

When someone has died

advice for those who are left behind



a guide for people with
learning disabilities and their carers

Advice for those who are left behind

If someone close to you dies, there are some things you will need to take care of. This can be difficult if you are feeling very sad and confused. Here is a step-by-step guide to what you need to do after they are dead.

In this booklet, we will call the person who has died the **deceased** person.

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The first things you need to do:

If the person died at home, you will need to:

- Tell the family doctor
- Tell the nearest relatives
- Contact the Police if the death was sudden and unexpected (if the person was not very ill before they died). If this happens, don't touch or move anything in the home until the Police get there.
- Contact a funeral director/undertaker
- Find out if the person who died had a will. If you don't know, ask other family members and friends. You could also ask the deceased person's bank.



If the person died in hospital

- If the person was not a patient in the hospital you will have to look at their body and say who it is. This is called identifying the body. You might want to take someone with you.
- You will have to think about whether you want the person to have an examination to find out why they died. This is called a post-mortem.
- Tell hospital staff if the person wanted to have parts of their body used to help other people. This is called donating organs. It could save someone else's life.
- Contact a funeral director or undertaker.
- Find out if the person who died had a will. If you don't know, ask other family members and friends. You could also ask the deceased person's bank.
- Get a death certificate. Ask the hospital staff or social worker to help with this.



Register the death

You have to tell the authorities when someone dies. This is called registering the death. This must be done within 8 days, but it is best to get the death registered as soon as possible.



The death can be registered by:

- The husband, wife or partner of the person who died
- Anyone who was there when the person died
- Other people can register the death too. You can ask the registrar about this.

Deaths can be registered with the registrar in the area where the person died. To find out where this is, contact your doctor, social worker, council, or the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

You will need to take:

- The death certificate you got from the GP or the hospital.
- Any letters about pensions or benefits the person was getting.
- NHS medical card, if they had one.
- The person's birth and marriage or civil partnership certificates, if you have them.

You will need to tell the registrar:

- The name, job and address of the person who has died
- If the person who has died was married, widowed (used to be married, but their husband or wife died) or divorced
- The date of birth of the dead person's husband, wife or partner, if they had one
- The full names and jobs of the dead person's parents. You can find this on their birth certificate.
- If the person who died was getting a pension or benefits
- The name and address of the dead person's NHS doctor



The registrar will give you:

- A death certificate. You have to give this to the funeral director so the funeral can happen.
- A form about the deceased person's benefits and National Insurance
- Part of the Register of Deaths. You might need this to find out about the deceased person's pension, savings or insurance. You have to pay for this.

Planning the funeral

It's best to start planning the funeral as soon as possible but don't make any final arrangements until you've told the authorities about the death (see page 1).

If the person died suddenly the Police might have to do an investigation. You might have to wait until they're finished before you can have the funeral.

Pre-paid funeral plans

Find out if the deceased person had a pre-paid funeral plan before you contact a funeral director. A pre-paid funeral plan means that the funeral has already been paid for.

You should be able to find a letter about this among the deceased person's papers. If not, ask their other relatives or friends about this.



Grief - Coping with your feelings



You will have a lot of different feelings after a person close to you dies. This is called grief. You might not be able to believe they are gone. You might panic about what to do next. You might feel very sad, angry or guilty.

Here are some ways to help you deal with those feelings.

Take your time

It's important to give yourself time to:

- understand what has happened
- talk about the person who has died with other family and friends
- feel sad and lonely
- be by yourself if you need to

Do it your way

Everyone is different and we all feel differently when someone dies. There is no right way to deal with grief. Do whatever works for you.

Take care of yourself

It is important to look after yourself. You need to eat meals as usual and it is best not to drink too much alcohol.

It's normal to feel scared and worry about how you will carry on. If you are worried about your feelings, speak to your doctor.



Remember:

- **Grief is normal** - it is part of everyone's life and it's OK to have these feelings.
- **It gets better** - it is hard at first but you will feel better over time.
- **You can't hurry it** - it might take a long time to cope with grief.
- **Life goes on** - if you find yourself not thinking about the person who has died, that's OK.
- **Grief can be scary** - it might make you feel very depressed. This is normal. Sometimes you might even think about killing yourself. It is important when you feel like this to let someone know how you feel - it's OK to talk about it.



It's important to know when you need help. It's good to talk to someone you trust about it – a friend, a doctor or a religious leader.

You can also phone **Breathing Space** on **0800 83 85 87**. They have experienced people who will listen to you and give you information and advice about grief.

Useful contacts

Age Scotland

They work to improve the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey.

Tel: 0845 833 0200

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/

Bereavement Register

Stops mail being sent to a deceased person.

Website: www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk

Carers UK

Help and advice for carers.

Tel: 0808 808 777

Email: info@carersuk.org

Citizen's Advice Scotland

Can give advice on registering a death, arranging a funeral, wills etc.

Website: www.cas.org.uk

Citizens Advice Direct: 0808 800 9060

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

Help for people experiencing bereavement to understand their grief and cope with their loss.

Tel: 0845 600 2227

Website: www.crusescotland.org.uk

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief

Useful resources and contacts about bereavement.

Website: www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk

Marie Curie

They provide care to terminally ill patients in their own homes or in hospices, and offer support to their families.

Website: www.mariecurie.org.uk

Samaritans

They give emotional support and help people get through tough times.

Tel: 08457 909090

Website: www.samaritans.org

Support Line

They offer confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email and post.

Tel: 01708 765200

Email: info@supportline.org.uk

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