



LIFE IS TEMPORARY · WHEN A MUSLIM DIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn. Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. Qur'ān, al-Baqarah 2:156

We are sorry. Here is what happens next.



As soon as you can, call your masjid's funeral committee.

They will arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and tell you which funeral director to use.

You do not have to do this alone, or all at once. Your masjid has done this many times. Follow the steps in order, and open each one when you reach it.

New

This guide is new and is being reviewed by people in the UK. If something here is wrong or out of date where you live, please tell us at hello@lifeistemporary.com.

WHERE YOU ARE

This guide follows the law in England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland register deaths, investigate sudden deaths and settle estates differently; choose your nation to see what changes.

England • Wales • Scotland • Northern Ireland

1

Have the death confirmed

In the first hour

A doctor or paramedic has to confirm the death before anything else can happen.

- ☐ In a hospital or hospice, ask the staff to confirm the death
- ☐ At home and expected, call the GP, or NHS 111 if you cannot reach them
- ☐ At home and unexpected, call 999
- ☐ Tell the staff early that the family needs a quick burial for religious reasons

AT HOME

Call the GP as soon as possible. If you do not know the GP or cannot contact them, call the NHS on 111. Citizens Advice, What to do after a death

and

Close the eyes, cover the body, make duʿā

In the first hour • at the same time as the step above

Gently and without hurry. Those present can do this while the calls are made.

- ☐ Close the eyes and the mouth
- ☐ Straighten the arms and legs
- ☐ Cover the body with a clean sheet

EVIDENCE

The Prophet ﷺ closed the eyes of Abū Salamah and prayed for him. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

☐ Pray for them, and say only good

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Call the mosque's funeral service

In the first few hours

Many mosques and Muslim burial councils run a funeral service. They arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and help with the paperwork.

☐ Call the mosque's funeral service or the imam

☐ Tell them where the body is and who the next of kin is

☐ Agree a time for the ghusl and the janazah prayer

[Find a Muslim funeral service >](#)

NO NUMBER?

Use the UK directory, or call the nearest large mosque. They will know who to call.

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The medical examiner checks the cause of death PAPERWORK

In the first days

In England and Wales a medical examiner, a senior doctor who was not involved in the care, checks every cause of death before it can be registered. Their office will call the family.

- ☐ Tell the doctor and the medical examiner's office that the family needs a quick burial for religious reasons
- ☐ Give them a phone number that will be answered
- ☐ Ask any questions you have about the cause of death
- ☐ Wait for their confirmation before you register

THE LAW

The medical examiner system became statutory in England and Wales on 9 September 2024. GOV.UK (DHSC), Death certification reform and the introduction of medical examiners

SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Neither has medical examiners. In Scotland some death certificates are picked at random for review. See the notes for England and Wales below. National Records of Scotland, Registering a death

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Ask whether the coroner is involved PAPERWORK

If the death was sudden

If the cause of death is unknown, or the death was sudden, violent or unnatural, the doctor reports it to the coroner. The coroner decides when to release the body, and may order a post-mortem, which can delay the burial.

- ☐ Ask the hospital or police whether the death has gone to the coroner
- ☐ Ask the coroner's office, in writing and early, to treat the death as urgent for religious reasons
- ☐ Ask whether a scan (CT) can be used instead of an invasive post-mortem

WHEN IT GOES TO THE CORONER

Among other cases: an unknown cause, violence or injury, poisoning or drugs, self-harm, neglect, a medical procedure, or a death in custody. The Notification of Deaths Regulations 2019, reg. 3

☐ Ask to be told when and where any post-mortem will take place

FAITH REQUESTS

A coroner may prioritise a death on religious grounds and cannot have a policy against it, but no community gets automatic priority, and many areas have no out-of-hours service. Chief Coroner's Guidance No. 28, Report of Death to the Coroner: Decision Making and Expedited Decisions (May 2018)

A SCAN

Some coroners in England and Wales use CT scanning, on a limited basis. You cannot refuse a coroner's post-mortem. Chief Coroner's Guidance No. 1, The use of Post-Mortem Imaging (Adults) ; GOV.UK, What to do after someone dies: When a death is reported to a coroner

