

# Guidelines for arranging a funeral

Provided by

**Freeman Brothers**

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## Introduction

The first few days following a death seem to consist of an endless succession of decisions, along with a great deal of paperwork. This booklet is intended to help you through the practicalities, with factual information and guidance regarding registration, arranging the funeral and any relevant legal matters.

Our experience has always been that dealing smoothly and conscientiously with the practical aspects of death can be a good way of coming to terms with the loss in the early stages. Bereavement affects people in a great variety of ways, none of them 'right' or 'wrong'. As funeral directors, our primary responsibility is to assist family and friends through the initial tasks that they face, so they can be satisfied that the funeral was conducted as they and the deceased person would have wished.

With this in mind, we have tried to include every alternative at all the points where a decision might be required, as well as giving brief descriptions of all the usual procedures involved.

If you have any further queries about the contents of this booklet, or anything which we have not included, please feel free to call us on one of our telephone numbers listed on the cover of this booklet. Our advice is free and willingly given.

We would respectfully request that, if at all possible, an appointment is made prior to you coming to our offices to make the funeral arrangements. This means we are able to guarantee that someone is available to see you, and that we are able to start our own processes in advance of your visit, which can greatly ease the whole procedure of arranging the funeral.



## Where the Death Takes Place

### In Hospital

When somebody dies in hospital, a doctor will usually issue a medical certificate (often referred to as a death certificate, although strictly speaking that is the document the Registrar gives you). Staff will then advise the family of how and where to register the death. It may be helpful to inform the hospital as to which funeral director you will be using, if you have decided at this stage.

Sometimes, for example if the death followed an operation, or if the person was only in hospital for a short time, the Coroner will have to be informed and a post mortem examination carried out to make certain of the cause of death. This is a legal requirement. When this happens the Coroner's Officer will keep in close touch with relatives, and inform you when you can proceed with the funeral arrangements. Usually, there is little or no delay in this situation.

If the Deceased has expressed a wish for his or her organs to be donated, or for a voluntary post mortem to assist in medical research, this does sometimes involve an extra day or two before the funeral can be arranged. Corneal removal, however, is a quick and simple procedure, and is the most common sort of organ donation.

The family would then usually make an appointment to visit the funeral director and arrangements will then be made to bring the body back to the Chapel of Rest.

### In a Nursing Home or Residential Home for the Elderly

When someone dies in a Nursing Home or Residential Home, the staff normally contact the funeral director within a relatively short time, so that the Deceased person can be taken to the Chapel of Rest. The staff will liaise between the family, the doctor and the funeral director to some extent, and ensure that a medical certificate is issued as necessary. The family may then register the death and arrange the funeral.

There is more information about registering a death on page 6.

### At Home

When a person dies at home, after an illness, the doctor who has been looking after him or her will probably issue a medical certificate, and confirm that the family can call the funeral director to take the Deceased to their Chapel of Rest. They can also proceed with registering and making funeral arrangements.

If the death was sudden or unexpected, however, or if the doctor has not seen the Deceased person within the last two weeks, the Coroner must be informed, and the police called to the house. Arrangements will be made for transporting the Deceased person into the care of the Coroner's Service while further investigation takes place.

### Elsewhere

**Abroad:** Procedures vary depending on the country concerned. If you want the Deceased person to be brought back to the UK, the easiest course is to contact a local funeral director, who will have experience of the required documentation and procedures and will guide you through them. If you choose to have the funeral in the country where the death occurred, the British Consul there can register the death, and perhaps nominate a funeral director.

**An accident on the road or at work:** The police will be called, and the case notified to the Coroner. If there is any possibility of a criminal prosecution, an inquest must have been opened before any funeral arrangements can be made.

**Suicide:** Again, the police and the Coroner will be involved, and a post mortem examination required. There is not usually any delay to the funeral, however.

**NOTE:** It is common practice for funeral directors' employees to drive across Britain for people who have died whilst away from home, or who wish their funeral to take place in a different area from that in which they lived. There is no foundation in the commonly held idea that there are legal or financial restrictions or penalties in transporting a body across county boundaries. The only factor is travelling costs.

## Registering a Death

1. This should be done within five days by a relative, someone present at the death, the occupier of the house where the death occurred, or the person responsible for arranging the funeral. The funeral director is not usually eligible to do this.
2. Registration must take place in the district where the death occurred. The county or unitary authority area is usually considered one district and so the death may be registered at any office within that area. If you cannot visit an office in that area, please ask for advice about registration by declaration.
3. Check when the Registrar is open. Advance appointments are usually required. Some of the Register Offices are not open full time so it is important to ensure someone will be available to see you.
4. Take the medical certificate and Deceased person's NHS card, if available. If the death was dealt with by the Coroner, there will be no medical certificate and the Coroner will advise when you may register. They will provide the Registrar with the relevant paperwork prior to your appointment. Please ask for more information.
5. Be ready with details such as address, previous name(s), date and place of birth, occupation, and date of birth of a surviving spouse.
6. Ask for as many copies of the death certificate as you think you will need, as they become more expensive if you apply later. Please also be aware some Registration offices still require payment by cash or cheque, and may not accept Credit or Debit cards.

