



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



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Office

Consular Directorate

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
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DEATH OVERSEAS



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INTERNATIONAL

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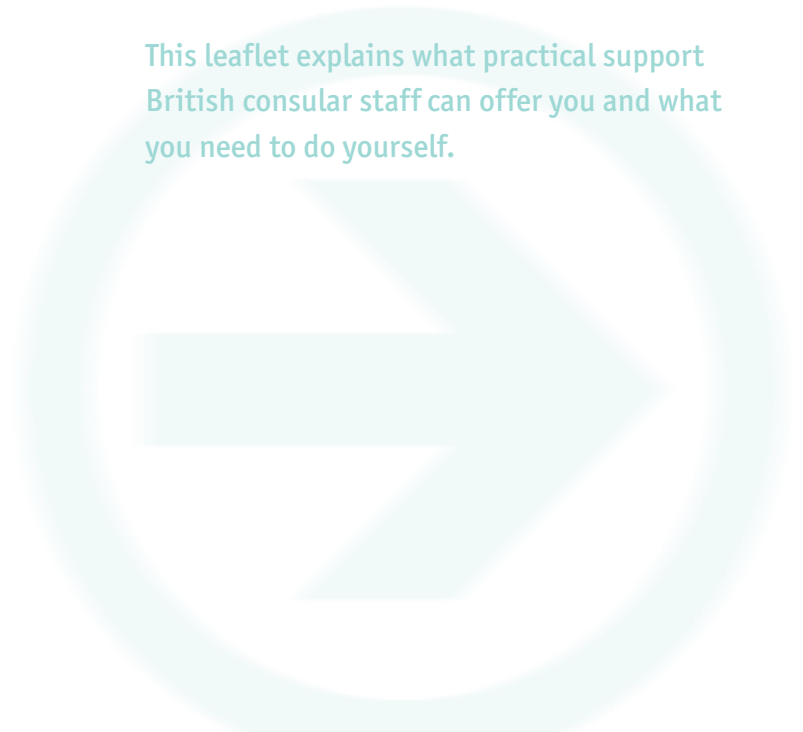
DEATH OVERSEAS

INFORMATION FOR RELATIVES
AND FRIENDS

The death of a relative or friend is always distressing, but if it happens abroad the distress can be made worse by practical problems.

After the death of a relative or friend abroad you are likely to have countless questions. What should I do now? How can I communicate with people in a foreign language? Who can I turn to for help?

This leaflet explains what practical support British consular staff can offer you and what you need to do yourself.



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INFORMATION FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS



IF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND DIES WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD WITH THEM

All deaths must be registered in the country where the death occurs. Your tour guide, the local police or the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate can advise you on how to go about this.

Make sure you have as much documentation as possible about the person who has died and yourself. This should include:

- full name
- date of birth
- passport number
- when and where the passport was issued
- the name of the next of kin of the person who has died

If the person suffered from an infectious condition, for example the Hepatitis or HIV viruses, it is essential that the authorities be told so that they can take precautions against infection. There is no obligation to register a death at the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, but by doing so you can obtain a UK death certificate, and a permanent copy of it will always be available in English in the UK. However, in certain countries we cannot issue death certificates and local ones are suitable for British purposes. These countries are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

IF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND DIES ABROAD WHILE YOU ARE IN THE UK

- If the death has been reported to a British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate overseas we will pass the details to the UK police and ask them to tell the next of kin as soon as possible. If the next of kin are not in the UK, we will ask our consular staff in the country where they are to do this. We do everything we can to make sure that, as next of kin, you do not hear of the death first from the media, but we cannot always influence this. In exceptional circumstances, to act rapidly, this may mean having to inform relatives by telephone.
- If you hear of the death from a tour operator, the media, or any other third party you should contact the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) on 020 7008 1500 and ask for the country desk in Consular Directorate.
- Consular staff in London will keep in touch with the family and our staff abroad until burial or cremation overseas (where local authorities allow these for foreigners) or until the person has been brought back to the UK.

