
Registering a death

The first steps

When someone dies, by law their death has to be certified by a doctor or Coroner, be registered by a registrar, and their body needs to be properly taken care of by either burial or cremation.

Usually a doctor will issue a “Medical Certificate of Cause of Death” (MCCD). This certificate will state the name of the deceased; the date and place of death; their age; the medical cause of death; and the signature and qualifications of the certifying doctor.

This certificate will need to be collected from the doctor’s surgery or hospital. If the Coroner has been notified about the death, it is possible that a Coroner’s certificate will be issued and sent directly to the registrar.

Once you have the MCCD from the doctor you will need to register the death. Registering a death should normally take place within five days of the death occurring. If the death has been referred to the Coroner, you should check with the registration office before your appointment to make sure that they have received the paperwork.

Who Can register the death?

There are certain people who are permitted by law to register a death. They are known as “qualified informants”. These include:

- A relative by blood, marriage, adoption or civil partnership; or
- A person present at the death; or
- The person responsible for instructing and signing the papers for the funeral directors; or
- A legally recognised responsible person from the hospital or home where the person has died.

The only necessary document that is needed to be taken to the registrars is the MCCD, but if available the birth marriage or civil partnership certificates would be useful to help provide full details for the registration. The NHS/Medical card should also be taken to the registration office where possible.

After registration

Once the registration has been completed, the registrar will ask for the entry to be signed by the informant, they will then issue:

- a green certificate to give to the funeral director to enable the burial or cremation to take place; and
- a white certificate (called a BD8) that can be sent to the Department for Work and Pensions with any details of pensions or benefits.

Certified copies of the death certificate may be purchased at an additional cost, these may be needed to help sort out the estate and finances of the person who has died.

What the registrar will ask

You will also be asked for the following information about them:

- First name(s), family name and any maiden name.
- Date and place of death.
- Last permanent address.
- Date and place of birth (a copy of their birth certificate is helpful, but not essential).
- Occupation and name/occupation of any surviving husband or wife.
- Details of benefits being received, including state and private pension income.

The registrar will also ask for some information which is used for government statistics, these may include:

- was the person who died under 75 years old?
- how long did they stay in hospital or other establishment?
- what industry did they work in and what position did they hold?
- The person’s national health number (the registrar will take in the medical card at this time, if it is available)