



# Swansea Council Muslim Funeral Guidelines

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## Introduction

Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem,

The loss of a loved one is an emotionally overwhelming and challenging time. Knowing how to navigate the complexities of arranging a Muslim funeral can feel like a daunting task. The practicalities that surround death often leave families wondering: Where do we place the body? Who do we contact? What forms need to be completed?

To alleviate some of this strain, this guide has been meticulously prepared in consultation with a multitude of Swansea-based organisations. We have joined hands with Swansea Mosque and Islamic Community Centre, Sketty Mosque & Community Centre, Imam Khoei Islamic Centre Swansea, Abdullah Al Mutawa Mosque, Hafod Islamic Cultural and Education Centre, Hafod Mosque & Welfare Association, Baraka Child and Mothers Group, Swansea Dialogue Society, and the Ethnic Youth Support Team (Swansea). Additionally, we have collaborated with the Swansea Bay NHS After Death Care Team, the Swansea Council Bereavement Service Office, South Wales Police- Swansea Command and the HM Swansea Coroner's Office, to provide a well-rounded resource.

The aim of this guide is not to offer a comprehensive account of Islamic rules on burials; numerous books and scholars provide that information already. Instead, we aim to help you understand the practical aspects of arranging a Muslim funeral in the Swansea Bay Region. For in-depth Islamic guidance, we strongly recommend contacting your local mosque Imam, Muslim Chaplain, or a trusted individual who can advise on religious details.

If you have stumbled upon this guide or received it from a community member, we encourage you to read through it. You never know when you might be able to offer your support to another Muslim navigating these challenging times. Death is the only certainty in our lives, and it is our communal responsibility to make this journey as straightforward as possible for each other.

Best wishes,

Dr Mahaboob Basha., BEM

(On behalf of the Swansea Muslim Community)

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## What steps must be taken?

The process of laying a loved one to rest can be broken down into five straightforward steps:

1. Reach out to a funeral service provider for assistance.
2. Obtain a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death from the Doctor in order to register the death.
3. Officially register the death with the relevant authorities.
4. Wash the body and perform the Janaza prayer (Funeral Prayer)
5. Take the body to the graveyard cemetery for the burial rites.

By following these steps, you can ensure that the funeral process adheres to both legal requirements and Islamic principles.

## **Step 1 - Reach out to a funeral service provider for assistance.**

Begin by getting in touch with a funeral provider. It is advisable to contact them as swiftly as possible following the death, even prior to registering the death, to allow preparations to commence.

When you call, make it known that this is a Muslim funeral and inquire about their experience in handling Muslim burials. It's preferable to engage a service familiar with the quick washing and burial requirements intrinsic to Islamic practices.

### **How do I choose a funeral service provider?**

Opt for a reputable Muslim funeral service provider. For example, Swansea Muslim Funeral Service, Co-op Funeralcare service etc, it has trained and experienced funeral directors who can assist you effectively.

You can also consult your local mosque's management committee for trustworthy recommendations of funeral directors in Wales.

Alternatively, you may search online for 'funeral services'. However, we strongly recommend using a local service familiar with local guidelines to expedite the process.

### **What will the funeral service provider do?**

The primary role of the funeral service is to facilitate the transportation of the body and coordinate the burial process. They will handle the movement of the deceased according to your needs, transporting the body from the hospital to the place of washing, your residence, the mosque, and finally to the burial site.

Upon consultation with you, they will arrange for the grave, bearing in mind your preference for a cemetery. It's important to specify your need for a burial plot in the Muslim section of the chosen cemetery. Be aware that not all cemeteries offer Muslim sections, so your choices may be limited.

It's the funeral service's responsibility to liaise with the cemetery to secure a grave and inform them of your arrival time, alleviating you of these concerns, during this challenging time. Don't hesitate to ask any questions you may have.

## **Step 2 - Obtain a Medical Certificate from the Doctor in order to register the death.**

After making arrangements for the funeral service, your subsequent task is to secure a Medical Certificate from the attending physician, GP or consultant.

### **If the death was expected**

In cases where the death occurred either in hospital or at home, and the doctor was previously aware of the individual's medical condition, they will issue a Medical Certificate specifying the cause of death. The surgery or hospital will send this certificate to the register office via email.

Once this step is completed, you should proceed to the Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages to formally register the death. It's advisable to contact the Register Office in advance to arrange for a registrar to be available. When you visit, the Register Office will provide you with a body-release slip, which you should then hand over to the funeral service provider. The registrar will usually email this document to the funeral service provider so that they get it as quickly as possible. This document allows them to take responsibility for the body and proceed with the necessary arrangements.