## First Decisions

### Burial or Cremation?

Most people have a clear preference about this, of which their family will be aware. It is likely to be the first question the funeral director asks you. There may be a letter or Will which makes the wishes of the deceased person clear. There may also be a pre-paid funeral already arranged. If so, the main details will be on record at the funeral director's office.

(See paragraph on Prepayment Scheme on page 26).

### Burial

#### Burial in a Churchyard

If the Deceased person lived or died in the parish of an Anglican church with space available in the churchyard, and was a Christian of any denomination, he or she has a right to burial in that graveyard. Similarly, if there is already a family grave in that churchyard, with space for another interment, it may be used even if the deceased lived elsewhere. There are, however, some churchyards in this area which have no further space for new burials.

There would usually be a funeral service in the church attached to the churchyard, but other options include a short graveside ceremony, or a service held elsewhere.

It is worth noting that there are currently a number of restrictions on the style and material of headstones and other memorials on graves in churchyards. If you are likely to want a wider choice, you may prefer the less restrictive regulations of a cemetery. Please ask to speak to a member of staff from our sister company, J. Gumbrill Monumental Masons, for further advice.

#### Burial in a Cemetery or Burial Ground

Cemeteries and Burial Grounds are owned and operated by Local Authorities or Parish Councils. Often, rights of burial are sold for a number of years. The fee is normally substantially lower for a resident in the Borough or District than for someone from outside the area. Some Parish Councils restrict burials within their Burial Grounds to local residents or those with a strong local connection. If the family already own a plot with

space for a further burial, there is a scale of fees depending on the conditions of the original purchase.

Some people have a funeral service in their own local church, and then go on to the cemetery for the burial. Others prefer to use the Chapel attached to the cemetery, if there is one. A third possibility is to have a brief ceremony beside the grave itself, or to have a service elsewhere.

Your funeral director can advise on the rules and regulations concerning burial in the place of your choosing.

#### Green burial

There is increasing demand for 'natural' burial and the nearest green burial site is at Clayton Wood, south of Hassocks at the foot of the Downs. Most natural burial grounds work in the same way as cemeteries, in that a plot will need to be purchased (this can be done in advance). There will probably be more restrictions on the style of the coffin used and the type of memorial (if any) which may be erected.

#### Burial elsewhere

It is not illegal to bury a body in your own garden. The chief requirement is a death certificate and sufficient distance from any water courses. For precise details, consult a funeral director.

#### Cremation

The crematoria in our area are: the **Surrey and Sussex**, north of Worth, near Crawley; **Worthing**, which is at Findon, north of Worthing; Guildford, which is between Guildford and Godalming; **Chichester**, **Brighton** and **Leatherhead**.

All crematoria require the completion of an Application for Cremation. The funeral director will help with this form, which is usually completed by the next of kin or an Executor. It is a statutory requirement that this form must be at the Crematorium a minimum of three working days before the funeral can take place (together with other paperwork which will vary dependent on the circumstances of the death). This cannot be altered under any circumstances and it is therefore very difficult to arrange a cremation at very short notice.

Many crematoria have two chapels. All crematoria can supply an organist. Some will levy an additional fee for this service. All have facilities for playing recorded music. The majority of people choosing cremation now have the whole funeral taking place at the crematorium. A substantial number, however, do choose to have a church service to precede the committal at the crematorium, or a Memorial Service to be held in church afterwards. There is no requirement that a minister of religion conduct the funeral at a crematorium, if a secular ceremony is preferred.

Non-Christian religions are also given ample opportunity to conduct appropriate ceremonies. For those whose faith demands that the actual cremation be witnessed, special arrangements will be made.

Most Crematoria have the ability to display a picture of the deceased on a screen in their Chapels for the duration of the service. They also provide 'visual tributes', where a montage of photos provided is shown, usually to accompanying music. This is arranged by the family directly with the company who operate this system. Some can also, if requested, record services to be viewed at a later date and/or arrange to broadcast a service via a secure internet connection. All of these services may incur additional fees over the standard price of a cremation service.

### Date and Time

One of the most important considerations will be when the funeral is to take place, especially if there are mourners travelling from a distance or who have commitments which cannot be altered. The availability of the Church, Minister or Officiant, Crematorium and/or Cemetery are all outside of the funeral director's control. The funeral director is usually able to be most flexible in accommodating the desired date and time. A sensible suggestion is to find out any times when the most important attendees would not be readily available and to work around those with all parties to find a time which suits everyone. The funeral director should be made aware at the earliest possible opportunity of unsuitable times as well as any preferences. We suggest travel arrangements – especially flights – are not made before the date and time for the funeral is fixed, as alterations can be awkward (and costly) and may make an already difficult time more stressful for those concerned.

