

Order of service

Once you have decided on the content of the funeral ceremony you may wish to have an order of service printed. These can include photos, poems, pictures, readings, prayers and the words to hymns and songs. They can become a very personal memento for people to take home.

Carrying the coffin

There may be friends and family who would like to help carry the coffin into the ceremony. It may be something you wish to do yourself and parents may wish to carry a child or baby's coffin. You may prefer for the funeral directors staff to do this.

Guard of honour

Friends or colleagues may wish to provide a guard of honour as the coffin enters the church or chapel.

Transport

There are also options of how your loved one can make the journey to the funeral – limousine or hearse, horse drawn hearse, 4x4, classic car hearse, motorbike and sidecar are just a few of the options.



Decoration

There are many ways that you can make the funeral ceremony venue more personal – you could use flowers, candles, pictures and mementos. You may decide to put a favourite item – a teddy for example on the top of the coffin as well as or instead of flowers. You may also be able to rearrange the seating into a less formal layout. Some families like to sit by the coffin and to be able to see the people who have come to the ceremony.



Mourners

Do you want people to come to the funeral in traditional black or would you prefer them to wear bright colours as a celebration of life? You may want them to wear their football shirts or an item in the favourite colour of your loved one. There are many options but you will need to let people know. Use our 'Telling People' list to help.

Remembrance

At some funerals people attending are given a small memento as they leave the ceremony – a sprig of Rosemary for remembrance, a memorial card with a photo or even an organ donor card. Your funeral director can also provide cards to be filled in at the funeral so you know who has attended.

After the ceremony

You may wish to hold a gathering after the funeral, you may prefer not to.

This can be held at home, a local hall or function room at the local pub or club. Catering can be as simple or complicated as you wish – many venues will provide food or family and friends may wish to help with this. You can personalise the gathering in the same way as the venue for the ceremony with photos and mementos. You could include a Book of Remembrance for people to record their own thoughts and memories.

Donor Family Network

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Arranging the Funeral

Arranging the funeral of a loved one can be very distressing. But it can also give comfort by providing a special way for friends and family to say goodbye and be a practical help in giving people something positive to do. It also helps to organise the funeral in a way that reflects your loved one and the love you have for them. Your loved one may already have made plans or you may have talked about their wishes before.

This booklet will help you to prepare and explain some of the options that you have. Try to read this before you meet your funeral director, it may help to have had time to think about some of the decisions you have to make.

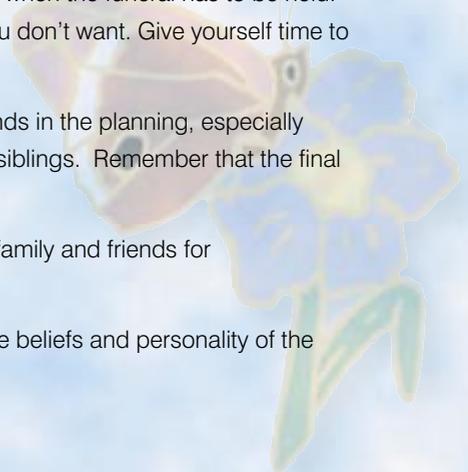
Before you start

Take your time. There is no set time scale to when the funeral has to be held. Don't be rushed or forced into something you don't want. Give yourself time to think about the decisions.

Where possible involve family and close friends in the planning, especially children but also parents/grandparents and siblings. Remember that the final decisions are yours.

Choose your funeral director carefully – ask family and friends for recommendations.

A funeral is very personal. It should reflect the beliefs and personality of the person who died.



Things to know

- There is no legal requirement to hold a funeral ceremony
- You do not have to use a member of the clergy – you could ask a friend to conduct the ceremony. It is also possible to have a Humanist (non religious person) to conduct the ceremony for you
- You do not have to hold the funeral in a licensed or religious building
- You can ask for religious icons to be taken down or covered in most cemetery/crematorium chapels
- You may wish to book a double slot if the ceremony is to be held at the cemetery or crematorium so that you are not rushed
- You do not have to have the coffin lowered or slide behind curtains – it can be left where it is in full view until after you have left

Choices

You will have to make decisions that you may find very upsetting. Take your time.

