

What to do when someone dies: a checklist

Every step in order. Tick each one off as you go. Nothing on the first day is urgent except verifying the death, securing the property and caring for any pets. Some steps only apply in some situations.

Phase 1 · First 48 hours

- ☐ **Get the death formally verified**
Call the right person so the death can be verified.
- ☐ **Understand the Police and coroner role**
Find out whether the coroner is involved, and get the case number.
- ☐ **Get the medical certificate of cause of death**
Ask the hospital or GP when the certificate will be ready.
- ☐ **Secure the property**
Make sure the home is locked, and note who holds keys.
- ☐ **If the death happened at home and was not found straight away (if it applies)**
Close the room off, stay out of it, and let professionals assess it.
- ☐ **Pets, food and heating**
Arrange care for any pets and empty the fridge.
- ☐ **Tell the people who need to hear it from you**
Make a short list of people to tell, and share it out.

Phase 2 · First week

- ☐ **Register the death**
Book an appointment with the register office.
- ☐ **Order enough death certificates**
Buy several certified copies while you are at the register office.
- ☐ **Use Tell Us Once**
Use the Tell Us Once reference the registrar gives you.
- ☐ **Choose a funeral director**
Get two written quotes before you commit.
- ☐ **Check who pays for the funeral**
Find out whether the estate, a plan, or a benefit covers the cost.

Phase 3 · First month

- ☐ **Find the will** (if it applies)
Look for the original will and confirm who the executor is.
- ☐ **Where there is no will** (if it applies)
Work out who has the right to administer the estate.
- ☐ **Value the estate**
List everything owned and everything owed.
- ☐ **Work out whether you need probate** (if it applies)
Ask each bank what their threshold is.
- ☐ **Apply for probate** (if it applies)
Submit the probate application and the inheritance tax forms.
- ☐ **Notify banks, utilities and insurers**
Work down the list, one organisation at a time.

Phase 4 · Property

- ☐ **Insure the empty property properly**
Convert the policy to unoccupied property cover.
- ☐ **Photograph and list the contents**
Walk each room with your phone before anything moves.
- ☐ **Clear the property**
Book clearance once the contents have been agreed.
- ☐ **Hoarding, pests and infestation**
Get the property assessed for flies, wasps, rodents and hoarded waste before anyone clears it.
- ☐ **Specialist cleaning, if it is needed**
Arrange specialist cleaning where the death was unattended.
- ☐ **Gas capping, safety certificates and the deep clean**
Book a Gas Safe engineer and a final clean before handover.
- ☐ **Sell the property or hand it back**
Decide between selling on the open market, at auction, or a cash sale.

Phase 5 · Finishing

- ☐ **Settle debts before distributing anything** (if it applies)
Pay the estate's debts and check nothing is outstanding.
- ☐ **Distribute the estate** (if it applies)
Pay the beneficiaries and get receipts.
- ☐ **Close the estate account and the loose ends**
Close the estate bank account and cancel what is left.

- ☐ What to keep, and for how long
File the final records somewhere safe.

The free guide explains each step, remembers your progress and keeps your reference numbers: <https://aftertheydie.co.uk>. General information for England and Wales, not legal advice. Based on GOV.UK guidance.