

What To Do When Someone Dies - Five Keys Steps

When someone dies there are many decisions and arrangements to be made. Some of these things can be done by a close relative or friend; others need to be done by the executor or administrator of the estate.

‘Losing a loved one is so very difficult to cope with and when faced all the other changes and practicalities that have to be dealt with after the death the experience can be overwhelming’ states Teresa Payne, solicitor. It’s only natural at such a sad time and many simply don’t know where to start.’

There are 5 key steps that should be taken.

1. Notify the family doctor: if someone dies at home, the family doctor should be contacted immediately. If the death was expected the doctor will give you a medical certificate showing the cause of death.

2. Register the death at your local register office: the Registrar will need the following information:

- a) the medical certificate showing the cause of death
- b) the full names of the deceased person (including names they once had)
- c) the date and place of death
- d) the usual address of the deceased
- e) their date and place of birth
- f) their most recent occupation
- g) the name, occupation and date of birth of their spouse or civil partner
- h) their NHS number, and birth and marriage/civil partnership certificates if possible.

The registrar will provide the forms which enable burial or cremation.

3. Find the will - the deceased person’s solicitor may have a copy if you can’t find one. If there is a will, contact the executor if this isn’t you, to enable them to start the process of obtaining probate. If there is no will, then family members need to decide who will apply to sort out the deceased’s affairs and apply to the court for ‘letters of administration’.

4. Begin funeral arrangements - you will need to check the will for any special provisions, and comply with any organ donor card requests. Check whether the deceased had paid into a funeral plan; if not, consider how the funeral will be paid for.

5. Dealing with the property of the deceased - Probate is the legal process of settling the estate of a deceased person. If there is a will it says what will happen to the estate, and will appoint people responsible for doing this (“the executors”). If there is no will, the person is said to have died “intestate” and the estate will pass in accordance with legal rules, and will be administered by someone appointed by the court to act under letters of administration (“an administrator”).

Teresa Payne is a solicitor and Managing Partner at leading Private Client law firm Parfitt Cresswell and is based at their Head Office in Fulham Broadway SW6 London. Teresa and her team of experienced lawyers have helped thousands of people who are bereaved by assisting them with the practicalities immediately after the death and also with probate dealing with the deceased finances and property. For more information or to download Teresa's Free Fact Sheet 'What to Do When Someone Dies' call +44 (0)207 381 8311 or visit www.parfittcresswell.com/ard/documents.asp?AID=1655&SID=34&FID=30447.