Time is booked at regular intervals by most crematoria. In practice this leaves about thirty minutes for the actual service. If a long service is planned, or a funeral with a great many mourners, there is an option of making a double booking. The cost of this varies depending on the crematorium concerned, as is the case with all other fees they will charge. The variation in amounts can be large and those concerned with costs may find benefit in choosing a different crematorium or asking if earlier times of day attract smaller fees.

Some families' prime concern is to have the funeral take place as soon as is possible (within constraints of practicalities such as cremation paperwork). It should be borne in mind that greater flexibility over the time of day of the service – for example, choosing to have the service earlier in the morning than might be most people's preference – is more likely to mean it can be on a sooner day. The 11.00am to 2.00pm (approximately) time of day tends to be most popular to enable people to have a reception afterwards, and there seems to be a slight preference for Mondays and Fridays to allow more distant mourners to either travel the day before or after the service.

### Cremation only

Over time, it has become more popular to accede to the wishes of someone who states that they do not want a funeral service at all, and instead to have what is known as a 'cremation only' funeral. The Deceased person is conveyed directly to the Crematorium without use of the Chapel or any formal service taking place there. This can also be used where a service has taken place elsewhere first and no-one wishes to attend the Crematorium. Some crematoria offer a reduced rate for this service, which is sometimes also known as 'direct cremation'.

In response to this, Freeman Brothers has introduced a cremation-only package. We start with the simplest arrangements possible, which involves the use of a hearsette instead of a hearse and only a pair of staff, and can customise this to include more traditional arrangements (such as visiting the Chapel of Rest, and collection of donations) if required.

We would, however, respectfully offer the following advice: a cremation-only funeral is not for everyone and it should be considered carefully. Many people find that the funeral is an essential part of the grieving process as it may help to close the chapter in which one is recently bereaved and start the new phase of life in which one gradually gets used to the person who has died no longer being part of our lives in the same way. In some senses, the funeral is as much for those close to the person who has died as it is for the Deceased person themselves. If you do wish to arrange a cremation-only funeral you may like to consider some other way of remembering the Deceased person or commemorating their life; perhaps a get-together with friends and family to share memories might be appropriate. Some people do this on the day when the cremation has been arranged, or include the interring of the ashes with this.

We always suggest that everyone discusses funeral arrangements long in advance of their death, so it is known what is wanted, and in these types of conversations, the family should not be afraid to express their own feelings about the Deceased person's plans. It may be that having a cremation-only funeral would be difficult for the next-of-kin, but that a compromise could be reached.

Some people may say they do not want a funeral when they really mean that they would not want a lengthy service in a place of worship, or a large attendance of distant relatives. In these circumstances, a small, private gathering of close family to listen to some favourite music may be more appropriate to meet their needs but may also help with the important function that a funeral service can fulfil for the family.

For more information on this, please see the section on 'Big Deal, Small Talk' on page 26.

## Other Decisions to Make

### The Officiant

The choice of who to officiate at the service is an important one, as it governs the style of the funeral service. You may know a religious officiant or have a friend who you wish to conduct the service – in that instance their availability must be considered when booking the day and time of the funeral. If you do not know an officiant, the funeral director will establish the type of service you would like and engage a suitable officiant for you. Some of the options available to you include:

### Church of England Minister

Every residence is part of a Church of England Parish which will (unless in a period of transition, called 'interregnum') have an incumbent (or resident) Minister. A Deceased person has the right to have their funeral conducted by the incumbent minister of the Parish in which they resided. It should be remembered that the Minister's availability will have to be considered when making funeral arrangements, and that if a service in church is required, the church's commitments will also need to be taken into account. It is not usually possible to have a church service without the incumbent Minister officiating, unless at their discretion and with prior consent. It should not be assumed that a previous incumbent Minister will be able, or willing, to return to their 'old' parish to officiate at a funeral service.

There is a set Church of England Funeral Service which the Minister needs to follow; the service will therefore include prayers (including The Lord's Prayer), at least one Bible Reading, and words which will no doubt be familiar to most people who have attended funerals in the past. While there are options for the family or friends to customise the service to an extent (for example, in choice of hymns and music, and in which Bible Reading(s) are used), it should be borne in mind that no aspect of this service can be excluded. Therefore, if you only wish to include some aspects (for example, The Lord's Prayer, but no other religious parts; or to sing a hymn but otherwise have a secular service), a Church of England Minister will not be able to officiate for you.



