

FREE COMPANION SHEET

The First Week, One Page

The seven things that actually need doing in the first seven days – and the many that don't. Nothing here is legal advice; it's the order of operations.

Do this week

1 Register the death

Within 5 working days in England & Wales (8 days in Scotland). Ask the registrar for several certified copies – most banks, pension providers and insurers each want an original, not a photocopy.

2 Find the will and the executor

Check with any solicitor who may hold it, a bank safe deposit box, or the home itself. The named executor is the only person with legal authority to act until probate is granted.

3 Use Tell Us Once, if it's offered

One appointment that notifies HMRC, DWP, the passport office, DVLA and the local council in a single pass. The registrar tells you if it's available in your area and gives you a reference number.

4 Notify the bank(s)

A phone call is usually enough to freeze the account and stop ongoing payments going out unnoticed. They'll tell you what they need to release funds later.

5 Check for a pension nomination

Workplace and private pensions aren't covered by Tell Us Once – contact each provider directly. A death-in-service benefit can depend on paperwork nobody's looked at in years.

6 Contact the employer, if there was one

Final pay, unused holiday, and any death-in-service payment are usually handled by HR – they'll need the certified death certificate.

7 Redirect the post

Royal Mail's redirection service (or its Deceased Preference Service, to stop marketing mail addressed to the person who died) means nothing important gets missed at an empty house.

This can wait

- Sorting or distributing personal possessions (*there is no deadline; grief doesn't run to one either*)
- Closing every account immediately (*freezing is enough for now – closure often needs the grant of probate anyway*)
- Cancelling every subscription (*a short overlap costs little; a missed one can cost a password*)
- Applying for probate itself (*usually a week 2–4 task, once the estate's shape is clearer*)
- Deciding what happens to the house (*no one needs an answer this week*)
- Finalising the estate accounts (*that comes much later, after debts and tax are settled*)
- Telling every distant contact yourself (*ask one or two close people to help spread the word*)

If it isn't on the list to the left, it can almost always wait until you've had a proper night's sleep.