



PRACTICAL STEPS AFTER THE LOSS OF A CHILD

THE LEGAL PROCESS, PLANNING A FUNERAL,
AND WAYS TO GET SUPPORT: A GUIDE
SPECIALLY FOR FAMILIES THAT ARE VICTIMS
OF YOUTH CRIME AND VIOLENCE

JAGS was created by Tracey Ford after her son, James Andre Godfrey Smartt-Ford, was murdered at the age of 17. Knowing how overwhelming the processes are during an already devastating time for any parent, JAGS Connect put together this guide as a compilation of guidelines and additional information specifically for those who lost a child to youth crime. It aims to give an overview of the different aspects to keep in mind, and be a directory for further steps.

Though it is not an exhaustive guide by any means, nor an official government document, we hope it will give you a scope of what steps a parent will take after the death of their child.

The official guidelines for what to do when someone dies can be accessed through the government website here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies>

For a general document on child death, please consult the NHS official leaflet, accessible here:

- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/parent-leaflet-child-death-review-v2.pdf>

The government website guidance for the death of a child or baby can be reached here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/if-a-child-or-baby-dies>

This is a longer document with detailed information when the loss of a child was caused by murder:

- <https://www.tcf.org.uk/resources/L22-When-our-child-has-been-murdered-C04R1101.pdf>

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LEGAL STEPS AND PROCESSES

Registering a death

Any and all deaths need to be registered. You can do this through here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death>

For more information on the documents the registrar will give you after you register a death, see here:

- <https://www.bereavementadvice.org/topics/registering-a-death-and-informing-others/what-the-registrar-will-give-you/>

Child Benefit and pay leave

If you were previously claiming Child Benefit, or were going to make a claim for Child Benefit, you also need to let the authorities know. you can do this through the following link:

- <https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit-child-parent-dies>

Similarly, you must report this to the tax authorities here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/changes-affect-tax-credits>

If a minor dies, you might be able to take parental bereavement pay leave. See how to do this here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/parental-bereavement-pay-leave>

Cancelling services

You may be offered a service called Tell Us Once, and given a unique reference number for this. Tell Us Once is a way to contact multiple authorities at once, such as to cancel passports, driving licences, and car registrations, if applicable. This is an optional service designed to decrease the amount of time spent contacting different services.

- <https://idp-tell-us-someone-died.dwp.gov.uk/Death/Enrich/BeforeYouStart>

To reduce the amount of junk mail arriving in someone's name, you can use the following service:

- <https://www.mpsonline.org.uk/consumer/register>

To manage someone's digital legacy, or be able to access their social media accounts or hard drive, for example to deactivate the accounts or access photos, each online service will have their own set of guidelines. Some examples can be found in:

- <https://www.bereavementadvice.org/topics/registering-a-death-and-informing-others/digital-legacy/>

Specifics for children lost to youth crime

There are a few differences in the process when a child dies due to youth crime or the actions of others. The coroner must hold an inquest if the person may have died while in police custody, if they may have died an unnatural death, or the cause of death remains unknown. This means that the body needs to be more thoroughly examined to determine a cause of death. If this happens, you will need an 'interim death certificate' to register the death while the inquest is taking place.

A child or young person's death through unnatural causes legally must be investigated by the authorities. If still looking for or investigating suspects, the body must be held as evidence. This also means you will not be able to touch the body, or sometimes even see the body. The authorities will release the body back into your custody after collecting evidence. This should be done in 28 days or less.

Legal help

You should be given a key worker to help you and be your main contact point through the death review process, the name of the steps taken after a death. This key worker may be an NHS worker, a nurse, or someone from a bereavement support team. If you were not given a key worker, you should contact another professional, such as someone from a hospital, police office, or coroner's office.

You will likely also have contact points with the coroner's office and the police, if they have been involved (such as in the case of an investigation). They should be transparent with you about the process and how long they think it may take for the body to be released back to you.

PLANNING A FUNERAL

Why

Though it may seem difficult or overwhelming to plan, a funeral can provide closure and an opportunity to grieve for families and friends.

There are many choices you can make, and here we will try to give you some considerations to keep in mind while you make your decisions. If you are religious, there may be some traditions for funerals that you might want to follow. If you are not sure, you could always talk to a pastor, rabbi, or other church leader for ideas or information.

As the pandemic eases, it is also important to check what restrictions are in place. You can do that through the government website, here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

Where

A funeral or memorial can take place anywhere. Many opt for a religious setting, but it could also be at your home, a cemetery, crematorium, hotel, or most any other place that hosts events.

Who

The officiant of the ceremony can be a religious leader, you, a family member, or any other person. There are no requirements, it really is whatever you think would be the best alternative for you and your family.

Getting help

It can be overwhelming to arrange a funeral for your child. It is very common to hire a funeral director, especially to arrange the storing of the body, signing contracts, and fine print. That being said, there is no legal requirement to have a funeral director.

One way to find a funeral director near you is to use SAIF's directory.



Funding

The average funeral cost in England for a funeral is around £4,000. This number depends on funeral director, location, catering or other hired roles, printings of photographs, or other extras. It can vary, and there are many ways to either keep the costs lower or get financial aid.

Click the logo for their guide on a "DIY" funeral, where you organise the funeral yourself instead of using a funeral director.



For financial aid



If you are employed, you can claim for the government's Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay and Leave, and the Funeral Expenses Payment, through the logo above. There is also the Children's Funeral Fund for England, which you can access through: <https://www.gov.uk/child-funeral-costs>.



Co-op Funeral-care offers their services for under-18s for free. Click on the logo to be taken to their webpage..

Crowdfunding is another way to get help with costs. 'Fundraising instead of flowers' encourages people to donate to a fund instead of buying flowers.



There are some charities and other sources dedicated to helping with costs. Click on the logos below to be taken to the respective charities' websites.



SEEKING SUPPORT

JAGS services

We are here to help and support you through our support network and resources.

JAGS
Forum

Our forum is designed to be a place to connect with other parents and carers for children and young people. You can talk to parents going through similar issues, for support or advice.

You can also access our resources directory for additional resources, including bereavement services

Resources

SAMARITANS

If you feel like you need someone to talk to urgently, you can contact Samaritans (available 24/7)