In the event of the Parish Church being interregnum, arrangements will usually have been made for a designated alternative Minister to be used in that period. If for any reason the family do not wish to use their Parish Minister, or s/he is unavailable, the funeral director may be able to call upon retired clergy to fulfil the same role.

### **Other Religious Denominations**

All religions will have their own beliefs surrounding funeral ceremonies. The funeral director is happy to liaise with an officiant of any faith, and will always try to find someone of any denomination to officiate if the family do not know someone appropriate. It may be the case within some faiths, however, that a Minister will be reluctant to take a service for someone who was not in their congregation, or non-practising.

### **Semi- or Non-religious Funerals**

Where the deceased and/or family do not have a specific religious belief, you may choose a Civil Celebrant. These are people whose profession is to carry out funeral and other services. They are not ordained to any faith but are trained in helping the family have what they would like in the service. Note that a Civil Celebrant differs from a Humanist officiant. The funeral director can recommend a Humanist officiant to take the service, but be aware that he or she will not allow there to be any religious aspect at all to the service. In contrast, a Civil Celebrant will be happy to accommodate hymns and/or prayers if that is the family's wish.

### **Choice of Music and Hymns**

You may have set ideas about the hymns and music you would like played during the service. If not, the person officiating at the funeral will guide you. At the crematorium, you may choose to use an organist (there may be an extra charge) or pre-recorded music, or both. During the service, hymns may be sung or music may be listened to. Music can be selected to be played as the congregation enter and exit, as well as at the time of committal. This is called 'voluntary music'. The choice of voluntary music can vary hugely from tunes of hymns played by the organist through to modern pop songs. Your funeral director can guide you as to what is possible and will need to know your choices in

advance to confirm details with the crematorium. In a church or other place of worship you may be restricted by their guidelines but do check with the Minister.

### **Transport Arrangements**

The hearse to transport the coffin to the funeral will be provided as a matter of course (although other options are available), but further cars are optional. The main decisions to be made are whether mourners wish to meet the hearse at the funeral venue or follow it – and if the latter, where from; and whether they wish to use their own transport or the funeral director's limousine(s). Where there is more than one venue, for example a church service followed by cremation, a combination of these arrangements can be made – for example, everyone travelling to the church in their own transport and meeting the hearse there, and then the main mourners using the funeral director's limousine(s) to follow the hearse to the crematorium.

### **The Chapel Of Rest**

Relatives and friends may wish to come and pay a last visit to the person they have lost, in the days before the funeral. There is a quiet Chapel for this purpose, where visitors may come for a private spell to use as they feel they need to.

It is often a difficult decision as to whether to do this, and nobody can adequately advise on such an emotional matter. It sometimes helps to think ahead to this time next year, and how you may feel if you have not said goodbye in the way you would wish. Many people do feel they have already done all that was necessary, especially if the death was expected, and took place, for example, in a hospice.

It is important to some people to see the Deceased person in the hope they will find them more at peace and while this is something which the funeral director will always strive to achieve, regrettably it cannot be guaranteed.

Similarly, there is no easy answer as to whether or not children should be brought to the chapel. Situations and individuals vary, but there are times when adults are afraid to show their distress to their children, which can leave a child quite confused. It is natural to be upset when someone dies, and there is no need to hide this from children, within reasonable bounds.



Sometimes, in spite of efforts the funeral director can make, a Deceased person's appearance may not be as people might wish to remember them. This can be especially true after accidents, and some illnesses also affect how someone might look once they have died. There is the option of coming and sitting beside the closed coffin, which is also possible for people who wish to spend time with the Deceased person without actually seeing them.

It is very common for relatives to wish to put a small token inside the coffin, a flower or photo or farewell note. For burial there are few materials that would raise objections. For cremation, slightly more care is required, but there are rarely any difficulties.

### **Jewellery**

You will be asked by the funeral director whether the Deceased person was wearing any jewellery, and if so, whether it is to be removed or not. If it is to be removed, it is helpful if it can be collected before the funeral takes place. If this is difficult, jewellery can be given to one of the mourners at the funeral. In either case, it is usual for a receipt to be signed.

### **Clothing**

Many people wish to provide clothes for the Deceased person to wear. These can be brought in at the time of making the funeral arrangements, or soon afterwards. It helps our staff if they know in good time that clothes are being provided. The alternatives are to use the nightclothes that were worn at the time of death, or a simple gown provided by the funeral director or the hospital.

### **Choice of Coffin Style**

Over recent years the availability of different styles of coffin has increased greatly. The vast majority are still 'coffin shaped', although we are also able to obtain American-style rectangular caskets if required. We offer complete choice of coffin, except for our Basic Funeral where by nature of the simpler arrangements offered, the choice is limited to either our most basic veneered coffin or a plain cardboard alternative.

