



Diploma in Funeral Arranging and Administration

Module 2	Unit 4	Responding to the initial notification of death
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Purpose and Aim of the Unit:	The purpose of the unit is to develop learners' ability to respond appropriately to the first call. Specifically, the unit aims to enable learners to ensure that essential information is both collected from and given to clients.
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This unit has 4 learning outcomes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	
The learner will:	
1	Know the meaning of the term the 'first call.'
2	Know the essential information to be obtained from the client during the first call.
3	Know the essential information to be given to the client during the first call.
4	Know how to respond to requests relating to bequeathal.



Introduction

Receipt of a 'First Call' will usually fall into one of the following three categories:

- Deaths occurring in hospital / or at home.
- Deaths occurring at a private residence or in a nursing or care home
- Sudden deaths where the Coroner is involved

Learning Outcome 1

Know the meaning of the term the 'first call.'

The funeral arranger and funeral director look upon the 'First Call' as being the initial enquiry regarding the arrangement of a funeral – in effect responding to notification that death has occurred.

First impressions are important irrespective of the time of day or night, therefore, it is essential when a 'First Call' is received that the client gets the feeling that whoever answers the telephone is a pleasant, sympathetic, patient, helpful and efficient person who will attend to the enquiry with care.



It is essential that the telephone is answered day and night by staff experienced to answer any queries and be able to deal with any eventuality

Learning Outcome 2.

Know the essential information to be obtained from the client during the first call.

When dealing with a 'First Call' relating to the death of a person, the following minimum information is required:

- Caller's name, address, telephone number and relationship to deceased
- Deceased's name and address



- Date, time and place of death

If the death occurred at home, ascertain the following information:-

- Has the doctor has attended?
- The name of certifying doctor (This may be different from the doctor who signs the medical certificate of the causes of death.)
- The doctor who gave permission for the deceased to be moved
- The name of the person who has confirmed death, if a doctor has not attended
- Would family wish the deceased to be moved to a funeral home and when that is to take place? It may be that relatives wish to see the deceased prior to moving.
- Is the person is to be buried or cremated? (This question should be tactfully asked. It is not always essential to ask this)
- Full details of next-of-kin (if different to the caller)
- Enquire if the deceased was covered by a pre-paid funeral plan (if appropriate).

Note: The topic of pre-paid funeral plans is covered in further detail in 'Arranging the Funeral' and 'Client Liability, Entitlement and Consumer Regulations'.

Make appointment time for staff and/or funeral director to attend to remove the deceased and bring into safe care. If appropriate, make time appointment for arrangements either at home or office

NB. The date and time of call and the name of the person who took the call should also be noted.





On some occasions the caller may be too upset for whoever has answered the telephone to obtain all the above information, possibly because the caller is alone.

If this occurs, take the minimum amount of information, and promise to arrange for someone to go round to the house immediately. Sometimes, in this situation it may be possible to elicit the name of a relative or neighbour whom the funeral director can contact before going to the house.

It is important not to make the client feel that they are being 'quizzed for information'.

Should the enquiry be in the first category, the details of the deceased and the caller will still need to be taken, however, the main object is to determine who will be responsible for making the arrangements and to make an appointment to either attend the house or for the client to call at the funeral home.

Learning Outcome 3

Know the essential information to be given to the client during the first call.

Having made the appointment, information should be offered regarding registration procedures, such as :

- which certificates to take to the registrar (the medical certificate of the cause of death and the medical card (if available))
- the location of the registrar
- details of transport and parking
- the information required to register a death
- the cost and purpose of the certificates issued
- the certificate(s) required by the funeral director

Relevant Forms and Documents

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/burials-and-coroners/index.htm>





The Doctor needs to know if cremation is proposed in order that the necessary forms are completed.

The table below represents the forms used applicable to the country you are working in.