HELP

The Coroners' Courts Support Service gives free help on 0300 111 2141. GOV.UK, What to do after someone dies: When a death is reported to a coroner

SCOTLAND

The procurator fiscal investigates sudden or unexplained deaths. Tell them at once of any religious objection to a post-mortem. Scottish Government, What to do after a death in Scotland (11th edition, 2016), 4. The Procurator Fiscal

Register the death within 5 days PAPERWORK

Once the medical examiner confirms

The 5 days start when the medical examiner (or the coroner) confirms the cause of death, and include weekends and bank holidays. A relative or another qualified person registers it at a register office.

- ☐ Book with the register office for the area where the death happened
- ☐ A relative, someone present at the death, the executor, or the person arranging the funeral can register
- ☐ Ask whether the council offers weekend or out-of-hours registration for urgent burials
- ☐ Take the certificate for burial (the “green form”) to the funeral service
- ☐ If you need more than 5 days, tell the register office at once

WHO CAN REGISTER

A relative or partner, someone present at the death, the executor, or the person arranging the funeral. The 5 days run from the medical examiner’s or coroner’s notice to the registrar. Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953, s. 16 (death in a house) ; GOV.UK (DHSC), An overview of the death certification reforms

THE GREEN FORM

After registration you get a certificate for burial or cremation. The burial cannot happen until the funeral director or burial authority has it. GOV.UK, What to do after someone dies: Register the death

OUT OF HOURS

This depends on the council. Thurrock, for example, takes calls at weekends. Ask your council. Thurrock Council, Procedure and practical guide for Muslim burials

SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Scotland: within 8 days, and you can ask for an advance registration if the funeral is urgent. Northern Ireland: within 5 days. National Records of Scotland, Registering a death ; nidirect, Registering a death with the district registrar

Arrange the funeral service and the grave PAPERWORK

Within the first day

The mosque's service or a Muslim funeral director usually collects the body and arranges the grave with the council or a Muslim cemetery.

- ☐ Confirm the body can be washed by Muslims at their premises
- ☐ Ask for no embalming and no viewing
- ☐ Ask the council cemetery about its Muslim section
- ☐ Ask whether the council allows burial in the shroud without a coffin

WITHOUT A COFFIN

Councils set their own rules. Some allow burial in the shroud alone, carried to the grave in a temporary coffin. Ask the cemetery office. Thurrock Council, Procedure and practical guide for Muslim burials ; Chorley Council, Cemeteries policy: Muslim burial procedure

and

Wash and shroud the body

Within the first day • at the same time as the step above

Done by trained Muslims of the same sex, or by the spouse. The funeral service usually provides the cloth.

- ☐ Confirm who will wash
- ☐ Confirm the kafan is ready

How the washing and shroud are done >

A SPOUSE MAY WASH

The Prophet ﷺ told 'Ā'ishah that if she died before him he would wash and shroud her himself. Sunan Ibn Mājah 1465 (ḥasan)

The janazah prayer and the burial

As soon as possible

The prayer is often held after one of the daily prayers, and the burial follows straight after.

- ☐ Tell family and community the time of the prayer

HASTE

The Prophet ﷺ told us to hurry with the funeral. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1315

- ☐ Confirm the grave in a Muslim cemetery or Muslim section
- ☐ Ask the price of the exclusive right of burial and the burial fee

How to pray the janazah prayer >

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Get copies of the death certificate PAPERWORK

In the first week

Banks, insurers and pension providers will each want a certified copy.

- ☐ Order several copies from the register office where you registered
- ☐ Or order them later from the General Register Office

COST

Copies from the General Register Office cost £12.50 each. GOV.UK, Order a birth, death, marriage or civil partnership certificate

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Pay the funeral costs and list every debt

In the first weeks

The funeral is paid from the estate first, then the debts. Nothing is inherited until both are settled.

