

St Christopher's

Preparing for a funeral

**INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS,
CARERS AND FAMILIES**

A funeral is a significant event. It may not be easy to think about, whether your own or that of a relative; for example how best to commemorate a life, what to include or leave out. However, planning a funeral can be helpful for those who are approaching the end of life and is one way of ensuring that their wishes are respected. This leaflet aims to help you consider some of the important things involved.

1 Making the arrangements and advance care planning

If you want to ask a named person or persons to make the arrangements for your funeral, this does not have to be your named next of kin. If you have not made a Will, you may like to include instructions for your funeral in your Will or advance care plan.

2 What sort of funeral?

Religious beliefs and personal wishes will play an important part in the type of funeral that is planned. If you are familiar with your local place of worship, the faith leader will be able to discuss with you readings from holy books, hymns or prayers. If you are not in contact with one and would like to meet a religious leader from your faith, the St Christopher's chaplain can arrange for you to talk to someone.

A non-religious service can take place, led by a Humanist Celebrant. A list of celebrants can be found on the website at the end of this leaflet, or our chaplain can give you the contact details.

3 What can be included?

Funerals are often a mixture of music, readings, hymns and addresses (or tributes). You can think about what you might want other people to say about you – either write it down or talk to them.

If you want to include music, the choice of pieces is entirely up to you, from songs you have enjoyed to your favourite pieces of music. It is traditional to have music played as people enter and leave, and sometimes music

during the service allows time for everyone present to reflect quietly.

A range of books with collections of poems and prose readings suitable for a funeral service are available from the chaplain for you to read. You can also access a selection from the websites suggested at the end of this leaflet. Funeral directors hold lists of musicians you can hire to sing or play at the funeral. Our chaplain is available to talk to you about planning your funeral and recording your choices.

If you wish to return to your home country after your death, a funeral director can help your family with the arrangements for this. There are costs involved in returning a body to a home country, over and above the funeral costs. Certain regulations apply to ashes being repatriated to a home country and a funeral director or airline information service will be able to help with these arrangements.

4 Funeral directors

If you decide to use a funeral director, the websites of those in professional associations are provided at the end of this leaflet. Unless you have a particular firm that you know well, it is advisable to visit two or three and ask for written itemised quotes. This will help you to know what each aspect of the funeral might cost and to keep to your budget.

Burials are more expensive than cremations and if you wish to be buried outside your borough you could be charged for the grave.

If a funeral director is not involved, you will need to liaise directly with the cemetery or crematorium office where the funeral is to take place. There are guidelines to help with this and the web link is listed. Please speak to your St Christopher's nurse.

5 'Green' funerals

You may wish to consider an ecologically friendly funeral where the body or ashes are buried in a woodland setting and a wicker, or other sustainably sourced coffin

used. You may find that the nearest green burial site is some distance away, so it could be less easy for family or friends to visit the gravesite easily.

6 Scattering ashes

You might want to have ashes scattered or buried in a place which has significance to you. You will need permission from the landowner, the National Rivers Authority or other legal body before scattering takes place.

7 Leaving your body to medical science

If you wish to leave your body to medical science, you should speak to your nurse or doctor who can give you information about this. It means there will be no funeral, but a memorial service can be organised and you may want to consider what should be included in this type of service.

8 Paying for a funeral

Funerals can be expensive. Often, the cost of a funeral is taken from the estate of a deceased person. Arranging for funds to be available may take some time and the funeral director will ask for part payment when arrangements are made, so it is helpful to be aware that cost may be incurred before a funeral can take place. You may want to talk with your family about how a funeral will be paid for and what aspects of the funeral are most important to you. Consider also, for example, how many cars are needed, and other special requirements.

Normally the person who registers the death is involved in the arrangements made with funeral directors. However, whoever signs any papers relating to this at the funeral director's is responsible for ensuring the payment is made. It is advisable to make sure that these matters have been discussed and agreed with family members in advance.

Most funeral directors now offer 'pre-paid' funeral plans which are a form of insurance and guarantee that the cost is fixed. You can choose what level of service you wish to have. Grants are available in certain

circumstances – if you need advice about this, ask one of our welfare officers.

Where there are no relatives or friends who can arrange the funeral, it may be organised by the local authority. In this event, the service will be basic, but will respect the religious belief of the deceased person.

9 Further help and useful websites

If you would like to talk with someone about your funeral, or that of a family member, please speak to a member of staff who will be glad to listen to your thoughts and concerns.

Some useful websites

National Association of Funeral Directors

www.nafd.org.uk

Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

www.saif.org.uk

The Natural Death Centre

This website gives information about alternative choices for funerals and natural (green) burial grounds

www.naturaldeath.org.uk

The British Humanist Association

This organisation trains non-religious funeral celebrants and provides resource material for funerals

www.humanism.org.uk

Choosing music or hymns

A website designed to help with choosing music or hymns for a funeral

www.funeral-music.co.uk

Funeral poetry and prose resources

www.uk-funerals.co.uk/funeral-poems.html

www.naturalendings.co.uk/funeral-poetry.asp

Information on burial and cremation law

webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dca.gov.uk/corbur/index.htm

Information on leaving your body to medical science

www.hta.gov.uk/bodyorganandtissuedonation
[howtodonateyourbody.cfm](http://www.hta.gov.uk/bodyorganandtissuedonation/howtodonateyourbody.cfm)

It is really important for your care
that the information you give us is
as full and accurate as possible.

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