England and Wales
Cremation 4/5 , can be completed.
Cremation 4 is to be completed by the Doctor issuing the ' Medical Certificate of Cause of Death ' and they will normally arrange for another Doctor to complete Cremation 5 .
Scotland
Forms B Certificate of Medical Attendant
Form C Confirmatory Medical Certificate
Form 11 Medical Certificate of Cause of Death
Northern Ireland
Forms B -Medical Confiration of Death -
Form C (Doctors forms)
Form F This form is part of Form B, C and F (Medical Referee)

Many doctors are willing to attend the funeral home to complete the cremation forms and to collect the appropriate fee. However there are those, particularly in rural areas, who prefer to complete **Cremation 4** at the place of death and for the second Doctor to likewise complete **Cremation 5**. *Students in Scotland ad Northern Ireland, please refer to the table above for relevant forms used*

If this is the case, the situation must be explained to the client and an indication given of the likely delay in effecting the removal. Normally, in these circumstances, the client should be asked to contact the funeral director as soon as the Doctor or Doctors have attended. The funeral director



should then make an appointment to attend at the house to carry out the removal. If there is likely to be a delay, it may well be worthwhile making an appointment as soon as convenient to the family, in order to start making the arrangements for the funeral.

There are certain circumstances under which a death occurring at home may have to be reported to the Coroner, or Procurator Fiscal in Scotland. *This is covered in Module 3 Units 4A, B & C.*

The funeral arranger and funeral director must be fully conversant with these procedures, and the circumstances leading up to a referral to the Coroner / Procurator Fiscal, since they could be relevant to a death occurring at home and particularly a sudden death. Should the Coroner / Procurator Fiscal become involved, it is important that the client is reassured, as the majority of people become greatly concerned as soon as the Coroner / Procurator Fiscal is mentioned.

Such a case cannot be moved from the home without prior consent of the Coroner / Procurator Fiscal and, indeed, it may not be possible to move the deceased as the Coroner / Procurator Fiscal may request that a funeral director under contract to the Coroner's / Procurator Fiscal Service be called out. In this case the family will need to be reassured that the funeral director who was initially contacted will still be able to make funeral arrangements with them.

Having made an appointment to attend a home, it is essential to be prompt.

Remember this is probably the first contact with the client and the objective is to build up that client's confidence.

Imminent Death

The 'first call' may also be from a client wishing to find out information about procedures for an imminent death. The conversation may embrace the first call information, options for funeral arrangements including places of burial or cremation, the choice of coffins, transport and other facilities, and also funeral costs. In this case the funeral director needs to summarise this information.



The First Call and Pre-Payment

It may be the case that the first call is for a person who has a pre-paid funeral plan. This is a reasonable question to be asked by the funeral arranger. If the answer is in the affirmative then the name of the plan provider should be noted. If the caller has other details to hand such as a reference number or date the plan was purchased then these should also be recorded. However, this is the extent of the information required at this stage. Contact should then be made with the plan provider at the earliest opportunity to ascertain what is provided under the terms of the plan..

Module

To summarise the above information:

- Answer the telephone promptly.
- Greet the caller by stating the name of the company and offer help.
- Ensure that the telephone manner is pleasant and helpful.
- Do not keep the client 'on hold' for long - keep the caller informed of what is happening.
- Deal with questions effectively.

- Do not be afraid to offer additional information that you think may be helpful to the client.
- Offer to phone back if it is not possible to fulfil the client's wishes at once, bearing in mind **that many pay phones do not accept incoming calls.**



Bequeathal

Learning Outcome 4

Know how to respond to requests relating to bequeathal.

The extended topic of Bequeathal features in the Diploma in Funeral Directing. However, it is important for funeral arrangers gain an understanding of the basics in order to help clients who may well have a family relative who has left their body to Medical Science.

Any person who wishes their body after their death to be donated for anatomical examination would normally sign a form prepared in compliance with the Human Tissue Act 2004 which would be provided by the medical school that has been approached. For the consent to be valid, it must be in writing :-

- signed by the donor in the presence of at least one witness who attest their signature, or
- signed at the direction of the donor, in his/her presence and in the presence of at least one witness who attests their signature, or contained in the adult donor's will, providing the will is lawful.



PROCEDURE (after death)

Once death has occurred the executor, next of kin or person lawfully in charge of the body, must telephone the Department of Anatomy at the appropriate medical school. The Doctors at the school usually will then contact the doctor who has issued the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and together they will make a decision as to whether the donation is acceptable. No guarantee can ever be given that a bequest will be accepted. Among other considerations, the cause of death itself or a post mortem examination could make the body unsuitable for anatomical examination. The minimum age for donation is 17 but there is no upper age limit for bequeathing.

