



Before Registering the Death

What happens next?

This depends on the circumstances in which someone has died.

If the death is both expected and natural, a doctor who has been looking after the patient will be able to issue a **Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)**. You need this to be able to register the death unless a coroner is involved.

If the person died in hospital you may have to wait for administrative staff to contact you to give you an appointment to collect the MCCD. The ward staff will tell you the procedure. You can usually collect any belongings at the same time as the certificate. This delay may seem inconvenient, but the doctor who needs to complete the MCCD may not be on duty at the time of the death.

If the death was at home or in a care/nursing home it will usually be the GP who issues the MCCD.

Staff at the hospital, care home or surgery will talk you through the procedure.

The MCCD is needed for you to register the death unless the coroner is involved.

If the coroner is involved

The majority of deaths notified to the coroner are completely natural but the cause of death is not certain.

It is a legal requirement in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that the cause of death is known and recorded. Scottish law is similar.

Examples of deaths which are referred to a coroner are those where the cause of death is not known, as a result of an accident, resulting from medical treatment or which are suspicious. The police or a doctor informs the coroner. The coroner is a senior and independent judicial officer and has coroner's officers working for him or her, who carry out investigations for the coroner.

Usually someone from the coroner's office will speak to the nearest relative or their representative, as well as any doctors who have been looking after the deceased, before deciding if a post-mortem examination is necessary. This is an external and internal examination of the body. It is normally possible to view and dress the body as usual after the examination. Please tell the coroner's office if you object to post-mortem examination for any reason, but it is a legal requirement about which you have no choice. You do have the right to be represented at the examination, but most people find this unnecessary.

The purpose of the examination is to determine the cause of death and it is not done for research or any other purpose. It may be necessary to keep very small samples of tissue and fluid from the body for further testing. You will be told if this is necessary and given a choice about what happens to the samples in the future.

After the post-mortem examination

If the cause of death is found to be natural and there are no other circumstances requiring an inquest, the coroner will provide a document instead of an MCCD allowing the death to be registered. This is often sent direct to the registrar but you may be asked to collect it in person.

If the death was not due to natural causes or further tests are needed to find the cause of death, the coroner will open an inquest. They will usually release the body for the funeral at this time.

The coroner's officer will inform your funeral director when they can collect the body to prepare for the funeral.



Registering the Death

When to register the death

Deaths in England, Wales and Northern Ireland should normally be notified to the Registrar of Births, Marriages & Deaths within 5 days of the death, and 8 days in Scotland. Most registration offices operate appointment systems, so please telephone before you visit. If registration is delayed because of the involvement of the coroner this is not your fault and you do not need to worry. If you need to register urgently for any reason please explain this when you call.

The person registering the death is called 'the informant'. Only certain people can fulfil this duty; close relatives of the deceased, someone present at the death or the person taking responsibility for the funeral. When you telephone to make an appointment, check that the person planning to register is entitled to do so, and that they are registering at the correct office, as regulations about where you can register vary across the UK.

You need to take the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) with you or tell the registrar that the coroner's office has told you can register. It is helpful to take the following with you, although these are not essential: birth and marriage certificates for the deceased, details of any state benefits, the NHS medical card and the National Insurance number of the deceased, and also that of a surviving husband, wife or civil partner.

The MCCD is needed for you to register the death unless the coroner is involved.

Documents from the registrar

Certified copies of the death certificate: The death registration is a permanent record and is retained by the registrar. You may purchase as many copies of this document as you need, and these are what is meant when banks and others ask to see an 'original' death certificate. The price varies as it is set by the local council but usually rises significantly if you need more later. Obtain one for each bank account, building society and share holdings of the deceased. If there is to be an inquest, the death is not registered until after the inquest - the coroner will issue you with an Interim Certificate which you can use instead of certified copies.

Certificate of Registration/Notification of Death (BD8): This form is free and you need to complete the form on the back to notify the Department for Work and Pensions of the death if the person received a state pension or any other benefits. The registrar may give you an envelope to post the certificate or you can hand it in at a Jobcentre Plus office. You can obtain this form from the registrar even if the death cannot be registered yet. Most organisations will only accept a certified copy as evidence of a death.

Certificate for burial or cremation: This is free and is commonly referred to as 'the green form'. It proves to the funeral director and the cemetery or crematorium authorities that a funeral may take place. The green form is replaced by a document from the coroner if there will be an inquest or if the funeral will be a cremation following a coroner's post-mortem examination.

'Tell Us Once' service

When someone has died there are lots of things that need to be done, at a time when you probably least feel like doing them. One of these is contacting government departments and local council services that need to be told. The Register Office may provide a service called 'Tell Us Once'. If so, they will give you a unique reference code, as well as instructions on how to use it and who will be informed.

Local registration offices:

- York: 01904 654477
- Selby: 01609 780780
- Harrogate: 01609 532154
- Northallerton: 01609780780