INFORMATION SHEET RELATING TO DEATHS IN BARBADOS

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When the death occurs overseas, family and friends in the UK can feel additional distress as they are unfamiliar with foreign procedures and perhaps are unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our High Commission in Barbados are ready to help as far as they can. You may be uncertain about what to do next or who to contact for advice. These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make. You should be aware that Barbadian procedures differ significantly to those in the United Kingdom and that, while we understand your need for arrangements to be made quickly, this is not always possible.

The information contained in this document is not meant to be a definitive statement of the law, nor is it to be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice.

Autopsies (Post-Mortems)

In Barbados a post-mortem is carried out to establish the cause of a sudden death. Post-mortems are usually carried out within 2-3 days from the deceased being placed in the mortuary. A copy of the death certificate is provided to the next of kin.

A copy of the post-mortem report is not usually provided to the family. The British High Commission can request a copy on behalf of the next of kin, although it is more usually done on behalf of the local British Coroner conducting an inquest into the death.

There have been no documented cases of a hospital or mortuary seeking to retain organs of foreign persons, either with or without the consent of the next of kin.

Mortuary Facilities

There are mortuary facilities at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which maintains a limited number of cold storage areas. All major funeral directors in Barbados maintain cold storage areas also and, except in a case where mass casualties may arise, these facilities are adequate.
Repatriation and Burial

Following the issue of the death certificate, an inspector from the Department of Health will examine the body to ensure there are no communicable diseases and verify the embalming documentation. Once this has been carried out satisfactorily the funeral directors will make arrangements for repatriation.

There are facilities in Barbados catering for Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish burial. There are also cremation facilities. If a local burial or cremation takes place, it will not be possible for an inquest into the death to take place in the UK.

Registration of the death

The Barbados Authorities will issue a death certificate in English. This is likely to be issued within 2 days of the post-mortem. Barbadian death certificates do not give details of the cause of death, as would be the case in the UK.

Deaths in Barbados may be registered with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. This form of death registration is not compulsory. However, the advantages are that a) you will have a British form of a death certificate b) a permanent and accessible record of the death will be kept at the General Register Office in the United Kingdom.

To receive a British form death certificate, an application should be made online at www.gov.uk/register-a-death. There is a statutory fee for this which is payable online when making the application.

Return of Personal Effects

The International funeral directors do not accept personal effects as a matter of course. The Directors will arrange for the deceased to be repatriated in the clothes they were wearing. In the case of a tourist with no accompanying companion or friends, the hotel will usually be asked to liaise and return personal effects to the next of kin.

Police/Judicial Inquiries

In the event of a suspicious death, the Police will carry out any preliminary investigations. If they are unable to establish a criminal cause of the death, a magistrate will order a coroner's inquest.

Coroner’s inquests can be slow and, in certain cases, can take up to two years before they are completed. The coroner will compile a report. This is not usually provided to the family, but the British High Commission may request a copy on their behalf.

If the Police believe criminal activity is involved they will complete the investigation and pass the file to the Director of Public Prosecutions Office (DPP).
When/if the DPP is satisfied there are grounds for prosecution, a preliminary enquiry will be opened in the magistrate court. Both the prosecution and defence are invited to give evidence. When the enquiry is completed the magistrate will assign the case to the assizes in the High Court.

The prosecution can request that a committal be made on papers, however the defence counsel must agree to this.

The police do not normally pass a copy of their investigative file to the family and requests from the British High Commission to obtain such files have been turned down in the past.

**Legal Aid**

Barbados placed a reserve on the right to free legal assistance when acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1973. Therefore free legal assistance does not exist in Barbados. Defendants may make a case to the Court for legal assistance but approval is rare and usually limited to cases of murder involving family members.

**Compensation**

As far as we are aware, there is no Government criminal compensation scheme in existence in Barbados.

**Local Funeral Homes**

Lyndhurst Funeral Home is the main undertaker handling repatriations to the United Kingdom. They work in conjunction with the appointed International Undertakers (Rowland Brothers, Keynons or the Co-Op), and have a great deal of experience in ensuring things go smoothly.

Peter Griffith
Lyndhurst Funeral Home
Passage Road
St Michael
Barbados

Tel: 426 4170 (24/7)
Home: 425 1284
Cell: 232 0450

British High Commission
Barbados