church of England

- Same as general guidelines above
- They also encourage people who can't get to funerals to light virtual candles. Visit this [website](#) for more info.

## Roman Catholic

- Same as general guidelines above
- Arrangements should be made for a Mass to be celebrated in memoriam when congregations are allowed to gather.

For more information, visit this [website](#).

## Hindu

For further information, visit this [website](#).

## Buddhist

For further information, visit this [website](#).

## 3. Sorting out their affairs

When someone dies, it can feel like there are a lot of things to deal with on top of the grief you may be feeling. We have set out the steps you need to take when your loved one has come to the end of their life. There is a lot of support available if you are dealing with a bereavement.

In the first few days and weeks after your loved one has died, you will have registered the death and organised a funeral.

Tell the government and your utility companies

**The Tell Us Once** service allows you to inform all the relevant government departments when someone dies. When you register the death please talk to us about the Tell Us Once service.

Visit their [website](#) for full info.

You need to tell banks, utility companies and landlords when someone has died as well. You may need to remember to speak to your loved one's:

- Banks and building societies
- Gas and electricity suppliers
- Mobile and landline phone providers
- Broadband providers
- Car insurance and finance providers
- Subscriptions and recurring payments including TV and streaming services, magazines and newspapers
- Parking, congestion and Dartford crossing charges

Check if you can get bereavement benefits. You might be eligible for financial help. Check if you can get:

- Bereavement Support Payment if your spouse or civil partner has died
- Guardian's Allowance if you're bringing up a child ~~parents~~ have died

### Register changes of circumstances

- Check your benefits, pension and taxes after the death of a spouse
- Check Child Benefit if a child or parent has died
- Check what you need to do if you're in the UK as the partner of a British Citizen or someone with indefinite leave to remain
- Check what you need to do if your partner who died served as a member of HM Forces
- Contact UKVI to check the rules for other visas

### Deal with your loved one's estate

You might have to deal with the will, money and property of the person who's died if you're a close friend or relative, or the executor of the will.

- Check if you need to apply for probate
- Value the estate
- Deal with the estate
- Update property records

## 4. Caring for pets

Another area to consider is "What arrangements are in place to care for pets of someone who has passed away". If the answer is no arrangements have been made, support is available to find alternative arrangements.

There are both national and smaller local pet charities who are able to support with a view to rehoming. The following major charities are able to provide support, but it must be stressed that demand often outweighs available space.

### Battersea's Forever Loved Service

The team at Battersea will give dogs and cats veterinary care at the shelter, looking after them there until they find a safe and happy home.

Visit their [website](#) for more info.

### The RSPCA's Home for Life Scheme

The RSPCA take on exotic pets as well as dogs and cats. Pets are looked after in shelters or foster homes around the country until they can be properly rehomed.

Visit their [website](#) for more info.

### The Cinnamon Trust

The Cinnamon Trust takes in pets while their owners are in hospital or in care, keeping them in volunteer foster homes around the country. You can also arrange to have your pet permanently fostered with them in the event of your death.

Visit their [website](#) for more info.

### **Cats Protection's Cat Guardians**

Pre-register with Cats Protection to get an Emergency Cat Care Card to carry in your wallet. This lets emergency service workers know who to contact to make sure that your cat can be brought into their care and eventually adopted.

Visit their [website](#) for more info.

### **Dogs Trust**

Pre-register to get a Canine Care Card for your wallet, and they will arrange care for your dog until a happy home can be found.

Visit their [website](#) for more info.

### **The Blue Cross Pets Scheme into Care**

The Blue Cross will care for and rehome a wide range of pets, including horses.

Visit their [website](#) for more info.

In addition to the national charities highlighted above, other organisations include:

- **Celia Hammond Animal Trust** rescuing cats across London and the South East
- **Network for Animals rescue** in London
- **Wanderers Haven Animal Sanctuary** Cranham accepting all types of animals.
- **Wallace Kennels Brentwood Dog Rescue** dogs only
- **Animal Country Club Moreton Essex** – kennels and cattery available for short term support during period of hospitalisation or whilst new home is being found. Charges apply.
- **Pro Dogs Direct** – offering non-destruction rescuing and rehoming through foster carers.
- **Chihuahua Rescue UK** – placement into approved foster care

## **5. Further Support**

### **For loved ones in hospital during the pandemic**

For further support and guidance, you can telephone the hospital bereavement office where your loved one died (see contact numbers below). Unfortunately, they are unable to meet face to face at this time. During the pandemic the death certification process has been simplified, the bereavement officer will explain the next steps to you.

#### **Newham University Hospital**

Tel: 020 7363 8056 or 020 7363 8055

#### **St Bartholomew's Hospital**

Tel: 020 3465 5889 or 020 3465 6892

#### **The Royal London Hospital**

Tel: 020 3594 1050 or 020 3594 2030

#### **Whipps Cross Hospital**

Tel: 020 8535 6628

#### **Queen's Hospital BHRUT (Barking, Havering, Redbridge University Hospitals)**

Tel: 01708 435490

#### **King George Hospital BHRUT (Barking, Havering, Redbridge University Hospitals)**

Tel: 0208 9708235

### **General support and information**

You can get more information and support from the Dying Matters [website](#). Please also see the full list of bereavement support services in our NEL Covid-19 Bereavement Support Pack.