- ☐ Pay the funeral costs from the estate
- ☐ List loans, bills and money owed to family
- ☐ Ask a scholar about any unpaid zakat

THE ORDER

Funeral, then debts, then bequests from a third, then the heirs. al-Sirājiyyah (al-Sajāwandī), opening chapter

HELP WITH COSTS

If you get certain benefits, a Funeral Expenses Payment may help. It is taken back from the estate. GOV.UK, Get help with funeral costs (Funeral Expenses Payment)

and

Find the will, and use Tell Us Once PAPERWORK

In the first weeks · at the same time as the step above

The executor named in the will leads what follows. Tell Us Once informs most government offices in one go.

- ☐ Check papers at home, email, and with any solicitor
- ☐ Use the Tell Us Once number from the registrar within 28 days
- ☐ A widow or widower under State Pension age: claim Bereavement Support Payment within 3 months
- ☐ Secure the house and car, and keep the phone line active for sign-in codes

TELL US ONCE

It tells HMRC, DWP, the Passport Office, DVLA and the council. It is not available in Northern Ireland. GOV.UK, What to do after someone dies: Tell Us Once

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT PAYMENT

Not means-tested. Claim within 3 months to get the full amount. A partner who was not legally married may qualify only in some cases. GOV.UK, Bereavement Support Payment

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Settle and divide the estate PAPERWORK

In the months after

Ask each bank whether it needs probate. Small sums and jointly owned property can often be released without it, but every bank has its own rules.

- ☐ Apply for probate if the estate needs it
- ☐ Close accounts and cancel subscriptions
- ☐ Pay any bequest, up to one third, to people who are not heirs
- ☐ Divide the rest by the fixed shares

See how the estate divides >

ONE THIRD

A bequest is limited to a third, and an heir cannot receive one. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 2742 ; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 2870 (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*)

PROBATE

With a will, the executors apply. Without one, the closest relative applies, normally the husband or wife, then children over 18. GOV.UK, Applying for probate

Look after the family

Four months and ten days

Mourning is kept to three days, except by a widow, who mourns four months and ten days, the length of her ʿiddah, or until she gives birth if she is pregnant.

- ☐ Bring food and help with the household
- ☐ Help the widow with errands and appointments
- ☐ Make duʿā for the one who has died

What to say and do when you visit >

A NIKAH ALONE

A nikah with no civil marriage may not be a marriage in English law, so a widow by nikah alone may not inherit or apply as a wife. Speak to a solicitor. Court of Appeal, Attorney General v Akhter and Khan [2020] EWCA Civ 122, media summary ; GOV.UK, Applying for probate

SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Scotland uses confirmation, not probate, and the sheriff clerk helps with estates up to £36,000. Northern Ireland has its own probate office. Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, Small estates ; nidirect, Probate

EVIDENCE

No mourning beyond three days except for a husband: four months and ten days. A pregnant widow's term ends with the birth. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 ; Qurʾān, al-Ṭalāq 65:4

FOOD

Prepare food for the family, for what has happened has occupied them. Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan)

ʿIDDAH DATES

Work out when four months and ten days have passed, by the Hijri and the Western calendar. Open ↗

Write your own Islamic will

For those left behind

Without a valid will, the law of England and Wales decides who inherits, not the fixed shares. An Islamic will is an ordinary will that directs the estate by the shares.

- ☐ Sign it in front of 2 adult witnesses, who also sign
- ☐ Do not leave anything to a witness or their husband or wife
- ☐ Make a new will after marrying: marriage cancels an earlier one
- ☐ Ask a solicitor who writes Islamic wills

[Draft a will that follows the shares >](#)

VALID WILL

You must be 18 or over, and sign in front of 2 witnesses over 18. [GOV.UK, Making a will](#)

FAMILY CLAIMS

A spouse, child, cohabitant of two years or dependant can ask the court for more than the will gives them, usually within six months of probate. A will that follows the shares can still be challenged. Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975, s. 1 ; Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975, s. 4

General guidance, not a fatwa or legal advice. Rules on registering a death, burial and estates differ between England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; your funeral director and a solicitor can confirm them.

Last reviewed October 2026. Something wrong? [Tell us](#)