A 'traditional style' coffin will either be made of a wood veneer or solid wood and will vary from a very simple style through to panelled designs with a raised lid. All are appropriate for burial or cremation though many people prefer to select a solid wood coffin when the Deceased person is to be buried. We furnish and fit all coffins on our premises and most of the solid wood range are handmade at our North Parade office by our own staff. We are very unusual to still work in the respect, which used to be the norm for all funeral directors.

There are also a wide variety of coffins made from non-traditional materials. These include 'natural' materials such as willow, wicker, bamboo and seagrass, which many people feel are an environmentally-friendly choice as well as being attractive in appearance. There are also companies who paint cardboard or veneered coffins to set or bespoke designs, meaning the coffin can become very personalised if required. The options are far too numerous to be detailed but your funeral director can discuss what is available if necessary. It should be noted that, while many people feel that cardboard is a cost-effective alternative to a more traditional coffin, anything but the most simple of designs will in fact usually be more expensive to obtain than our simplest veneered coffin.

People often assume that non-traditional coffins can be obtained at a lower cost, but they are often hand-made, which affects the price at which a funeral director will be able to obtain one. Any coffin which has to be ordered specially may take some days to arrive and this may affect the ability to have a funeral service at very short notice.

### **Flowers or Donations**

Many people feel that it is a needless extravagance for a lot of friends and more distant relatives to buy flowers, especially for a cremation. It can be difficult to know what to do with them afterwards, too. To satisfy the wishes of mourners to contribute something, there is very often a fund in memory of the Deceased person, usually to an established charity. The funeral director will generally handle these donations, and forward them to the charity concerned.

Money donated to charity in memory of the Deceased person is held by the funeral director for at least five weeks after the funeral, and then forwarded to the charity concerned with a list of donors and the amount given. A similar list, with the total sum received, is sent to the family. Some charities acknowledge every donation individually, as well as a letter of thanks to the relatives, whilst others merely send a single receipt to the funeral director. Donors should be informed, where possible, that cheques should be payable to the charity, not to the funeral director. Freeman Brothers also provides an online tribute service. This can be found at [www.freemanbrothers.co.uk/remember](http://www.freemanbrothers.co.uk/remember). These pages allow for memories to be shared, candles to be lit and donations to charity to be made in memory of the person who has died.

However, some do feel that a funeral demands a substantial showing of flowers – especially if it is a burial. When a young person dies, many people feel a particular need to send flowers. The usual system is for florists to deliver tributes to the Chapel of Rest in time for the funeral director to make a note of all the names on the flower cards, and to arrange them appropriately in the hearse. If necessary a special car can be provided to transport a very large number of flowers.

The tradition of delivering flowers to a local hospital or nursing home after the funeral has somewhat fallen out of fashion due to the reluctance of those establishments to accept them. We would suggest such donations would only be accepted when there is a direct connection to the Deceased person, and even then would advise that it is customary to check to ensure it will be welcomed.

Normally, the funeral conductor will remove cards from the tributes after a cremation and hand them to a member of the family, so they can be kept.

### Condolence Books

In the event of a large funeral, it can be very difficult for the family to know exactly who attended the service. Books of Condolence are increasing in popularity as a means of ensuring everyone's message remains in the same place and, unlike the more traditional system of attendance cards, the family do not have to worry about a suitable means of storage. The book itself then becomes an important keepsake for the future.

### Service Sheets

A printed Order of Service is becoming increasingly popular both as a memento of the funeral and a help to guide mourners through the service. Words of hymns and readings, photographs and other images can all be included. We offer an in-house printing service and are able to meet most requirements. Please ask for a copy of our Order of Service leaflet for more information including prices.

### Press Notices

Although less common these days, most local newspapers still publish information about recent deaths and forthcoming funeral arrangements on their 'Announcements' page. Notices can be inserted by the funeral director and the cost added to the final account. The Times or the Daily Telegraph are the customary national newspapers for a notice, however these are costly in comparison to a local newspaper. It is usual to choose one or the other of the two papers, and to limit the wording where practicable.

### Checklist for Arranging the Funeral

- Burial or cremation?
- Will a particular Officiant be required?
- Any limousines needed?
- Start from the house or meet at the church, cemetery or crematorium?
- Hymns or special music?
- Chapel visiting?
- Flowers or donations?
- Newspaper announcements?
- Arrangements for the ashes? (see page 23)
- Service sheets?
- Attendance cards/Book of Condolence

## A Baby or Child's Funeral

When a child (at whatever age) dies parents are presented with a range of decisions which they have probably not ever considered before. Most of the topics so far covered in this booklet are relevant to a baby's funeral, except for the style of coffin. There are an increasing number of special coffins available for babies and children but many parents still prefer a simple white coffin covered in a flock material.

