



Scottsdale *MoneyWISE*  
PROFESSIONAL FINANCIAL ADVISERS

## Scottsdale's Financial Check List for the Bereaved

Losing your partner is so traumatic that at the time you'll be unlikely to be able to think clearly, or want to focus on financial decisions. Unfortunately, some financial decisions are irreversible and will affect the rest of your life.

This guide has been compiled by Scottsdale MoneyWISE to help you navigate these decisions and prevent you from feeling completely overwhelmed. We have prioritised what's required and then broken it down into manageable chunks.

### Immediate requirements

Don't be afraid to ask for help at this time. The tasks that need to be carried out within a week of a death include:

- 1) Gather together the following information about your spouse and store it in a safe place. This will make some of the tasks ahead a little easier.
  - National Insurance number
  - NHS number
  - Birth certificate
  - Marriage certificate
  - Child benefit number (if appropriate)
  - Tax reference number
  
- 2) Pull together all the legal and financial documents that include, or were held solely by, your spouse. These may include:
  - Will
  - Trusts
  - Powers of attorney
  - Recent tax returns
  - Bank statements
  - Credit card and loan statements
  - Insurance policies
  - Salary or pension income
  - Pension arrangements
  - Savings and investments
  - Social security
  - Mortgage (although you don't have to contact the mortgage company yet)
  - Contracts relating to vehicle(s)

- 3) Make a list of bills and their due dates so you don't miss any, and avoid paying penalties. If payments leave your account automatically, make sure you have enough money in your account to cover a few months. The list often includes things like:
  - Gas
  - Electricity
  - Water
  - Council Tax
  - Home telephone
  - Mobile phone(s)
  - Broadband
  - Cable or satellite TV
  - Mortgage or rent
  - Car and home insurance
  - Loans and credit cards
  - Mobile phone
  - Subscriptions and membership fees
- 4) If your partner was still working, you need to notify their employer and ask for information about any unpaid salary, potential insurance pay-outs, and retirement accounts. We can help you work through this and understand it.
- 5) Contact your local authority to see if they use the Tell Us Once service (where you can contact several government departments in one go to tell them about the death). This will cover departments including local libraries, electoral services, the council tax office, HM Passport Office, the DVLA, HMRC for tax, and the Department for Work and Pensions. You might find that this helps reduce some of your outgoings – for example, it'll give you a council tax discount. If your local authority doesn't offer this service you'll need to contact these departments directly yourself.

### **Tasks to complete within the first few months**

There's quite a lot to do in the first month or two. Don't be tempted to put tasks off as they must be done, and many will affect you in the long term. If you need assistance, we're on hand to help with some of the more complicated aspects of this list:

- 1) Obtain official copies of the death certificate. Think about how many copies you will need to speed up the process of informing every organisation that you need to.
- 2) Change the details on joint accounts (e.g. utilities, banks, credit cards, phones) so the companies will be able to take instructions directly from you. You'll be asked to provide copies of the death certificate.
- 3) Close any accounts that are in your late partner's name that you don't need to keep.
- 4) If you have children and your spouse received Social Security payments, make an appointment with your local Social Security office to tell them.
- 5) We can help you find out if your partner was eligible for retirement benefits that you're not aware of.
- 6) If your partner's death was unexpected or sudden, there may be payments due from various insurance policies – we can help you look into this.

## When to make other decisions

We advise that, where possible, people avoid making irreversible financial decisions until they have adjusted to their new circumstances. We suggest waiting for six to twelve months.

Waiting means you avoid agreeing to arrangements that you may come to regret. For example, some people rush to pay off their mortgage and then feel lost in their own home, or find the reminders of their loved one too upsetting. Others feel pressured to move closer to family members, but then miss the communities in which they'd previously lived.

These suggestions below are to help you with long-term planning. We're able to provide professional financial planning advice when you need it.

- 1) Be penny-wise until things have settled down enough for you to think clearly. This is particularly important if you're used to living on two incomes.
- 2) Don't be rushed into using insurance pay-outs to buy financial products such as annuities, stocks and shares – especially if you're not a highly experienced and knowledgeable investor.
- 3) You're very welcome to make an appointment with one of our advisers to talk about putting your money somewhere safe, until you're ready to discuss your options.
- 4) For most people, their spouse is the main beneficiary and/or decision-maker in their will: reread and rethink your will. We can recommend advisers who can help you with this.

## Other considerations

**Dividing the estate:** Probate is the process of legally distributing the estate of a deceased person according to the wishes expressed in their will. If there is no will, different rules apply: for example, in England the spouse will automatically inherit personal possessions and the first £250,000 of the deceased's estate. If the estate is worth more than this, there is a complicated set of rules that the Inland Revenue will apply to the remainder.

**Tax changes:** Your tax allowances and payments will change. For example, if you're receiving the Married Couple's Allowance, it will stop at the end of the tax year. If your partner was receiving the Blind Person's Allowance and, at the time of death, hadn't used up their full quota for the year, you can ask HMRC to transfer the allowance to you for the remainder of the tax year.

Most people also need to complete a Bereavement Benefit coding form so HMRC can adjust the tax code on their income.

**Inheritance Tax (IHT):** There's no IHT to pay on estates left to a spouse or civil partner. Also, if a partner passes away and hasn't used all their IHT allowance, it can be passed on to the surviving partner – a substantial tax saving on inherited funds.

IHT rules change frequently, and it's worth checking them because some gifts are subject to IHT, even if the giver was alive when the gift was made.

**State pensions:** Depending on age, and whether you and your partner are retired or not, you are likely to receive financial assistance through the State Pension system. However, the rules surrounding how much you may be entitled to also change frequently, so it's worth checking this as soon as you're able to.

### **Useful sources of information, advice and support**

By clicking on one of these links you are departing from the regulatory site of Scottsdale MoneyWISE. Neither Scottsdale MoneyWISE nor Intrinsic is responsible for the accuracy of the information contained within the linked site.

[www.ageuk.org.uk/information-and-advice](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-and-advice)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

[www.gov.uk/death-spouse-benefits-tax-pension/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/death-spouse-benefits-tax-pension/benefits)

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency)

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-passport-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-passport-office)

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs)

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-public-guardian](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-public-guardian)

[www.gov.uk/tell-us-once](http://www.gov.uk/tell-us-once)

[www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/](http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/)

[www.nafd.org.uk](http://www.nafd.org.uk)

[www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

[www.saif.org.uk](http://www.saif.org.uk)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

[www.thebereavementregister.org.uk](http://www.thebereavementregister.org.uk)

[www.veterans-uk.info](http://www.veterans-uk.info)

[www.warwidows.org.uk](http://www.warwidows.org.uk)

### **Scottsdale MoneyWise Limited**

Tel: 01908 226400

Email: [info@sc-mw.co.uk](mailto:info@sc-mw.co.uk)

7 Copperhouse Court

Caldecotte

Milton Keynes

MK7 8NL

[www.scottsdalemoneywise.co.uk](http://www.scottsdalemoneywise.co.uk)