

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 section aims to provide an explanation of what may happen and who you can 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 via www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies

We offer a [PDF version](#) of this page, so that you can print a copy. There is also a very helpful booklet provided by the University Hospital Leicester NHS Trust. You can print a PDF version of the booklet: https://abb831a8-c437-404c-9a29-1731c3f9d8fb.filesusr.com/ugd/508c0b_1cbc3002674a4292bf802dabc7e71abf.pdf

Confirming death

Confirming that death has 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.

The role of a Medical Examiner

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. The medical examiner must be independent, so must not have been involved in providing care during life. They help other doctors with the certification of a death. 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. 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. The involvement of a Medical Examiner is a new service, which is being implemented throughout Leicestershire and Rutland, to ensure that deaths can be certified more accurately and more quickly and that any deaths that need further investigation can be picked up without delay.

Following a death, the deceased person's GP will usually speak to a Medical Examiner to discuss whether the Coroner needs to be informed about the death, and if not, what should be put on the death certificate as the cause of death. The medical examiner will also look at the electronic medical record to check that this is all correct. Where a death has not been referred to the Coroner, the Medical Examiner will aim to speak with the next of kin (or their chosen person) by telephone, to explain the cause of death and answer any questions they may have.

In order to make sure that the NHS learns from patients and families' experiences of care, a Medical Examiner will also ask about the care your loved one received, good or bad. Your opinions will be passed back to the doctors concerned so that lessons can be learned. The law does not give you the right to reject the doctor's opinion on the cause of death, but the views of the bereaved are an important part of this process and the outcomes from any subsequent review by the practice can be shared with the next of kin.

Not all families will be contacted by a Medical Examiner but if you feel this is important to you, or if you have questions or concerns related to your loved one's End of Life Care, please contact the practice. Your name and telephone number(s) will be passed on to a medical examiner, who will then call you.

When 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 (for example following a recent surgery). 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. Doctors are sometimes requested by family of a deceased person not to inform the coroner, but it is important to remember that this is not a matter of choice. It is a legal duty of a doctor to inform the coroner in certain circumstances.

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. 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 - www.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.

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.

Who will issue the death certificate?

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 work with the Medical Examiner to generate and issue a certificate of the cause of death. If death occurs at home, this will usually be the GP. 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.

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 via <https://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk>.

If you wish to donate your whole body to train medical professionals you need to contact your medical school of choice. You can find details on the Human Tissue Authority via www.hta.gov.uk.

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. It 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, organisations which 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.

Visit www.gov.uk/tell-us-once for more information, or see the [Tell Us Once Information Video](#) or the [TUO brochure](#) or

Managing the digital legacy

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 is 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 whether you would like to keep your social media accounts active. There is lots of useful information to help you think about what is right for you including:

- **Dying Matters**
- [www.dyingmatters.org/sites/default/files/files/Digital%20Legacy%20Fact%20sheet%20for%20Dying%20Matters%20\(Autosaved\).pdf](http://www.dyingmatters.org/sites/default/files/files/Digital%20Legacy%20Fact%20sheet%20for%20Dying%20Matters%20(Autosaved).pdf)
- **Digital Legacy Association** - www.digitallegacyassociation.org/resources-2/

Useful Contacts for Coroners' and Registry offices

Leicestershire North and Rutland Coroner's Office

34 Woodgate, Loughborough LE11 2TY

01509 268 768

www.loughborough.co.uk/info/750/

Leicester City and South Coroner's Office

www.coroners.leicester.gov.uk/

Cambridgeshire Coroner's Office (including Peterborough)

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/births-deaths-and-marriages/deaths/coroner-and-inquests

Lincolnshire Coroner's Office

01522 552500

www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/deaths/report-death-coroner/1

Northamptonshire Coroner's Office

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

Leicester Registry office

0116 305 6509

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/registrars/death-registration

Corby Registry Office

0300 126 1000

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

Melton Mowbray Registry Office

0116 305 6509

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/registrars/death-registration

Oakham Registry office

01572 758380 or email registrars@rutland.gov.uk

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

Stamford Registry office

01522 782244 or email regiar@lincolnshire.gov.uk

www.registryofficesnearme.com/item/stamford-registration-office/