All deaths have to be registered, even if the death is that of a child. Unfortunately, in the case of a baby who dies soon after being born, this may mean that both the birth and the death have to be registered at the same time. The hospital where the birth took place will be able to advise on the procedures which need to take place and the paperwork which will be required.

A baby who is stillborn after 24 weeks' gestation must be registered and a burial or cremation must take place. The parents do not need to arrange this; the hospital will be able to explain what other arrangements are possible. Before 24 weeks, none of this is necessary if the parents decide it is not in their wishes.

Whether the baby is stillborn or dies after being alive, the funeral choices are the same. It is recommended that any decisions are made carefully to ensure the parents' wishes are fully carried out.

For a child's funeral, the family will often prefer that a hearse not be used at all. A lighter-coloured vehicle is available if required. There are many ways the funeral director can help the parents in remembering a baby or child after their death, such as taking hand- or footprints or bringing the coffin home for a short while. As with all funerals, the parents should feel free to discuss their requirements and the funeral director will do their best to facilitate those arrangements.

Organisations such as The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS); the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths; or the Compassionate Friends can offer useful support and information.

## The Funeral Itself

Sometimes mourners follow the coffin into the church or chapel, but families might well prefer to be seated before the coffin is carried in, especially in winter, or if there are elderly or infirm relatives to be considered. The funeral will be organised throughout by a senior member of staff (usually referred to as the 'conductor') who will take charge of every detail. The conductor will indicate to mourners the appropriate time to go into the church or chapel and direct them to their seats; guide them on when to leave, and will be aware of exactly what has been arranged regarding music, flowers, transport and other elements of the funeral. Crematorium or church staff will provide music as required. Four bearers are normally provided to carry the coffin. If the family wish to use their own bearers, this can be arranged. The funeral director will usually make the request that the family members who wish to bear the coffin attend a practice session in advance of the funeral to familiarise themselves with the process involved. Sometimes it may be necessary to use more than four bearers. This can be for a variety of reasons, such as if the carrying distance is long, or the Deceased person is an unusual size. The funeral director will advise if this is the case and the additional charges for this.

In the case of a **cremation**, it is usual now for the crematorium curtains to close around the coffin, but not for it to be removed to the area behind until after everyone has left the chapel. Some families prefer the curtains to be left open. The cremation itself will usually take place later the same day. There is no possibility of ashes from more than one cremation becoming mixed together because ashes are carefully removed after every one. Arrangements can be made for a witness to be present at the cremation, if this is a religious requirement or otherwise requested.

Flowers will be laid out in a special area outside the chapel for mourners to see. They will remain in the same position all day.

With a **burial** in a churchyard or cemetery, after the service has taken place in the church, the usual procedure is for the coffin to be carried out to the grave, with the Officiant and family members, where the interment takes place.

The grave will be filled in immediately after the mourners have left. Flowers may remain on the grave.

Sometimes, attendees may assume that the burial part of the service is private or only for immediate family, as was once traditional. This is particularly the case in those instances where the burial is not in the same place as the service e.g. if it is in a cemetery or burial ground after a church service. It is useful to make your wishes in this respect clear to the funeral director and Officiant, who can they ensure the wider circle of mourners know whether or not they are welcome or expected to attend. If you are having a printed order of service, appropriate wording can also be used to convey your wishes. Please ask for more assistance.

## Afterwards

### **The Cremated Remains (Ashes)**

Once a cremation has taken place there are a number of options regarding the cremated remains. If the family wish them to remain at the crematorium, they will probably be contacted directly about the range of memorials and services available, if there is a significant choice. Different crematoria offer different selections.

If a member of the family has previously been cremated at the same crematorium, there will be a record of the position of the cremated remains, whether scattered or interred, and the two sets of remains can usually be reunited.

If the family wish to scatter cremated remains privately, or to have them interred in a family grave, or in a new cremation plot, they will be collected from the crematorium by the funeral director a few days after the funeral. If required, the funeral director will liaise with a church Minister and arrange for an interment ceremony, with or without relatives present.

Many cemeteries have cremation plots which are supplied under similar terms to plots for burial. Precise details vary between cemeteries. Such plots can be marked with stone tablets. Most churchyards have a Garden of Remembrance, which is specifically designated for the burial of cremated remains.

The funeral director can provide a casket suitable for the interment of cremated remains. These are usually wooden with the name of the deceased engraved on a small plaque on the lid. A choice of styles is available. Please note that unless requested otherwise, cremated remains will be returned in the urn from the crematoria. Some churches or cemeteries will request the remains are interred loose or in a specific type of casket, e.g. biodegradable. Please check that the casket you have selected will be suitable for the final resting place of the cremated remains.

It sometimes happens that a decision cannot immediately be made regarding the cremated remains, in which case they may either be temporarily left at the crematorium or at the funeral director's premises. After a month the crematorium will wish to know what is to be done, while the funeral director may offer a longer period of time before the choice is made. Charges may be levied for long-term cremated remains storage, but most people find that a few weeks is enough time for the decision.

