

Herefordshire Community Network

Support for Ukraine – information for guests

Planning a funeral

Planning a funeral is an emotional and challenging experience. The death of a loved one may have been a sudden shock for the entire family. Regardless of the circumstances, arranging a funeral can seem daunting, with official paperwork to be completed and make important decision. All while experiencing profound grief and sadness.

1. Registering the death before a funeral

Before you make formal arrangements for a funeral in the UK, the death must be [officially registered](#) within 5 days (including weekends and bank holidays). After registration, you will receive two important documents: a death certificate and a certificate for burial or cremation, which is sometimes called the 'green form'.

The death certificate is needed to handle the legal and banking affairs of your loved one, and the green form must be given to your appointed funeral director before burial or cremation.

A step-by-step guide for what to do after a death can be found on the Government website -

<https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies>

Without this first step being completed, a funeral cannot take place.

If you need to arrange for [repatriation of the body](#) of somebody who died outside of the UK or somebody who died in the UK and wished to be buried abroad, there are certain legal procedures that must be followed.

Did the deceased leave a will and/or funeral plans?

Once the death has been registered and you have received the necessary certificate, you can proceed with your plans for the funeral.

2. Find bereavement services

How are you feeling? Managing grief when somebody dies

No matter how well-planned for, or anticipated as the result of a long illness, the death of someone close to you will be upsetting and could leave you wondering how to cope. Whether you find yourself

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suffering from strong feelings of grief and bereavement, or you just need some advice on how to deal better with someone's death, the UK government has a [service to help you find support](#) in your local area.

Planning a funeral can be a lot to take on, especially when suffering from feelings of loss and sadness, so it's often a good idea to have someone to talk to about your feelings. It can help clear your mind ahead of a lot of logistical planning.

We do not always make the best decisions when we are stressed, so if you can find a way to give yourself a bit more 'headspace' or serenity at this challenging time, it might help you make the best plan.

3. Notifying family and friends of the deceased when someone has died

Now the legal essentials have been taken care of, the focus can turn to informing close family and friends of the sad news. It won't necessarily be an easy job emotionally, but social media and the internet can be a big help if trying to track down relatives abroad or people that the deceased may have been fond of but lost touch with over the years.

Some people also like to place a death announcement in local or national newspapers, and these will now normally offer a digital placement as well as in print.

4. Choosing between burial or cremation when arranging a funeral in the UK

In recent years in the UK, [cremations](#) and direct cremations have become more popular, with burials now only accounting for about a quarter of all funerals. This is due to a range of factors, from saving money to taking up less space.

If it looks like there may be a delay before the funeral can be held for logistical or legal reasons, or if family living overseas cannot travel back quickly, then a direct cremation with a service held after the event at a convenient time could be a good option.

5. Budgeting when planning a funeral in the UK

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Costs for a basic funeral in the UK vary by regio (being more expensive in London and neighbouring counties) and the options you choose. Burial is often the more expensive option, while cremation generally costs less, and direct cremation is even cheaper.

You may be entitled to help towards the costs of the funeral. Check this link to see if you are entitled.

<https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments>

The most important thing to keep in mind when it comes to planning an affordable funeral – either for yourself or a loved one – is that you're in control. You should never feel pressured to choose options you can't afford. If you feel like you're on the end of a 'hard sell' it may be a good idea to consider other funeral directors.

It's also common to shop around funeral directors these days to compare prices and services.

When budgeting for a funeral in the UK it's useful to:

- Make the funeral directors aware of your budget first, before any costs are discussed
- Ask the funeral director for a written estimate of ALL costs (including third party costs)
- Compare quotes for the same services from several funeral directors
- Ask the funeral director if any deposit is payable
- Get a clear, written summary of all payment terms from the funeral director
- Consider if you want to provide additional transport for guests
- Ask yourself if you want floral tributes and displays
- Consider costs for a wake with food and drink after the service

6. Floral tributes - what are the options when planning a funeral?

Flowers at a funeral take many forms. From a simple bouquet or wreath to an impressive lettered tribute, they act as a captivating visual expression of emotion.

It should also be possible to supply floral tributes and flowers for the service yourself if you have a talent for flower arranging. Your funeral director and service venue will advise.

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7. Choosing a coffin when planning a funeral

The deceased may have had their choice of coffin decided long ago, but it's more likely that whoever is planning the funeral will be left to decide. There is more choice than ever when picking a coffin for a funeral in the UK now - from simple coffins made from cardboard to sustainable wicker and deluxe hardwood coffins with custom painted finishes.

