



**Vauxhall Community
Law & Information
Centre**

WHAT TO DO AFTER SOMEONE DIES

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Who are we?

Vauxhall Law Centre has been in existence for over 45 years and is based in an area suffering from exceptionally high levels of disadvantage and poverty. The Centre was originally set up as a result of collaboration between local Community Activists, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Law Society and the John Moores Foundation all of whom remain broadly supportive of the work undertaken at the Centre. The Centre has had many different funders over the years including Liverpool City Council, the Tudor Trust, John Moores Foundation, LCVS, Steve Morgan Foundation, GMB and many others.

The Centre has an excellent reputation for delivering a high quality free legal advice service combatting poverty. We are members of the National Law Centre's Network and provide services accredited to the Advice Quality Service Standard, who independently audit the standards and quality of the work we undertake. We provide advice and support in the Law Centre and by telephone. We advise over 1,500 people per year and also provide representation in over 100 cases at Social Security appeal tribunals.

Our Service Aims

1. Combat social exclusion by raising income levels and helping to control debt levels through legal advice work.
2. Make available to people legal advice and representation to which they would not otherwise have access so that they can better assert their rights.
3. Provide a high quality, independent advice service which is free to users.
4. Reduce poverty and improve people's sense of health and well-being and promote independence for disabled people and their carers through the provision of welfare law advice.
5. Promote equality and the active challenging of discrimination through legal advice and representation.

We have produced this guide as a result of an increased demand in people seeking advice after experiencing a bereavement. It is intended as a guide only. Please feel free to contact us on 0151 482 2540 or advice@vauxhalllawcentre.org.uk. Alternatively complete the enquiry form and a member of our team will get in touch with you.

What to do in the event of a death

Deaths in hospital

Many deaths now happen in a hospital or nursing home. If your relative dies in hospital, the hospital staff will contact you, lay out the body and arrange for it to be taken to the hospital mortuary.

You will then be asked to arrange for the body to be collected by funeral directors, who will normally take it to their chapel of rest. At the same time, you will be asked to collect the person's possessions.



Before a death can be formally registered, a doctor will need to issue a medical certificate giving the cause of death. In hospital, this is usually done by a hospital doctor, who will hand the certificate to you in a sealed envelope addressed to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. You will also be given a notice, explaining how to register the death. There is no charge for either of these. If the person has not been seen by a hospital doctor, their GP may be able to issue a certificate instead.

A hospital may ask you for permission to carry out a post-mortem examination to learn more about the cause of death. You do not have to agree to this.

In some cases, a doctor may not be able to issue a medical certificate of the cause of death. There may be a number of reasons for this. If the doctor isn't able to issue a medical certificate, they will refer the death to the coroner. The coroner may order a post mortem examination. You do not have the right to object to a post-mortem ordered by the coroner, but you should tell the coroner if you have religious or other strong objections.

You can find out more information about when a death is reported to a coroner at: www.gov.uk/after-a-death/when-a-death-is-reported-to-a-coroner.

Where cremation is to take place, a second doctor will be needed to sign a certificate that the body has been examined. There will be a charge for this.

Deaths at home

When someone dies at home, their GP should be called as soon as possible. The GP will normally visit the house and, if the death was expected, should be able to issue a certificate giving the cause of death.

If you do not know the name of the GP, the person didn't have a GP, or if the death happens outside normal GP practice opening hours, call 111 (the NHS non-emergency number) instead.

A doctor is not allowed to issue a certificate if they are unsure about the cause of death. When this happens the death must be reported to a coroner and the body will be taken to a hospital mortuary, where a post-mortem may need to take place.

Registering the death



When someone dies at home, the death should be registered at the register office for the area where they lived. If the death took place in hospital or in a nursing home it must be registered at the register office for the area in which the hospital or home is situated.

A death should be registered within five days but registration can be delayed for another nine days if the registrar is told that a medical certificate has been issued. If the death has been reported to the coroner you cannot register it until the coroner's investigations are finished.

It is a criminal offence not to register a death.

The death should be registered by one of the following (in order of priority):

- a relative who was present at the death
- a relative present during the person's last illness
- a relative living in the area where the death took place

- anyone else present at the death

You cannot delegate responsibility for registering the death to anyone else.

You must take with you the medical certificate of death, since the death cannot be registered until the registrar has seen this. The registrar will want from you the following information: -

- date and place of death
- the full name of the person (including maiden name) and their last address
- the person's date and place of birth
- the person's job
- the full name, date of birth and job of a living or dead spouse or civil partner
- if the person was still married, the date of birth of their husband or wife
- whether the person was receiving a pension or other social security benefits.

Forms you'll be given

After you've registered the death, the registrar will give you a green certificate which allows a burial or cremation to go ahead. There's no charge for the certificate. You should give this to the funeral director. If you're not using a funeral director keep the certificate safe, you'll need it to arrange the burial or cremation.

The registrar will also give you a form to send to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (In Northern Ireland the Social Security Agency). This allows them to deal with the person's pension and other benefits.

Death certificate

The death certificate is a copy of the entry made by the registrar in the death register. This certificate is needed to deal with money or property left by the person who has died, including dealing with the will. You may need several copies of the certificate, for which there will be a charge.

You can get copies of a death certificate from the General Register Office. Its contact details can be found at www.gov.uk/general-register-office.