



**As a morbid treat this Halloween, David Lemon, our senior analyst, has taken the opportunity to examine the main causes of death in Dorset.**

By [David Lemon](#)

As Halloween approaches and our minds turn towards other-worldly creatures like ghosts, spirits and ghouls, we thought it might be interesting to let you know how people slip this mortal coil... and then return to move your furniture around and go bump in the night.

In 2014, 8,438 people from Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset died. Nearly a third of these were from just six conditions. Although heart disease is still the largest killer, the good news is that it, along with most of the other main causes of death, has dropped over the last eight years. Of course they will never disappear completely because, well, you got to die from something right?

The only cause of death that has shown any real increase is dementia. From 2010, there has been a drive to improve how this is recorded, so that will account for some of the rise. However, it is important to understand that people don't really die from dementia, but rather it is an underlying cause of death, one that can spark a chain of events leading to death from something else: a fall, forgetting to take medication, or failing look after yourself.

In fact, when we examine what the actual cause of these 'dementia deaths' is, it turns out that it is mostly pneumonia or simply old age. This could actually be viewed as a positive thing as we are seeing fewer people die from disease, and more from just the inevitable passage of time.

One final thing to note is how the common cause of death of people from different areas changes. Despite the wider Dorset county area having the population with the most older people in it, which would make you think dementia would be the highest cause, it is actually the second highest, with chronic heart disease being the most common; whereas, in Bournemouth, which has a younger population, dementia is the most common cause of death. The reasons behind these differences are not clear, but could range from variations in death recording practices, to more wider economic and social impacts on mental and physical health.

Well that was fun, wasn't it? Fluffy bunnies, candy floss and rainbows next time, I promise.

**David Lemon is a senior public health analyst for Public Health Dorset**



Blog: Don't fear the reaper

