

# **After a death, when you are probably least able to cope with it, the law demands that a member of the family goes through the legal requirements to register the death.**

This page aims to provide an explanation of what may happen and who you may need to contact to help you cope with grief and bereavement, find spiritual support, arrange a funeral and understand the role of an Executor of a Will. Guidance which focusses on legal and administrative matters, including the possibility of financial support, is available from the [Government through this link](#).

A printable [PDF version](#) is available of this page

## **Confirming death**

Confirming that death has indeed occurred is not the same as certifying death (see below). There is no legal requirement around who can confirm that death has occurred, but most hospitals have a policy that it must be done by a qualified doctor. In the community, the fact of death may be confirmed by paramedics (e.g. ambulance staff), although if in any doubt they will usually attempt resuscitation and hurry to the nearest Emergency Department. If death is expected (as in a hospice) a senior nurse may be allowed to confirm death. Occasionally (for example in intensive care units) it can be surprisingly difficult to confirm the fact that death has occurred and two doctors may be required.

## **Should the coroner be informed?**

The law requires that some deaths are referred to the coroner, who will then decide whether or not to investigate. The coroner's role is mainly to investigate deaths that are not entirely due to 'natural causes', where something may have gone wrong or where the death might have been prevented. So, for example, if there is any possibility that the final illness was related to exposure to something during employment, or if the cause of death is unknown, or if the deceased has not been seen by a doctor within 14 days before death, referral to the coroner will usually be necessary. But not always - the rules are complicated. So if your loved one's death is referred to the coroner, ask for an explanation. The Ministry of Justice has issued a guide to coroners and inquests- <https://coroners.leicester.gov.uk/media/1003/moj-guide-to-coroners-and-inquests.pdf>

## **Does the coroner wish to investigate?**

If a death is referred to the coroner and the coroner decides to investigate, the matter is taken out of the hands of the health service and you will be dealing with the Coroner's Officers. These are experienced people who should be well accustomed to providing explanations. But you need to realise that the focus of the coronial system is on identifying whether something went wrong. Coroners do not seek to allocate blame, but they do need to ensure that if there is to be a criminal investigation, the evidence is all available and has not been corrupted. So the processes of the coroner and the coroner's court may seem a little abrupt when compared with processes in the health service. If the coroner does investigate, he/she may insist on a full post-mortem examination; if so, you do not have a right to object because the priority is the pursuit of justice - even if it seems obvious to you that the death was entirely natural.

**Organ donation** You have the right to decide what happens to your body after death. In England the system for organ donation is an opt out system for more information go to the [NHS blood and transplant site](#). If you wish to donate your hold body to rain medical professional you need to contact your medical school of choice you can find details on the [Human Tissue Authority](#)

## **Certifying the death**

If a coroner does investigate, the coroner will issue a certificate setting out the cause of death. If the coroner is not informed or declines to investigate, it is the duty of a doctor who has been involved in the deceased's care to issue a certificate of the cause of death. If death occurs at home, this will usually be the General Practitioner. In a hospital there will usually be a Bereavement Office which is responsible for finding the right doctor to complete a certificate of the cause of death.

## **Medical Examiners**

This is a reform which is currently being implemented across England and Wales. At the moment, the hospitals in Leicester and Peterborough have medical examiners, but they are not involved in deaths in the community.

A medical examiner is a senior doctor who has had additional training around which cases to refer to the coroner and how best to certify causes of death. So they help other doctors with the processes mentioned above. As part of their role they also try to speak to at least one member of the family, to check that the cause of death is understood and to ask whether there were any problems with the delivery of care. (The concept of medical examiners arose after the investigation of Harold Shipman, the GP who murdered many of his patients then wrote

death certificates stating the deaths were due to natural causes). So if you don't understand the cause of death, or if you think something ought to be investigated further, the medical examiner may be able to help.

## **Registering the death**

This is the final part of the state's involvement in recording the death. The local Registrar (of Births, Marriages and Deaths) will, on receiving the certificate giving the cause of death, ensure that the official record of the death is made and will issue the formal 'death certificate'. This certificate will be needed by whoever has to sort out the deceased's estate; for example, banks and insurance companies will want to see it as proof that the person has died. They often refuse to accept photocopies, so the Registrar can, if needed, issue you with a number of copies of the death certificate.

Tell us once is a service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go.

Tell Us Once is offered by most Registrars (but not all) to those registering a death. It is an optional service, but most people choose to use this service as it saves them time at a stage in their lives when they are dealing with the emotional difficulties that come with bereavement. Typically, those who need to know about a death are:

- Department for Work and Pensions
- The Pension, Disability and Carers Service
- Jobcentre Plus
- Overseas Health Team
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Child Benefit

Child tax credit and working tax credit

Identity and Passport Service

Housing Benefit Office

Council tax Benefit Office

Tell Us Once can also contact the following services and organisations if requested:

Council Housing

Council Tax

Libraries

Blue Badge parking permit

Adult Services

Children's Services

Collection of payment for council services

Electoral Registration

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Tell Us Once needs the following information about the deceased:

National Insurance number

Date of birth

Details of any benefits they were receiving

Driving license or driving license number

Passport or passport number.

## **Managing the digital legacy**

Times have changed with many of us having most of our information digitally. Our digital legacy is all our information that we have left online. This may include photos, blogs and listings about the person, their social media profiles, gaming profiles and bank accounts.

It's important to think about what you would like to happen to yours. You will need to make sure you have left information as to your passwords and would you like to keep your social media accounts active.

There is lots of useful information to help you think about what is right for you. You will find more information on [Dying Matters Digital legacy](#) and through the [Digital Legacy Association](#)

## **Useful Contacts**

### **Leicestershire North and Rutland Coroner's office**

<https://www.loughborough.co.uk/info/750/>

34 Woodgate, Loughborough LE11 2TY

Telephone: 01509 268 768

### **Leicester City and South Coroner's office**

<https://coroners.leicester.gov.uk/>

### **Cambridgeshire Coroner's Office (including Peterborough)**

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths/coroner-and-inquests>

### **Lincolnshire Coroner's Office**

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/deaths/report-death-coroner/1>

01522 552500

### **Northamptonshire Coroner's Office**

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/births-deaths-ceremonies/deaths/Pages/deaths-reported-to-coroner.aspx>

### **Leicester Registry office**

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/registrars/death-registration>

0116 305 6509

**Corby Registry office**

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/births-deaths-ceremonies/Pages/registration-service-updates-coronavirus.aspx>

0300126 1000

**Melton Mowbray registry office**

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/registrars/death-registration>

0116 305 6509

**Oakham Registry office**

<https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/births-deaths-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/rutland-register-office-opening-hours/>

01572 758380

[registrars@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:registrars@rutland.gov.uk)

**Stamford Registry office**

<https://www.registryofficesnearme.com/item/stamford-registration-office/>

01522 782244

[regiar@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:regiar@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

