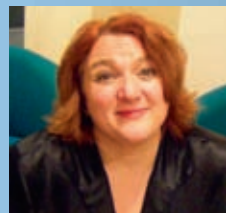
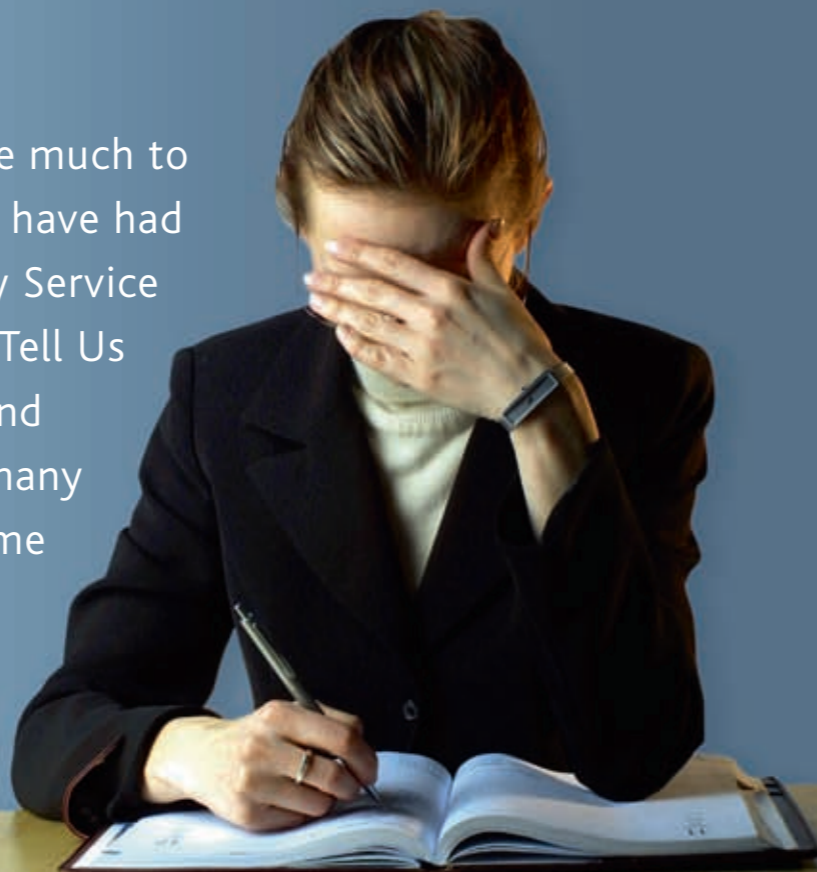


Tell Us Once



Lyn McDonald is Director of the cross government Tell Us Once Birth and Bereavement Programme, which is rolling out a new service across the country during 2011 through local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. It is already running in 43 local authorities and most others will come on board between June and November this year. We spoke to Lyn about the service and how it affects bereaved families and Funeral Directors.

“As a sole relative I have much to attend to but already I have had contact from Exeter City Library Service and the Passport Office. I think Tell Us Once is a wonderful initiative and such a help when there are so many organisations to contact at a time when there is so much else to think about.” Mrs D, Exeter



What is Tell Us Once?

The Tell Us Once service is all about making it easier for people to deal with government at a time where they may be feeling confused and vulnerable.

When we started out a few years ago we did a lot of research into what sort of service people wanted and designed it around their needs. We also worked with CRUSE, the bereavement charity, to make sure that frontline staff could deal sensitively with people who were bereaved.

Relatives or friends dealing with the estate may be facing a lot of bureaucracy and are usually feeling overwhelmed. This can be especially true if the person they have lost

was the one who did all the paperwork.

They face multiple demands to provide the same information many times to government. Often the information is required to be produced in different ways. This meant purchasing additional death certificates and making numerous phone calls or writing letters. Research we carried out showed that in some cases people had to contact government up to 44 times when reporting a death.

So when notifying a death, bereaved people may have to face dealing with forms, call centres or visits to government offices.

Our research shows that the Tell Us Once factor can reduce the average number of

these contacts by seven. Less time is spent on providing the same information many times – Tell Us Once takes the information just once and reuses it on behalf of the customer if the customer agrees.

Who do you notify?

In central government we notify HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Identity and Passport Service (IPS) and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). We also notify all the parts of a local authority that need to know such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Library services and electoral services.

Case study

Mrs Lee (name changed to preserve anonymity) visited a registrar that offered the Tell Us Once service to register the sudden death of her husband. She was very distressed during the interview and feeling completely overwhelmed as she had two young children of six and eight years old.

The bereavement support officer advised her about claiming Bereavement Benefit and issued a claim form for a Funeral Payment as the family received Working Tax Credits.

She said that the service had taken a huge weight off her shoulders because her children were so young and she wouldn't have been able to ring around various agencies and authorities to inform them of her husband's death at this very difficult time. The Tell Us Once service had made a huge difference at a time when she needed help the most.



Where can people access the service?

The service for reporting a death is offered face to face, by telephone and, from the end of the year it will be available online using the Directgov website. The service is offered where it is most convenient for people to go such as the register office, local authority customer service centre or even in the hospital.

How does Tell Us Once help Funeral Directors?

The Tell Us Once service is a way for people to deal with government more easily at a time when there is much to do. This can help to take the pressure off funeral directors who may be asked by relatives for advice on what needs to be done. It provides a single point

of contact to guide customers to the kind of help they need.

Any customer who uses the Tell Us Once service will also be directed to the DWP Bereavement Service, where they can do an eligibility check for other DWP benefits including the State Fund Funeral Payment.

We understand all the work that funeral directors do for their customers and hope they will find this will support them better when they are helping their customers. With benefits being resolved earlier for customers, funeral directors will be able to focus more on the work they do with their customers.

Are there any plans to expand the service?

Yes, most definitely. We are working to expand the number of services covered.

Customers have indicated they would like the service extended in areas such as banks, insurance companies and utilities so we are looking at that.

Is there any more information online?

Some basic information about the Tell Us Once service and how to use it can be found on the Directgov website http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_188740.

From Summer 2011 anyone wanting to use the service to report a death will be able to do a postcode search on Directgov to find out if the service is available in their area. ▲