### **Payment and Legal Responsibility**

A breakdown of the different expenses will be provided in the form of a full estimate for the cost of the funeral. This will also include other fees and disbursements made to the crematorium, doctors, the Minister and any others. This estimate is compiled at the time the funeral arrangements are made, and any financial complications or difficulties should be discussed then.

The individual who makes the funeral arrangements becomes responsible for the costs. It is generally quite acceptable for all financial matters to be handled by a solicitor, and the funeral director will be happy to send the account directly to the solicitor.

Monies are available to contribute towards the cost of funeral arrangements where the relative making the arrangements can satisfy the Social Fund that they meet the criteria for this assistance. Please note, this is based on the circumstances of the living relative, not the Deceased person. Eligibility is assessed by the JobCentrePlus. It should not be assumed that funding will be granted, and it is certain that even a maximum award will not cover the full cost of even the most simple funeral.

It is usual for the funeral director to request a deposit where the account is not being dealt with by a solicitor or a pre-payment scheme. This will usually be to cover the costs incurred through carrying out the funeral e.g. crematorium or cemetery fees, newspaper notices and so on. Payment is requested before the funeral takes place and can be made by Credit or Debit card, BACS, cash, or a cheque or Bankers' Draft. If there are concerns about the ability to pay for the funeral arrangements, please express these to the funeral director as soon as possible. There are many ways to reduce the costs of

the funeral without affecting the dignity of the deceased or the quality and feel of the funeral ceremony.

*All of the above are matters to be discussed and decided upon when making arrangements for the funeral during a visit to the funeral director's office. If required, a home visit by a member of staff can be arranged, although, due to distance selling regulations, this may have an impact on the possible date of the funeral.*

## Prepayment Scheme

Freeman Brothers operates its own prepayment scheme, whereby the funeral can be paid for at current prices, with no further expenditure, regardless of the date of the eventual death. This scheme is extremely flexible, covering burials, cremations, style of coffin, newspaper announcements, and even choice of memorials. Arrangements can be made for funerals in other parts of the country, if the individual concerned has moved. Funds are kept securely, with independent trustees, and clients are provided with full documentation regarding their membership of this scheme.

There is still a role for families, of course. For cremations, there must be a signature from a close relative, and often there will be a number of decisions still to be made. The primary advantages are two-fold – firstly, there is the economic advantage of knowing one's arrangements have been paid for. Our scheme guarantees nothing included ever needs to be paid for again. Secondly, there is the peace of mind which comes with having put plans in place and knowing that one's family will not have to make difficult decisions about arrangements when the time comes.

### **Big Deal, Small Talk**

We recognise that not everyone feels a pre-paid funeral is suitable for them, but may wish to leave a record of their preferences for their own arrangements. We have created our 'Big Deal, Small Talk' leaflets as a way of demonstrating that, although some people think that the idea of discussing their wishes is a big deal, in reality all that is required is some small talk. The leaflets are designed so that they may be completed without any assistance, and left in a safe place for loved ones to follow in the event of a death. Alternatively, it may form the basis of a discussion with friends and family as, for some people, it is important to know that the funeral being planned is appropriate for those who will be attending it. These leaflets are available free of charge from any of our branches.

## Memorials

Many people feel the funeral is not completed until there is a permanent marker on the grave or ashes plot. Freeman Brothers' sister company, J. Gumbrill, handles memorial work. If a headstone has been removed from a grave for a second burial, there will be a follow-up letter suggesting an additional inscription. If it is a new burial or a cremation plot, appropriate memorials can be supplied. A grave needs to be left to settle for at least six months before a stone can be affixed (and this may be longer dependent on ground conditions or regulations of the burial place in question). A memorial can take two or three months to make, especially if it is a handmade one, so there need only be a short interval before thinking about the stone.

As has been mentioned throughout, not every memorial will be appropriate for every place of rest. All churchyards and most cemeteries will have rules and regulations covering various aspects of what they allow such as materials which can be used or accepted sizes. J. Gumbrill will work with you to ensure the memorial not only represents a fitting tribute to the deceased but also that all these rules are met so that the memorial is appropriate to its final setting.

A special consideration with a memorial for an ashes plot will be the order in which the interment of the ashes and the placing of the memorial is carried out. An interment can be carried out in a relatively short time following the funeral while, as mentioned above, a memorial can take some weeks to produce. A decision will need to be made as to whether the ashes should be interred at an early opportunity and the plot left unmarked while the memorial work is completed, or whether the ashes should be retained in the care of the funeral director or a family member until the stone is ready, to enable it to be placed immediately after the interment. Either option is equally feasible so it is a personal choice dependent on how the family feels about having the resting place of the ashes unmarked versus having a longer duration between the funeral and the interment. It should be noted, however, that in rare exceptions, the burial place will have rules governing the order of this process, which cannot be overwritten.



