

What to do after someone dies - the immediate steps

When a loved one passes away, the process that follows can be stressful and overwhelming. There are a number of tax, financial and practical matters to deal with and this is an area of law fraught with problems if not attended to properly. This simple first-steps guide has been designed to help you through this difficult time. Our website gives greater detail and contact information for our probate teams.

- 1. If somebody dies at home** - the first thing to do is to call the GP (or if the circumstances really are unexpected or unusual then call the police as well). If the deceased hasn't been seen by a doctor in the last 14 days then the doctor has to report to a Coroner. If they have been seen then the doctor can write a formal cause of death notice.
- 2. If somebody dies in a hospital** - the body can usually be kept at the hospital and if death occurs at home then you may keep the body at home but most prefer to have a funeral director contacted as they can keep the body.
- 3. Register the death** - within 5 days. Book an appointment with the local Registrar of births, marriages and deaths (in the area where the deceased lived - not necessarily where they died) and formally register the death. You will need to know the full name, address, date of birth and death of the deceased and their "occupation" even if retired and take with you the doctor's cause of death notice. Tell the Registrar if you think the funeral will be a burial or a cremation (there are extra forms needed for a cremation).
- 4. Tell family and friends** - this seems obvious but in all the shock of a death it's often easy to forget to tell a deceased's nearest and dearest.
- 5. The Will** - If you know that there is a Will then try to find where it's kept and contact the named executors.
- 6. Start arrangements for a funeral** - the costs of a funeral are an allowable expense from the deceased's estate so undertakers don't always demand payment up front. Try to make sure that you are following the wishes of the deceased. This might have been noted in their Will or stored with their Will, or may have been made known to family/friends.
- 7. If the deceased leaves an empty home** - try to find the name of the house and contents insurers to ensure that cover is maintained and the insurers are aware that the property might be empty for a while. They will ask if anyone will be visiting the property regularly and that all windows and doors are locked - this is purely an initial safety measure to keep up the insurance. The executors will deal with the longer term insurance aspects. Where there is property abroad - make sure that similar steps are taken for that/those properties. This includes holiday home, boats, caravans etc.

These are just some initial steps. The executors of a Will can then take matters forward. If there is no Will then we can advise you on what happens next.

Pitmans probate specialists are on hand to answer any of your questions.



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"We found your advice to be clear, highly productive and the suggested plan very straight-forward to implement."

"I have appreciated your personal approach in settling the estate. I can't thank you enough for all your hard work, diligence, guidance and professional advice during the long process. Your advice, leadership and friendly kind words of encouragement definitely aided the process."



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