

Registering a Death in Northern Ireland



A death occurring in Northern Ireland must be registered within five days with the exception of deaths referred to the Coroner and can be registered in any District office in Northern Ireland.

The death was at home or in a hospital, care or nursing home or a hospice and the death was expected.

Following a death the doctor or hospital will forward a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death electronically to the General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRONI). GRONI will forward it to the registration office which covers the deceased's home address.

Most deaths are registered by a relative of the deceased. If the deceased has no relatives or none are available then any of the following can register the death:

- any relative of the deceased – including a relative by marriage
- a person present at the death
- a person taking care of the funeral arrangements
- the executor or administrator of the deceased's estate
- the governor, matron or chief officer of a public building where the death occurred
- a person living in and responsible for a house, lodgings or apartments where the death occurred
- a person finding, or a person taking charge, of the body

To complete the registration you will need to know:

- full name and surname of the deceased
- deceased's usual address
- date and place of death
- marital status (single, married/civil partner, widowed/surviving civil partner or divorced/civil partnership dissolved)
- date and place of birth
- occupation of the deceased
- if the deceased was married/civil partner, full name and occupation of husband/wife/civil partner

- if the deceased was a child under the age of 16, the full names and occupations of the parents
- maiden surname (if the deceased was a woman who had married)
- name and address of the deceased's GP
- details of any NI Civil Service or Teacher's pension that the deceased may have held

The doctor who signed the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death may have passed your details to the registrar so that the registrar can contact you to organise the registration of the death.

The registrar will contact you by telephone to arrange the completion of the registration of the death. This can be over the telephone or if you wish, by attending at the registration office.

The registrar may require you to fill in a death registration form which you will send to the registration office by email or they may get the details from you over the telephone.

Or, the doctor or hospital who completed the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death may give the form to you. In this case you should contact the registration office which covers the area where you live. The death should be registered within 5 days.

Once the death has been registered, the registrar will issue a Certificate for Burial or Cremation to the funeral director so they can go ahead with the funeral or cremation.

If the body is to be cremated, the GP or hospital will arrange for a second doctor to sign the cremation certificate.

You'll be able to buy one or more death certificates at the time of registration. These will be needed by the executor or administrator when sorting out the deceased person's affairs.

For deaths registered after 17 December 2012, a short form of death certificate is available. The short death certificate will not show the cause of death.

Death certificates, either short or full, may be purchased from the Registrar at the time of registration.

After the registration, copies of death certificates can be purchased from the General Register Office however your first copy will cost more than getting it at the time of registration

The death was unexpected or the result of an accident or unnatural circumstances or if the cause of death is unknown.

The death will normally be reported to the Coroner for the Area the death took place. If a death is referred to the coroner, funeral arrangements should not be made before the

consent of the coroner has been obtained. The coroner can give consent for burial or cremation to take place before the death is registered.

The death can only be registered and a death certificate obtained after the registrar has received the necessary certificate from the coroner. When the registrar receives the certificate they will contact a relative of the deceased and ask them to call in at the office to register the death.

The Coroner will first gather information to investigate whether a death was due to natural causes and if a doctor can certify the medical cause of death.

The Coroner will ask the police to gather the information about the death. This will usually include speaking to the family of the deceased, anyone who was caring for the deceased and anyone who was there when the death happened.

If the reason why a doctor cannot certify the death is simply because they have not treated the patient in the last 28 days, then the Coroner will discuss the cause of death with the doctor. If a Coroner is satisfied that death was from natural causes and no further investigation is necessary, then they may accept the medical cause of death that a doctor gives and issue a Coroner's notification to allow the death to be registered.

If a doctor cannot certify the medical cause of death then a Coroner will investigate the death and may order a post-mortem examination to be carried out.

However, if a post-mortem examination is ordered, or, if an inquest is to be held, then the death cannot be registered until the Coroner's investigation has been completed. In these circumstances funeral arrangements should not be finalised until the Coroner has authorised the release of the body for burial or cremation.

When registration of the death is delayed, the Coroner can issue an interim certificate called a 'Coroner's Certificate of Evidence of Death' to assist in the administration of the estate. However, not all financial organisations will accept this and you may need to wait for the final registration of the death before the administration of the deceased's estate can be completed.

A funeral may take place once the Coroner is satisfied that the body is no longer required for the investigation. The Coroner will release the body to a funeral director of the family's choice and issue a burial or cremation order. Even if the Coroner is going to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death, the funeral can still take place as soon as the Coroner has released the body.

The Coroner's Liaison Officer will be able to confirm to you when the Coroner has released the body.

The death has occurred outside of Northern Ireland

In these circumstances the death will have been registered in the Country where the death took place according to their laws and regulations.