BODY DONATION CONSENT FORMS

These forms, either, completed and signed by the donor or by a representative on behalf of the donor, authorize the use of the body for anatomical examination and at the time of death a copy of this form will already be in the possession of the medical school.

Permission may also be given on this form for the retention of tissues or parts of particular interest for further medical, educational or scientific reasons after general anatomical examination is concluded.

In England and Wales the Following Forms are applicable:-

FORM HTA(A)1 Form of authorisation for use of a body for anatomical examination, education, training and research and instructions about the final arrangements after the examinations are complete and the body is required no more by the medical school.

FORM HTA(A)3

This form is an internal Medical certificate of registered cause of death that must be completed by the registered medical practitioner who completed and signed the original certificate.

Notes for Students working in Scotland

The HTA does not regulate medical schools in Scotland. Each Medical School will also have their own documents rather than a standardised version. Form titles will be the same, but HTA numbers do not apply, and form numbering will differ between each Medical Schools.

People wishing to donate their body to Medical Science do so by contacting:-

Health Quality and Safety Branch G.E.R

St Andrew's House

Regent Road

Edinburgh

EH1 3DG



SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR A 'FIRST CALL' INFORMATION FORM

NAME OF CALLER		
ADDRESS		
Telephone no.	Relationship to deceased	
NAME OF DECEASED		
AGE OF DECEASED		
ADDRESS		
PLACE OF DEATH		
DATE AND APPROXIMATE TIME OF DEATH		
NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN		
(If different from caller)		
TELEPHONE No		
HAS DOCTOR OR SOME OTHER PERSON CONFIRMED DEATH?	YES/NO	
NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NO. OF THAT PERSON		
DOCTOR'S PERMISSION TO MOVE TO FUNERAL HOME	YES/NO	
PRE PAID FUNERAL PLAN	YES/NO	COMPANY DETAILS
Bequeathal ?	YES/NO	
BURIAL OR CREMATION		
CALL TAKEN BY	DATE AND TIME	
REMOVAL BY	AUTHORISED BY	
DATE AND TIME GIVEN TO ARRIVE AT RESIDENCE		
Funeral director assigned to make arrangements/contact family		
JEWELLERY/VALUABLES/CLOTHING		
Signature of client		
Signature of Funeral director		
Further information and instructions		



Proof of Learning – Assessment Criteria

Module 2 Unit 4	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
	The learner can:
2.4.1	Define the term the 'first call.'
2.4.2	State the essential information that should to be obtained from the client during the first call.
2.4.3a	State the essential information that should be given to the client during the first call.
2.4.3b	Explain the purpose of the information given in 2.4.3a.
2.4.4	Identify the information to consider following a request relating to bequeathal.



Help with your studies

- Tips for students
- Website Link
- Example examination questions

Tips for students:

- It is important not to view this unit in isolation, but one that draws from a number of units in this course. For example, the removal procedure is covered in the next unit (Module 2 Unit 5) and advice concerning the registration of death is covered in Module 3, Unit 7. of key importance is the unit on communication including telephone skills (Module 1 Unit 3)
- As with all the other Modules in this course, always use the full title of the certificate. Where applicable, this should include its colour and number. For example, don't write 'The Registrar's green certificate.' Use the full title and colour: 'Registrar's Certificate for Burial and Cremation (green)'. Don't write 'Form 6.' Write 'Certificate of Coroner, Cremation 6'. Students in Scotland should make reference to documents appropriate to Scotland. If unsure, please check with your tutor.
- Past examination questions can often be answered with a list. Always check your list to ensure you have included the most obvious information, such as the name of the deceased.

Website Links

If you are unsure how to assist your client in where and how to register the death, for your own information check and refer to your local authority website, or the national website

www.gov.uk/after-a-death/register-the-death.

Database

UK Registry Offices

www.iccm-uk.com/suppliersearchdetails.php?suppcat=58

Additional Resource

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/prod_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_170740.pdf.



Example Examination Questions

Use these questions to test your knowledge or for revision purposes.

How should you deal with the first call from a client who notifies you of a death?

What information might you obtain?

What information should you give to your client?

What procedures should you follow at this stage?

What information is essential to give to the client at the time of the First Call?

Which documents are relevant for the purposes of Bequeathal?

