

Your funeral party

Background information on funerals



Did you know that there is no legal requirement to have a member of the clergy at a funeral? Or that you can be buried in your garden if you like? There is plenty of time to make a final statement if you plan your funeral ahead. Below is some information to help you plan.

Funeral services

You are not legally required to have a funeral service and there are no regulations on what form the ceremony should take, though burials and cremations often go hand in hand with funerals which are regulated. Funeral ceremonies can be held anywhere, in a marquee or local hotel, at a natural beauty spot, or your school, place of work, football ground anywhere you have permission to have the body present even in your own home.

Some people decide they would like a religious service carried out by a particular member of their faith group and held in their place of worship. Other people who have lived life without religious beliefs may prefer to have a non-religious or humanist ceremony. These can be planned with or without the help of a celebrant and tend to acknowledge loss and celebrate life with readings and music and time for reflection, without using religious symbols and rituals.

You can have a religious, humanist or non-religious ceremony. Look at the options to choose what is right for you.

To find out more contact the British Humanist Association, email info@humanism.org.uk, phone 020 7079 3580, website www.humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/humanist-funerals-memorials or the Institute of Civil Funerals, email ask@iocf.org.uk or phone 01920 898156 .

It is a good idea to let your family and friends know if you'd like a certain type of service in advance. If you put this in your will your wishes may not be made known in time.

If you are not using an official cemetery or crematorium you do not have to use a coffin. You can be buried in your garden if you want. For more information visit www.ifishoulddie.co.uk

Costs of funerals

Funeral costs have soared over recent years. Costs can include a casket, head stone or monument to mark your grave, burial plot, clergy's fees, doctor's certificate, crematorium fees and funeral directors' fees. It is possible to take out a pre-paid funeral plan, which can reduce funeral costs. You can pay a lump sum or monthly instalments towards your funeral.

Various charities, finance organisations and funeral organisations offer pre-paid funeral plans, so it pays to shop around and get a few quotes first. Check they are a member of the Funeral Planning Authority (FPA) who regulate the funeral plan industry and have a code of practice that members have to comply with. Contact by email info@funeralplanningauthority.co.uk or phone 0845 601 9619 .

Using a funeral director

Many people use funeral directors, who arrange all aspects and support the family through the process. It's useful to contact a few funeral directors in your area for quotes. For a list of funeral directors contact the National Association of Funeral Directors, email info@nafd.org.uk or phone 0845 230 1343, or the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors, phone 0845 230 6777 , website www.saif.org.uk

Remember that a will is often read out after the funeral so you need to let your loved ones know about your funeral wishes beforehand.



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Personalising funerals

Some people like to have flowers at their funeral; others prefer family flowers only with requests for donations to their favourite charity in lieu of flowers. You may want the money to go to the charity you support. If you wish, include that in your funeral plan together with instructions on where to send donations.

Choose your favourite music and readings for your funeral in advance or ask your loved ones to help you choose. You can write a list or make a compilation of your favourite music or ask someone to help. There are many websites which suggest poems or readings for funerals, including Dying Matters www.dyingmatters.org/page/poetry

Traditional burial and cremation

Bodies must be buried or cremated. A traditional burial usually takes place in places of worship or a cemetery. Cemeteries are frequently owned by local authorities or private companies. If you choose to be buried you need to purchase a burial plot, a casket, grave line or vault and a grave marker such as a headstone or monument. In most cemeteries there are different categories of graves and costs vary. To find out more contact your local cemetery.

Most crematoriums are owned and run by local authorities. Cremations are usually cheaper than burials; get in touch with your local crematorium to find out costs. For further information contact the Cremation Society of Great Britain, email info@cremation.org.uk, phone 01622 688292/3, website www.cremation.org.uk

Scattering ashes

The scattering of the ashes in a garden of remembrance at the crematorium or their burial in a cemetery can be included in the cost of cremation, or can be an additional cost. If you do not want your ashes to be scattered, or buried at a cemetery, crematorium or place of worship they can be scattered almost anywhere else. If you want your ashes scattered on private land you need to get the consent of the land owner.



You can ask friends and family for donations to your favourite charity or hospice instead of flowers.



If you wish to scatter your ashes on private land, you must get permission first.

Woodland burials or eco-friendly funerals

Green burials are becoming increasingly popular; many commercial sites are opening across the country, promoting environmentally friendly funerals. At a woodland burial ground, loved ones can plant trees to mark the site either on or near the grave. In nature reserve burial grounds, which can be wild flower meadows or pastures, graves can be marked by a small wooden plaque that will rot away naturally and bulbs and flowers can be planted. Contact The Natural Death Centre email contact@naturaldeath.org.uk or phone 0871 288 2098.

Organ donations

You may want to consider donating your organs after death. This is a very personal decision, and one that you may want to discuss with your family and friends, so that they are aware of your wishes. Contact the NHS Organ Donation and Transplant Directorate, phone 0177 9757 7575 or online www.uktransplant.org.uk

Donating your body for medical research

You may want to consider donating your body for medical research. There is currently a shortage of bodies donated to medical science, which according to the Royal College of Surgeons is threatening the teaching of anatomy. 1,000 bodies a year are needed by UK medical schools. If you want to donate your body for medical research you need to fill out a consent form, which can be obtained from your local medical school, with your signature witnessed. Keep a copy with your will and give a copy to the medical school.

Bodies are normally held for three years before being buried or cremated at a special memorial service. For more information contact the Human Tissue Authority, which regulates the removal, storage, use and disposal of human bodies. Visit www.hta.gov.uk email enquiries@hta.gov.uk or phone 020 7211 3400.



Becoming an organ donor could help some of the 10,000 people in the UK currently needing a transplant.



For more information on funerals visit Dying Matters at www.dyingmatters.org/site/need-support/funerals