*(Go to Step 3 once you have a Medical Certificate)*

### **If the death was unexpected**

Should the death be unexpected yet still due to natural causes, the doctor may issue a Medical Certificate that indicates the cause of death. Again, this can be emailed to the Register Office.

It's crucial to note that a funeral cannot proceed without a valid Medical Certificate. If the doctor is uncertain about the natural cause of death, they won't issue a Medical Certificate. In such instances, you'll need to work closely with the medical professionals until they are satisfied with identifying the cause of death.

*(Go to Step 3 once you have a Medical Certificate)*

## **Care After Death Service**

When a death occurs in a hospital, the Care After Death Service is the initial point of contact, providing support to grieving families and facilitating the swift issuance of death certificates. This service is essential for coordinating with the Coroner, doctors, and funeral directors to expedite processes. They also play a crucial role in community death scenarios, offering guidance and helping with arrangements for the release of the deceased from the mortuary.

## **Independent Medical Examiner**

In alignment with new government mandates, the Medical Examiner Service will be established across England and Wales by April 2024 as a legal requirement. This service introduces an independent review of deaths by a Medical Examiner, a senior doctor not previously involved in the patient's care, to ensure the Cause of Death is accurately determined and the surrounding circumstances are impartially evaluated. The Medical Examiner's team, consisting of Medical Examiner Officers, will reach out to the deceased's relatives or friends shortly after the event to discuss the cause and circumstances of death, addressing any concerns or questions they might have.

## **Will a post mortem be conducted?**

In cases where cause of death is unnatural or unknown, a medical examination or post-mortem MAY be ordered by the Coroner to ascertain the exact cause.

The coroner does not need your consent for a post-mortem, but they will explain why they consider that they need one. Wherever possible, coroners will take account of your faith and cultural needs and preferences. You should discuss these with the coroner's office as soon as you can.

Please see Guide to Coroners Service which provides detailed information and is found on the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-coroner-services-and-coroner-investigations-a-short-guide>

It's important to note that, in Islamic tradition, post-mortems are generally considered forbidden. If you wish to avoid this, there are a couple of avenues you might explore:

1. Request that the Coroner utilise an MRI scan as an alternative to a traditional post-mortem. Bear in mind that you will be responsible for covering the associated costs.
2. Make an appeal to the Coroner on religious grounds. In some instances, they may be willing to waive the requirement for a post-mortem based on this appeal.

### **When does the Coroner get involved?**

There are instances where a doctor may be unable to issue a Medical Certificate, and the death will be reported to the coroner to investigate. Such cases typically involve:

- Accidental or injurious death
- Death from an industrial disease
- Death occurring during a surgical operation or before recovery from anaesthetic
- Death where the cause is unknown
- Sudden, unexplained death
- Violent, unnatural, or suspicious death
- Instances where the deceased had not been seen by the attending doctor within **28 days** prior to death

In these situations, where the death has been reported to the Coroner, you need to contact the Coroner's Office as soon as possible as advised above.

### **What will the Coroner do?**

The Coroner may decide to conduct a post-mortem examination; you won't have the authority to prevent this. However, you do have the option to have a medical representative present to observe the post-mortem. If natural causes are determined, the Coroner will issue the relevant form to the Register Office, specifying the cause of death.

The Coroner might also provide a Burial Order. This permits you to proceed with the burial while completing the registration process at a later date. Regardless of the outcome, your funeral directors can now assume responsibility for the body, allowing you to move forward with the funeral arrangements.

If the Coroner does not find a natural cause of death, an inquest will be required. In such a case, it's advisable to consult a solicitor, who can guide you through this more complicated process.



*Note:- since Covid-19 pandemic, most of these documents and forms are likely to be exchanged via email among the hospital, Coroner, and Register Office. Please ensure to make respective phone calls or send emails to each team if you are handling this process yourself. However, once you've commissioned a funeral director, they should be able to manage all these administrative tasks on your behalf, acting as your family's agent for the funeral arrangements.*

## Step 3 - Register the death so that you can bury the body

Once you've obtained the Medical Certificate specifying the cause of death, your next task is to make an appointment with the Register Office to formally register the death. The Register Office is the same establishment where you would typically register births and marriages.

### What Do I Need to Bring to the Register Office?

1. The Medical Certificate from the doctor or hospital.

This certificate is usually emailed directly from the surgery or hospital to the Register Office. Please note that if you collect the certificate and bring it to the Register Office, the registrar will need to make some checks before proceeding with the registration. If any information has been omitted or clarified with the doctor, the registrar will need to complete this before continuing with the registration.