## The Loss

It often happens that not until the funeral is behind them do people really become aware of what they have lost. In fact, one of the most positive aspects of a funeral is that it carries the newly bereaved through the first distressing days and gives them something practical to do. The rituals of death have always served this same purpose of easing the transition into the new phase of life for those left behind whilst at the same time acknowledging that a unique individual has gone.

However, it must be borne in mind that making decisions may be difficult in the light of the bereavement. It must be stressed that there is no necessity to have the funeral at any specific length of time after the death. Indeed it may be unhelpful to 'rush through' the arrangements and the funeral itself and realise later the whole period was something of a blur. The most important thing is to proceed at a pace that seems suitable.

One of the chief needs for many people at this time is to talk about the experiences and emotions of the recent days or weeks. There is often a fear that the deceased person will be forgotten, and talking about him or her, remembering episodes and habits from the life now ended can be very consoling. Particularly if there are children in the bereaved family, it is important for them to feel they can freely refer to Granny or Grandad, or whoever it may be, without a sense that this is unacceptable. This becomes even more important if they have lost a parent or sibling.

Many people in our culture regard it as undesirable to show strong emotion in front of children. Although this has the protection of children in mind, it can also lead to serious anxiety and confusion in the child. At the extreme, if there is no visible sign of grief, the logical conclusion the child may draw is that there is no justification for sadness, and their own feelings then become hidden and denied. Equally, at the other extreme, small children do need to feel that life goes on, and that death is an unavoidable part of our overall experience, so there can be difficulties if a close relative is severely incapacitated by grief for any length of time. The Charity Winston's Wish was set up

with the aim of helping children who have suffered bereavement of a close family member and they can assist you further. Their telephone number is 08088 020021 and their web address is [www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

Different individuals respond to loss in different ways. It is very common indeed for there to be an element of relief, for example, mixed with the sadness. This may be readily understood when a very ill or old person dies, but it can also be a prominent emotion in other circumstances. It is important to remember that there are distinct positive aspects to death, alongside the obviously painful ones. There is often a tendency to feel guilty about this, and to believe that any show of humour or optimism is misplaced around the time of a death. This is unfortunate for a number of reasons – not least because guilt can lead to a disabling degree of depression and an interruption of the healthier process of working through grief and sadness.

Loneliness is probably the greatest enemy at this time. Even if there are other people around, there is unlikely to be anyone who can replace a lost spouse or parent effectively, at least in the early days and weeks. Each time someone close to us dies, we lose that facet of ourselves which only that individual knew. Shared memories, pet names, day-to-day habits, are all gone. This can be true of more distant relatives, as well. An elderly brother or sister will take many childhood memories with them, as will aunts and uncles, sometimes too. Worst of all, if a child dies, so do all our hopes and expectations for that life, and all that we inevitably invest in our own offspring. There is no real 'cure' for this, simply a resolve to come to terms with it. For most people there will be new friendships and interests in time to help fill the gap.

Local provision of support groups will vary by area but most GPs will be able to offer advice. Some national charities, for example CRUSE Bereavement Care, are set up to offer help and advice at a time of bereavement. They have a daytime helpline, 0808 8081677 which may prove useful. There are counselling services available on the NHS (which may have long waiting lists) as well as privately run. Please ensure any private counsellor is suitably accredited.



Groups formed for the purpose of helping with bereavement will often concentrate initially on giving considerable time and space to the expression of the more personal aspects of the loss. Then, little by little, members of the group are encouraged to look forward, and move into the new phase of their life. People very often need some help in doing this, especially if they have devoted much of their own time and attention to caring for the person who has now died. The sudden absence of such a demanding focus can result in a sense of floundering and purposelessness which is hard to deal with.

The greatest long-term benefit of such a group is probably the bonds which grow between the group members, which may continue long after the initial sessions with a leader. It is quite usual for people to continue to meet informally and to offer friendship and understanding to each other over many months and years.

## Further Resources

For more information, please feel free to contact us. Our telephone numbers are as follows: Billingshurst- 01403 785133; Crawley- 01293 540000; Horsham 01403 254590; and Hurstpierpoint- 01273 831497. You can also email us- mail@freemanbrothers.co.uk. You may find the 'Resources' page of our website useful; it contains links to many helpful websites.

Freeman Brothers is a member of the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF). Both of these regulatory bodies can provide you with further information and their details are listed below.



National Association of Funeral Directors:  
Telephone: 0121 711 1343  
[www.nafd.org.uk](http://www.nafd.org.uk)



SAIF:  
Telephone: 0845 230 6777 / 01279 726777  
[www.saif.org.uk](http://www.saif.org.uk)

