

What happens now?

This information sheet explains people you and your family may be involved within the coming days.

Police

By the time you read this list, the Police will have assessed the situation, collected items they wish to use as evidence and linked with Doctors, the Coroner and other people who can help them determine if the death was by suicide. They can answer questions you may have.

The Government Undertaker

When a death is sudden and unexpected, a specific funeral service is used by the police to transport the body to the government mortuary. In most cases this is at the local hospital. Usually when a sudden death occurs an autopsy will be done by the Coroner. This can take some time, so you may not be able to hold the funeral quickly. After the autopsy, you are not under any obligation to continue to use that funeral service.

The Coroner

The Coroner's essential task is to find out the cause of death. Sometimes it may seem obvious, but they need to find out if there are other circumstances surrounding the death, such as the presence of substances in the bloodstream, or other events that may have led up to the death. Autopsy is a procedure which examines the body. While the thought of this procedure can be quite distressing, it is a legal requirement, and may provide information for you to understand what caused them to die.

Information the Police provide assists the Coroner to decide what the cause of death was. Your Funeral Director will contact the Police and the Coroner to arrange the paperwork to release the body for the funeral.

The Funeral Service

The Funeral Director can provide a lot of information that helps you plan the funeral. Such as helping arrange the time and place for the service, provide a list of Celebrants or Clergy, tell you about cemeteries, crematoriums, florists and anything else involving the funeral. When to call the funeral service is up to the family. It is possible to just get information over the telephone to compare services and costs. If you are comparing costs, make sure they are very clear about the service and facilities they provide, and if there are any hidden costs. In some situations, financial support is available from the government.

Essentially the funeral service allows us to pay tribute to, and reflect on, the life of the person who died. Firstly, it meets the legal and dignified removal of the body. Secondly, it helps us accept the reality of the death, and take the first step towards working through our grief and renewing our lives.

It is also important to consider how you wish to say goodbye, and whether you wish to see your loved one before the service. Viewing or saying goodbye is not morbid, it is quite normal. In either situation your Funeral Director will encourage you to provide clothing.

Words of advice

- Do not be in a hurry to do anything. Some people think a funeral service must be held quickly. That is not so.
- Allow yourself time to make decisions about the funeral and give your relatives and friends time to be there to provide comfort and support.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help. In times of tragedy and sadness your friends and family will be only too happy to help.