### Additionally, you should be prepared to provide:

2. The date and place of the deceased's passing.
3. The last known address of the deceased.
4. The deceased's full name.
5. The deceased's date and place of birth (town and country if born in the UK, and country if born abroad).
6. The deceased's occupation, along with the name and occupation of their spouse, if applicable.
7. Information on any pension or allowance the deceased was receiving from public funds.
8. If the deceased was married, the date of birth of the surviving spouse.

### What will I receive from the Registrar?

1. Certificate for Burial (commonly known as the **Green Form**) Hand this over to the funeral service, as it authorises them to proceed with the burial. The registrar can email this form to your funeral provider. Please note that if the body is being taken out of England/Wales the registrar cannot issue a green form. The funeral director will need to contact the Coroner's Office for the necessary paperwork to do this.

2. A unique code which will provide you with access to the “Tell us Once service”. This will help you to notify government and local authority departments of the death. It previously called Certificate of Registration of Death (**Form BD8**) this certificate is replace with unique code.

### **How do I register a stillborn baby?**

In the UK, a baby is deemed stillborn if born dead after the 24th week of pregnancy. In such cases, the doctor or midwife will provide you with a Medical Certificate of Stillbirth. Take this certificate to the Registrar, who will issue two documents: a Certificate for Burial and a Certificate of Registration of Stillbirth. Again, the medical certificate will usually be emailed to the Registrar’s Office.

### **What do I do if the Register Office is closed?**

If you find yourself in a situation where the Register Office is closed, don't worry. It's still possible to proceed with the burial by obtaining a Certificate for Burial from the Registrar via their out-of-hours telephone service. In Swansea, you can contact the security office at 01792 636595, who will take your contact details and get in touch with the registrars. They will then call you back to assist with the process. Once you have this certificate, you can proceed with the burial. However, it's important to note that you'll still need to register the death at the Register Office during their regular business hours.

## **Step 4 - Wash the body and perform the Janaza prayer**

After you've selected a funeral service, your next step is to identify a suitable location to wash the deceased's body. This is often either at a mosque or at the funeral service's premises.

### **How to Wash the Body**

While a comprehensive guide to washing and dressing the body is beyond the remit of this resource, it's advisable to consult an experienced Muslim individual within your local community for guidance.

Supplies needed for washing the body can be provided by the Muslim funeral service provider. However, here is a general list of items you'll require for washing the body:

1. Cloth [kaffan]: The length and type depend on the deceased's size and gender. Consult a local Imam or experienced community member for advice.
2. Bar of soap
3. Cotton buds for ear cleaning
4. Cotton wool for wiping the eyes
5. Large towels for drying the body (1-3 depending on body size)
6. Perfume for the casket
7. Air-freshener to freshen the room and cloth
8. Scissors

### **Transporting the Body to the Mosque**

Once the body has been washed and dressed, the funeral service provider will assist in transporting the body to the mosque for the funeral prayer..

### **Non-Washable Body**

If there are medical considerations, the hospital will advise whether the body can be washed traditionally with water. In situations where washing with water isn't advisable, you can perform "Tayammum," which is the Islamic procedure for cleansing with dust or sand. Consult your local Imam for specific religious guidelines on how to conduct Tayammum in these circumstances. Both the hospital's after-death care team and experienced funeral directors will be able to guide you on the appropriate course of action in such situations.

## **Step 5 - Take the body to the cemetery for burial**

After the Janaza (Funeral Prayer), the funeral service provider will transport the body to the designated cemetery. A burial plot within the Muslim section will have been arranged by the funeral directors. Invite your local Imam or a knowledgeable Muslim member from your community to accompany you. They can guide you on the proper Islamic procedure for lowering the coffin into the grave. The process is both straightforward and quick. After the grave has been filled with soil, offer prayers to Allah (swt) for the departed soul.

### **Taking the Body out of Wales/UK for Burial**

Some individuals opt to transport the deceased out of the UK for burial in what they consider to be their 'home country.' This is often based on the belief that Muslim lands are more sacred than non-Muslim territories.

However, such thinking is not in line with Islamic principles. Allah (swt) created the entire Earth, and the location of burial has no bearing on the deceased's spiritual journey. Additionally, delaying the burial process is generally discouraged in Islam.

A person intending to remove a body from England and Wales must give notice in proper form to the coroner within whose jurisdiction the body is lying. Your funeral director should be familiar with the procedure and necessary steps to be taken to obtain the "out of country paperwork" from the coroner.

