

Advanced Funeral Directives Guidance Notes

What is an advanced funeral directive?

An advanced funeral directive is a document containing instructions for relatives and friends, so that those responsible for arranging the funeral have a clear understanding of the wishes of the person who has died.

Funeral wishes, whether made in a Will or an advanced funeral directive, are not legally binding after death. They can simply be written out informally. We offer a form that can guide you through the process of planning a funeral, which suits your own individual situation and priorities.

Why should I make an advanced funeral directive?

The funeral is our final opportunity to say goodbye to a loved one; an occasion for family and friends to come together to support one another and an important element of the grieving process. You may have views or ideas on the structure and content of your own funeral, so that it reflects your life or beliefs, or have messages to convey to those who may mourn. Your wishes might best be achieved through the completion of a funeral directive that has been considered in advance.

As funeral wishes are not legally binding, it is advisable to identify who will give instructions for your funeral so that you feel confident that your wishes will be followed. If you have a partner to whom you are not married and they are not appointed your executor, consider their needs carefully. Parents often take control when an unmarried person dies, and the partner's wishes can be ignored. It is also helpful, and often therapeutic, if your partner, family and friends can follow your wishes after death. Meeting your wishes is part of the grieving process for them, and forms part of their separation from your life. It can also be a process in which you can consider their needs and perhaps integrate them into the funeral in some way. Friends or relatives acting as bearers, reading a eulogy and having specific names mentioned during the service can be helpful to them. Once these opportunities have passed, they can never be recovered.

An advanced funeral directive also enables important issues to be thought about beforehand in a calm atmosphere, and ensures that the family is prepared to discuss the arrangements. It can be distressing to have to consider these questions at the "crisis" time of a death. You will also be able to price the various funeral options. Using this Directive, the deceased can leave meaningful guidance to the survivors. Without this guidance, the survivors often feel a social obligation to arrange a good "send off", which can prove expensive. A modest funeral, perhaps with the money saved going to grandchildren or the local hospice, might be more meaningful than an expensive farewell. The choice is yours.

How do I make an advanced funeral directive?

You could simply note down any special instructions you have and ensure that it will be accessible to the person responsible for making arrangements. Alternatively, you could download the form 'Advanced Funeral Directive' from this website. The form clearly sets out all the decisions and issues which you may need to consider in personalising arrangements following a death. It contains user-friendly details on the environmental implications and many other general aspects of funerals, and has particular information on arranging a funeral. It is for guidance purposes only, but you can amend the form however you wish, and add pages if you need to. Delete any sections that do not apply. The form can be photocopied

The completed Directive will be of great practical assistance and emotional support to those who have the sad task of arranging a funeral.

You may wish to consider the prices of the varying options. Funeral bills are split into two parts. The first part is "disbursements" - the sums usually paid by the funeral director, assuming you are using one, on your behalf, to doctors (for cremation), the cemetery or crematorium and the minister. Our staff can tell you precisely what Chesterfield charges for a burial or cremation. The second part is the cost of the funeral arrangements made by the funeral director themselves. These include the cost of collecting, handling and retention of the body, embalming, the coffin, viewing the body, the hearse and cars, and all the professional arrangements. Two or more quotes should be obtained from funeral directors. Funeral directors often offer a "package" price but should be able to provide a breakdown of costs.

For costs to be comparable, it is better to have a precise idea of the kind of funeral you want before you obtain quotes. In general, the more you use the funeral director or the more complex the funeral, the more expensive it will become. Conversely, an informal funeral using a hearse but no limousines, no viewing of the body and a low cost coffin will be less expensive.

Keep the document with your Will, or somewhere known to the person arranging your funeral.

Further information

If you want to learn more about modern funerals, obtain a "green" funeral or arrange a funeral yourself, read one or both of the following:

Natural Death Centre Handbook - from Natural Death Centre, 6, Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT Telephone: 0181 208 2853 or try your local library. This book is full of practical advice on a very wide range of death related subjects.

The Dead Good Funerals Book - from Welfare State International, The Ellers, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0AA Tel: 01229 581127 or try your local library. This book has a more artistic focus, and concentrates on making funerals more personal.

We produce many leaflets about our services and memorials, please contact us for details. We also welcome enquiries from individuals or groups who wish to visit the Crematorium to receive a 'behind the scenes' view of the process of cremation.

The Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management produces the Charter for the Bereaved. The Charter identifies 33 rights and aims to define the rights of every individual who experiences bereavement and to set a standard of service related to burial, cremation and funerals generally. The Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee has formally adopted the Charter for the Bereaved. A copy of the Charter is available on the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's website (www.iccm-uk.com under Policy, Downloads of Guidance Documents), or view a copy at the Chesterfield Crematorium Office