A basic funeral package will usually include a cardboard or a simple wood-effect coffin, and the other options will be available as an optional extra - for an additional cost.

The different types of coffins commonly available in the UK are:

- Budget coffins - cardboard, woven shroud made from a natural fibre like linen, hemp or cotton
- Mid-range coffins - veneered MDF for a wooden effect, natural materials like willow or bamboo
- Deluxe coffins - solid hardwoods like mahogany or oak, metal

8. Transport costs when planning a funeral

Some 'low cost cremation' packages from other providers use an ambulance in place of a hearse to keep costs down. If this is important to you, make sure you check with the funeral director to avoid upset and disappointment on the day of the funeral.

If you are planning a large funeral service and are expecting many guests to arrive in their own cars, it pays to check out parking available in advance. Most cemeteries should have ample space, but if it's a smaller venue or you are expecting a large amount of mourners, there could be a shortage of spots. Making attendees aware of extra parking in the area will help them arrive on time - and less flustered - for the service, as will clear directions to the service.

9. Planning the format of the funeral service itself

Not all funerals have an official service, but if you do want to mark the passing this way, it's a good idea to get this planned and invitations sent out as soon as possible. If the deceased followed a certain religion, then this will most likely dictate the type of service and where it is held.

Standard format of a funeral service in the UK

- *People begin to arrive at the service venue before the service is due to start*

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- *Funeral procession to the service venue (less common these days)*
- *The coffin is moved from hearse to funeral service room (if there has been a procession)*
- *Funeral service - usually in blocks of 30-60 minutes*
- *Longer services will have to be booked in advance and cost more*
- *The committal - the body is buried or cremated*
- *The wake - social gathering afterwards with refreshments*

How long do funerals last in the UK?

Every funeral is of course different and the length of each depends on many factors: how many guests there are, the religion of the deceased and whether it was a burial or a cremation.

For example, a simple cremation service may include only a short reading and be over in 30 minutes, but a Roman Catholic funeral could last longer than one hour if it includes a Requiem Mass.

A Ukrainian priest can be arranged – please contact AUGB at Unit 35 for help with this.

10. After the service - planning the funeral wake

A social gathering after a cremation or funeral service is often referred to as the wake. In many ways, it's become an integral part of the grieving process - a chance to share memories of the departed that unites family and friends in a more relaxed context than the funeral service.

The wake can also be thought of as a kind of 'pressure release valve' from the preceding weeks of stress, planning and sadness in the build up to the funeral.

There are no rules when it comes to choosing a venue for the wake. If it's a smaller service, it's not unusual for the wake to be at a member of the family's home, if they can accommodate the mourners. This is the most affordable option if on a limited budget as it cuts out costs for venue hire and caterers.

Planning a wake checklist:

- Venue - where and when? What are the payment terms?
- Will the wake be public or private?
- Get the invitations sent in good time
- Use a newspaper/social media announcement if needs be

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- Can the venue provide catering, or will you provide food/external caterer?
- Do you need RSVPs for numbers/food?
- Do you need to be aware of dietary requirements/allergies?

11. After the funeral and wake

Following a cremation, you will be advised when you will be able to collect the ashes of your loved one. You do not need to decide straight away what you wish to do with the ashes. Some people keep them at home, others scatter them at special place. It is also possible to have the interment of the ashes at your chosen resting place, such as a cemetery or garden of remembrance. You can also have the ashes buried in a private place.

After what will have been an intense couple of weeks, it's natural to feel like you may need a few days to decompress and try to 'get back to normal'.

It could be a good idea to book a few extra days off work and be kind to yourself - rest, relax and recharge.

Remember, the grief may hit you harder after all the logistical challenges and business of the funeral wake are over. Don't worry - it's normal to feel exhausted - both emotionally and physically - after the funeral.

One positive that can follow the challenging runup to the funeral, is the chance to reconnect with friends and family that you had not seen for a long time before the service.

Some people may choose to organise a further memorial event, scattering of ashes or thanksgiving gathering after the funeral and wake. It is usually a more social and relaxed meetup than the funeral and is another chance for friends to reunite and remember the special person they have lost.

Once you feel rested, getting back to work, socialising, and other 'normal' activities can help you level out. And, although you will not forget the pain of losing your loved one and will keep their memory to heart, day by day, life should seem a little easier.

We hope this definitive guide to planning a funeral has been useful.

Information correct as of 31.10.2024