## Important contact details in Swansea

CONTACT	OPENING HOURS	TELEPHONE NO:	EMAIL
Swansea Mosque and Islamic Centre		01792 654532	<a href="mailto:info@swanseamosque.org">info@swanseamosque.org</a>
Sketty Mosque & Community Centre		07808203990	<a href="mailto:info@skettymosque.org">info@skettymosque.org</a>
Imam Khoei Islamic Centre Swansea		07828604011	<a href="mailto:Mostafa_kalik@icloud.com">Mostafa_kalik@icloud.com</a> <a href="mailto:Alaa.k.tahir@gmail.com">Alaa.k.tahir@gmail.com</a>
Abdullah Al Mutawa Mosque, Brynhyfryd		07482641157	<a href="mailto:almutawaabdullah47@gmail.com">almutawaabdullah47@gmail.com</a>
Hafod Islamic Cultural and Education Centre		07428167556	
Hafod Mosque & Welfare Association		07449949661	<a href="mailto:Shahjalalmosque16@hotmail.com">Shahjalalmosque16@hotmail.com</a>
Swansea Coroner Office	Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm	01792 450650 or 01792 636237	<a href="mailto:Coroner@swansea.gov.uk">Coroner@swansea.gov.uk</a>
Swansea Registrar Office	Monday to Friday 9am – 4.30pm	01792 637444	<a href="mailto:registrars@swansea.gov.uk">registrars@swansea.gov.uk</a>

	Closed Weekends & Bank Holidays		
<b>Swansea Cemeteries Office</b>	Monday to Friday 9am – 4.30pm Closed Weekends & Bank Holidays	01792 636389	<a href="mailto:bereavementservices@swansea.gov.uk">bereavementservices@swansea.gov.uk</a>
<b>Swansea Bay Health Board Care After Death Service (all hospitals)</b>	Monday to Friday 9.00am to 6.00pm, and Saturday 9.00am to 12.00pm.  Contact available out of hours i.e. until 8pm each day via switchboard	01792 703327  01792 703114	<a href="mailto:SBU.CADC@wales.nhs.uk">SBU.CADC@wales.nhs.uk</a>
<b>South Wales Police – Swansea Command</b>		Emergency 999 Non- emergency 101	



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. What are the first steps to take after a Muslim passes away in Swansea Bay?

Reach out to a funeral service provider experienced in Muslim burials.

**Speak to the GP or hospital about completing a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and issuing it to the Register Office.**

2. How do I choose a suitable funeral service provider for a Muslim funeral?

**Opt for a provider familiar with Islamic practices, such as the Swansea Muslim Funeral Service. Consult your local mosque for recommendations.**

3. What is the process for officially registering a death?

**Check with the Register Officer that the medical certificates have been received by email and arranged an appointment; they will advise on the necessary documents to take to the appointment.**

4. What should I do if the death occurs unexpectedly?

**Contact the Care After Death Service at a hospital if the death occurs there. If the cause of death is unclear, the case may be referred to the coroner.**

5. How is the body washed and prepared for a Muslim funeral?

**Identify a location for washing the body, typically a mosque or funeral service premises. Follow Islamic guidelines for washing and shrouding the body, potentially with the help of community members.**

6. Can a post-mortem be avoided on religious grounds?

**While the Coroner may order a post-mortem, you can request alternatives like an MRI scan. Discuss your religious concerns with the Coroner's Office.**

7. What happens if I want to transport the body out of Wales for burial?

**Notify the Coroner and obtain the necessary paperwork. Understand that transporting the body out of the UK for burial is not encouraged in Islam.**

8. How is the Janaza prayer/ Funeral congregation arranged, and where is it performed?  
The funeral service provider can help coordinate the Janaza prayer, usually held at a mosque. Invite an Imam or knowledgeable community member to lead the prayer.

9. What are the guidelines for burial in a Muslim cemetery?

Ensure the burial plot is in the Muslim section of the cemetery. Follow Islamic procedures for lowering the coffin and filling the grave.

10. How can I contact relevant authorities and services in Swansea for a Muslim funeral?  
Refer to the contact details provided in the guidelines for services like the Coroner's Office, Register Office, Cemeteries Office and local mosques.

11. Do I need to make an appointment to register the death at the Register Office?

Once the cause of death has been agreed by the hospital/GP and the Medical Examiner, the death certificate (MCCD) is then emailed to the Register office directly from the hospital/GP together with details of the next of kin; once received the Register office will check the information and once all ok they will ring the next of kin to make an appointment to register the death.

12. Can I choose the cemetery for the burial?

If you choose Muslim burial in Swansea the Muslim burial section is located at Danygraig cemetery in Port Tennant, where graves are prepared by grounds staff in accordance with operational requirements. For further information you can discuss with your funeral service provider or contact the cemeteries office at the Council.

