Appendix G

[This Appendix is an extract from James Woodward’s book ‘Befriending Death’ (SPCK 2005).

It is provided courtesy of The Reverend Dr. J Woodward BD AKC MA STh MPhil PhD]

**WHAT TO DO AFTER A DEATH**

How to register the death

In normal circumstances the GP will have examined the body recently and will be able to write out a Cause of Death Certificate. This should be taken in person to the registrar appointed for your area (your undertaker, Citizen’s Advice Bureau or post office can inform you who your local registrar is) for the death to be registered. Sometimes you may have to ring first to arrange an appointment. The telephone number will be listed under registrar of births, deaths and marriages. In exceptional circumstances – maybe if you are disabled – the registrar will come to your home to register the death.

However, although the next of kin may feel responsible for doing it, any relative can register the details who:

• was present at the death, or

• was present during the last illness, or

• is resident in the area where the death occurred.

Certain other people who can give direct evidence of the death are also eligible to register the death. All deaths should be registered within five days in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

There are two purposes for registration:

i. to confirm the identity of the deceased; and

ii. to establish the cause of death.

The body can be released for burial or cremation only when the registrar is satisfied about the person’s identity and the cause of death.

In most cases, this will be straightforward. As well as the Cause of Death Certificate, the informant needs to take, wherever possible:

 birth and marriage certificates

 the deceased’s medical card

 any state benefit books

The registrar will want to know:

 the full name of the deceased (and the maiden name if applicable)

 any other names the deceased was known by

 the occupation of the deceased

 date and place of birth

 date and place of death

 last address

 name, date of birth and occupation of spouse (or previous spouse)

 whether deceased was receiving state benefit.

The registrar will then issue a Certificate for Burial (also known as the Green Form). This must be given to anyone organising arrangements before the funeral can take place.

If cremation is preferred, your doctor needs to complete a form as does a second independent doctor. Both doctors must certify a cause of death and confirm that no further examination of the body is necessary. Please note that your first costs are incurred here, but normally a funeral director will include these charges in his bill.

This process is not straightforward and it is not easy to remember everything, especially if you are feeling distressed. Remember that the most important piece of paper is the death certificate. This will be a key document for handling the deceased’s affairs. You can be given a number of copies to make your task easier.

It is advisable, if you are likely to be in some distress with all the formalities, to take someone along for support.

Action to be Taken

This is not a complete list covering everyone’s individual circumstances. You should return the following, with a note of explanation and the date of death with each of the items:

* The deceased’s passport to the Passport Office
* Order books, orders or cheques to the social security office or other office that authorised the payment. This applies also to a child benefit book that includes payment for a child who has died. Orders should not be cashed after the death of a person. It may be useful to keep a record of pension book numbers or other social security numbers
* The deceased's debit and credit cards need to be cancelled and disposed of
* The deceased’s driving licence to DVLA, Longview Road, Swansea, SA6 7JL
* The registration document of a car, for the change of ownership to be recorded, also to DVLA
* Any season tickets, claiming any refunds
* Membership cards of clubs and associations, again, claiming any refund due
* Library books and tickets
* Any National Insurance papers to the relevant office
* Any National Health Service or social services equipment such as wheelchairs or hearing aids.

**The following should be advised:**

* The bank(s) of the deceased, so that a review of any standing orders or direct debits is made. The bank will advise if there is a joint account and how funeral-related bills may be settled
* The offices of the local electricity, gas or telephone company, the water authority and the council   
  (i.e. council tax)
* Mobile phone supplier and email / internet provider
* The local social services department of the council if the person was getting meals-on-wheels, home help or day centre care, or had equipment issued by the department
* Any hospital the person was attending
* The family doctor to cancel any care, if they were not involved in certifying the death
* HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
* The Benefits Agency
* Any employer and/or trade union
* A child or young person’s teacher; employer or college if a parent, brother, sister, grandparent or close relative has died
* The car insurance company
* The local council housing benefit/council tax benefit (if applicable)
* The post office so that they can redirect mail if necessary
* Solicitor and executors regarding the will.