

What do I do when someone dies?

This support sheet aims to give you clear direction on what to do in the first instance when someone dies.

What do I do if someone dies at home?

1. If the death is unexpected:

Call 000 - you will need the ambulance and the police. **The funeral director cannot attend until specific processes have been completed.**

- **Firstly**, the ambulance officers will be able to assess the person and confirm 'life extinct'.
- **Secondly**, the police then need to verify that there are no suspicious circumstances and the death appears to be due to natural causes.
- **Thirdly**, the police will then make contact with the person's general practitioner to ascertain that they are confident about a cause of death and will be able to provide the 'medical cause of death certificates' to the funeral director.

Once these three steps are completed, the police will give you permission to call a funeral director to arrange a transfer into their care. This can happen at any time of the day or night. We are here when you need us. If the police are not able to reach the general practitioner, or the general practitioner is not certain about a cause of death, the police will arrange a transfer into their care (forensic science) for safe -keeping until further information is available. Please know that you will be kept informed and supported through this process. Often, the additional information obtained over the coming hours/days is sufficient to enable permission to proceed with funeral arrangements.

2. Under the Care of a Palliative Team:

If the person is under the care of a palliative team, they should develop a plan with you before the need arises. Follow their lead. They will let you

know who to call, and in what order. The funeral director will generally be last on the list.

Once again, the funeral director can not attend until a treating clinician certifies 'life extinct' and verifies that the treating doctor will provide cause of death certificate

What do I do if someone dies in a nursing home or hospital?

If the person dies in nursing home, the nursing staff will call and ask the general practitioner or locum to attend so that they can assess the person and confirm 'life extinct'. They will also call family so that they may attend if they wish. Due to the busy nature of doctors, this step can sometimes take a few hours.

Once confirmation is obtained, and the family are ready, you can call a funeral director to effect a transfer into their care. Once again, this can happen at any time of the day or night. We are here when you need us.

If the person dies in a public or private hospital, the hospital will attend to the process of confirming 'life extinct' and organising the 'medical cause of death certificates'. Each hospital has a different release process. You can ask the nursing staff, or your funeral director, about the process in their particular hospital. Most of the time, once the family is ready, the person is moved to the hospital's mortuary while the internal processes are completed.

Generally, public hospitals will only release people into the care of a funeral director during set operating hours on weekdays.