13. Is it possible to have our loved one buried next to a specific person or near a particular grave?

There are possibilities for this, but it depends on the ground and space availability in the cemetery. Please talk to the cemeteries office at the Council for more information.

14. Can we bury our loved one on our own land?

Yes, it's possible, but you need to speak to the Local Authority as this requires permission and approval. For further information on burials on private land visit the council website [www.swansea.gov.uk/burialsonprivateland](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/burialsonprivateland)

15. How much does it cost to buy a plot in the cemetery, and can I pay by card?

The cost of a plot is currently £2015 (fees reviewed annually – 1<sup>st</sup> April); this fee covers the purchase of the plot & interment for one coffin. Payment by card is recommended; but cheques/cash are acceptable. Please contact the bereavement services office at Civic centre for further details.

16. How long is a plot allocated to us? Is it a lease or a purchase?

The plot is leased for 99 years. For more details on the cemetery policy/regulations, please refer to the bereavement services office.

17. How can a grave in the Muslim section be prepared for a second burial, and what considerations determine this possibility?

A grave in the Muslim section can be prepared for a second burial if initially dug to the required legal depth for multiple burials. The key considerations include the existing condition of the grave, legal depth availability for an additional burial, and the grave's proximity to others. Some graves are pre-prepared for two coffin burials, allowing for a second burial atop the first. However, this depends on specific criteria being met, including the grave's initial preparation and legal requirements. Always first speak to the burial team at the Council

18. What should I do if the death occurs outside of normal Registry Office hours?

If the death occurs outside of normal office hours, you can use the out-of-hours service provided by the Register Office to proceed with the Registration. The Register office can either arrange to complete the registration for you or, if that is not possible, they can arrange to issue the paperwork for the burial. However, in that case, you will still need to formally register the death during regular business hours.

However, you cannot proceed with the burial unless the Registration has been arranged and you have made contact with the cemeteries office to arrange the burial appointment & submit paperwork etc. The cemeteries office is only open during normal business hours.

19. Are there specific Islamic guidelines to follow for the funeral and burial process?

**Yes, Islamic guidelines for funeral and burial should be adhered to. These include the preparation of the body, the Janaza prayer, and the burial method. Consult your local Imam or the funeral service provider for detailed guidance.**

20. What if the deceased had wished for a specific type of burial?

**The wishes of the deceased should be respected as much as possible. Discuss any specific requests or instructions left by the deceased with your funeral service provider to ensure they are fulfilled appropriately.**

21. Can women participate in the burial process?

**In Islamic practice, the participation of women in the burial process can vary based on cultural and community norms. It's advisable to consult with your local Imam or community leaders for guidance in this matter. In general answer is yes**

22. What support services are available for grieving families?

**Support services for grieving families may include counselling, religious support from community leaders, and support groups. Contact your local mosque or community centre for available resources. The Care After Death Service in hospitals also informs families about additional support services available both within the hospital and in the wider community. This comprehensive approach ensures families are aware of all the resources at their disposal during their time of bereavement.**

23. What happens if a Muslim dies without any relatives, friends, or next of kin responsible for burial arrangements?

**If a Muslim passes away without any relatives or friends to take responsibility for burial arrangements and they are not a British Citizen or do not have residency, the responsibility may fall to the mosque s/he attended or the local Muslim community. If no one assumes responsibility, The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 mandates local authorities to arrange for a burial, known as a public health funeral. Local mosques and Imams often have resources or funds to support such funerals, so reaching out to them is recommended as a first step.**

## Glossary

**Certificate of Burial** - Also known as the 'Green Form'.

**Coroner** - This individual, often a doctor or lawyer, is responsible for investigating the circumstances of a person's death.

**Funeral Directors** - These professionals are responsible for managing the body and organising the funeral. This includes transporting the body to and from the hospital, mosque, and cemetery.

**Green Form (Certificate of Burial)** - This form is issued by the Registrar, granting permission to proceed with the burial. You will need to give this form to your funeral directors.

**Inquest** - If the Coroner is unable to determine a natural cause of death, an inquest is called to investigate the circumstances further.

**Medical Certificate** - This certificate is issued by a doctor, specifying the cause of death. It must be taken to the Register Office for the death to be officially recorded.

**Post-Mortem** - A medical examination performed by a qualified doctor to ascertain the cause of death.

**Registrar** - The only authority capable of officially registering a death.

**Register Office** - The council office where vital records, including births, deaths, and marriages, are officially registered. A burial cannot proceed until the death has been registered here.