Burial or cremation

You may already know if your loved one wished to be buried or cremated. Sometimes this is for different reasons – religious beliefs, personal preference, and family tradition. You may not know their preference and have to make the decision yourself.

Burials can be in an existing grave or in a new grave. Burials can also take place at sea, in your garden or in special woodlands. These options may take more organisation - you will need to discuss them with your funeral director.

Cremation involves choosing what to do with the ashes, there are several options and you don't have to decide straight away. You don't have to scatter them all in the same place.

Burial – the ashes can be buried in the local cemetery.

Scattered – this can be done in the cemetery or garden of remembrance or at a place special to your loved one.

Sometimes you will need permission - if it is the local football ground, for instance.

Kept – some families prefer to take the ashes home in an urn or other container and keep them somewhere special.

Unusual – there are other options which are slightly more unusual and maybe more expensive. Options include sending ashes into space, making the ashes into gems and jewellery, and making them into fireworks.



Coffins and clothes

You will need to choose a coffin, a lining for the coffin and what your loved one will wear. These are distressing questions but are an important part of saying goodbye by making choices that reflect the wishes and personality of your loved one.

Remember there are lots of different things you can have, take time to make your decision. Your funeral director will have pictures to help you choose, there is a wide variety of coffins available from cardboard and bamboo through to ornate oak caskets.

Your loved one can wear their own clothes or a gown (sometimes called a shroud). The funeral director may also arrange for hair and make up to be done – it helps if you can supply a recent photograph and their own make up. You may decide that you want to apply the lipstick etc yourself and this is also possible. If you choose for your loved one to wear their own clothes don't forget to include underwear and shoes. You will also need to decide on items such as jewellery, particularly wedding and engagement rings, and also items such as rosaries.

Viewing

Going to see the body of a loved one is a very personal decision - some people want to and some don't. Going to see the body is another way of saying goodbye. If you decide not to go you could send something special to go into the coffin - a letter, picture or photograph. It is also important for children to feel included in this.

Some families take the body into church the night before the funeral for special prayers.

Other families take the body home either for the whole period leading up to the funeral; just the night before or for a brief period of time. It may be important to you that your loved one comes home, even if only briefly. This can be done but you will need help and advice from your funeral director.

Funeral ceremony

The funeral ceremony is very personal and can take many different forms.

It may be a religious service in church; it may take place in a cemetery or crematorium chapel; it may or may not include the funeral service; it may be a reflection of loss or a celebration of life.

It is your choice.

Whatever combination you decide to have there are many ways in which you can personalise the ceremony.



Music

You may want to include music that was special to your loved one – Bob the Builder or the theme to Match of the Day, a piece of classical music or a rock anthem. You may want to have a certain piece played as the coffin is carried into the venue. You may choose to have hymns for everyone to sing.

You can choose from CDs, the organ or other instruments, the choir or even a piper to play a lament or bugler to sound the last post.

Some suggestions can be found on our website: www.donorfamilynetwork.co.uk

Readings, poems, prayers, speeches and tributes

The words that are said at a funeral can be very moving and very personal. You may choose a reading from the Bible or Holy Book, or for special prayers to be read.

You may have a piece from a book or a poem read. You or your family may want to write something - you don't have to read it out; that could be done by a friend or family member or by the person leading the ceremony.

You may wish to ask someone to make a spoken tribute – this could be the Clergyman, a friend or member of the family. If you do ask someone to do this, give them plenty of time to prepare. Ask them to write out what they are going to say so you can have a copy to keep.

Flowers and donations

When you are planning the funeral you will need to decide if you want people to send flowers. You may like lots of flowers or none at all. You may prefer flowers of a certain colour or just single stem flowers. Some families see the flowers as a last gift to their loved one. You may wish for family and close friends to send flowers and ask others to make a donation to a charity that was important to your loved one. It is also important to think of what will be done with the collection which is often taken as people leave the ceremony.

After the funeral you may want to take the flowers home and put them on your patio or garden. You could take a flower from each tribute and press them to make a keepsake.

Balloons and doves

Balloons can be released at the ceremony or gathering. This can be very poignant and is very suitable for a child's funeral. You may also want to consider a dove release. Doves symbolise peace, faith and love and can be another way to say goodbye.