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- Consular staff in London will pass on to our staff overseas the wishes of the next of kin about disposal of the body. We will do our best to make sure these wishes are carried out.
- But it is not always possible to carry out the wishes of the next of kin. For example, there may be no facilities for cremation. And in some countries, post-mortems are carried out without permission of the next of kin. Sometimes organs will be removed and kept without the next of kin being informed or consulted. You should also be aware that in some countries a lack of suitable storage may make it impossible to obtain the necessary international certificates to transport the body.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US:

Support is provided by British diplomatic and consular missions overseas and by the Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. British diplomatic missions overseas are the British Government's main offices in other countries, usually in capital cities. These take the form of **British High Commissions** or **Deputy High Commissions** in Commonwealth countries and **British Embassies** in other countries. You may also find **British Consulates General** or **Consulates** in capital cities or regional centres. In some places where there is no British diplomatic or consular office, we have **Honorary Consuls** who can offer some limited help or put you in touch with the nearest office. Look at the FCO website: www.fco.gov.uk or telephone 0845 850 2829.

WHAT KIND OF HELP WE CAN PROVIDE WHEN SOMEONE HAS DIED ABROAD

- keep the next of kin informed and try to ensure you don't feel that you are on your own;
- tell you the cost of local burial, local cremation and transport of the body and personal belongings back to the UK;
- provide a list of local and international funeral directors (see Note 1). If an English speaking firm is not available, our staff can help you with the arrangements;
- help transfer money from friends and relatives in the UK to pay any necessary costs;
- where there is evidence of suspicious circumstances concerning the death, we can suggest the best way to raise concerns with the local authorities. We can offer basic information about the local police system and legal system. When informed of how any investigation is progressing, we can pass on any details. But in some countries, the investigating authorities and the courts refuse to answer enquiries from third parties including British consular staff. In these circumstances, the family should consider appointing a local lawyer. As with funeral directors, we can also provide lists of local lawyers and interpreters.

Note 1:

Neither the Government nor the relevant British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate can make any guarantee in relation to the professional ability or character of any person or company on the list, nor can they be held responsible in any way for you relying on any advice you are given.

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WE CANNOT

- investigate deaths ourselves;
- give legal advice;
- pay burial or cremation expenses;
- pay for the return of bodies to the UK;
- pay any debts that may be outstanding or pay any other expenses.

GENERAL HELP AND ADVICE

The emotions you may experience after a major personal crisis such as the death of a relative or friend can be traumatic. It is important to remember that help is available. Some people will not want or feel the need to talk to anyone outside their family and friends, but for others it may be essential. There is nothing wrong with knowing that you need help.

YOU CAN FIND HELP AND ADVICE ON BEREAVEMENT FROM YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR OR A NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS, SUCH AS

- **The Compassionate Friends**

53 North Street
Bristol B53 1EN
Tel: 08451 232304
www.tcf.org.uk

- **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Cruse House
126 Sheen Road
Richmond Surrey
TW9 1UR
Tel: 0870 167 1677
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

- **Samaritans**

Chris, PO Box 9090
Stirling, FK8 2SA
Tel: 08457 909090
www.samaritans.org.uk

- **Victim Support**

Cranmer House
39 Brixton Road
London SW9 6DZ
Supportline: 0845 3030900
www.victimsupport.com

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COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We welcome any comments on the support we provide.

If you have any comments, please write to:

FEEDBACK

Policy, Communications and Training Group Consular
Directorate,
Consular Directorate
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Old Admiralty Building
Spring Gardens
London
SW1A 2PA
Phone: 020 7008 1500
Fax: 020 7008 0152
Email: feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

If you are not satisfied and want to make an official
complaint, please write to the FCO Director of Consular
services at the same address or email
complaint.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

We will investigate your complaint fully and do our best to
give you a full reply within 20 working days. If we cannot
give you a full reply within this time, we will tell you when
we expect to do so. We will record and examine complaints,
and use the information to help make sure we offer the best
possible help and support.

