

Arranging a good funeral – What choices are there?

There are very many ways to make a funeral very personal and appropriate - too many to list here. But to give you an idea of what is possible you may want to consider the following.

What happens to the body of the person who has died?

Most people believe that someone can only be cremated, or buried in a traditional churchyard or cemetery, but there are now also over 270 natural burial grounds where interment occurs in a way that is beneficial to the environment. Some people choose to donate their body to medical science - although not all such offers are accepted. Less common choices are burial on your own land or at sea.

What type of funeral ceremony can we have?

A traditional religious service is appropriate for some people. For others, a totally non-religious ceremony, or 'semi-religious' service is more apt. Some families/friends conduct all parts of a ceremony themselves or there are celebrants who can help you. You may want no service at all. The choice is yours. Many people feel that a funeral has been a healing experience when they have had the opportunity to be involved in shaping the ceremony and participating on the day.

In what ways can we make the funeral special?

Practically every aspect of the funeral arrangements provides scope for you to make it personal and unique. The venue, the decor, the coffin or shroud, transport arrangements, music, readings, speakers, photographs, slideshows, memory tables - the list is endless. If you are employing a celebrant to lead the ceremony they will be able to make suggestions that might help you craft a special event, fitting for the person who has died, while a good funeral director should be able to offer you choices, alternatives and ideas.

How involved can we be?

The simple answer is - as involved as you want to be. People are as different in death as they are in life, and a funeral doesn't just have to be an event that you just turn up to - it is something that you can help create. It can be very helpful once it is all over for you to know that you contributed to making the funeral very special.

Will we need professional support?

Only you will know whether you need support and assistance to organise a funeral. Advice and guidance as well as support can be obtained from a number of sources, including celebrants, bereavement officers and cemetery or crematoria managers and staff.

It has become normal practice in the UK for families to allow funeral directors to take care of everything to do with funerals, from the care of the body of the person who died to the provision of a memorial - and everything in between - but you do not need to use the services of an undertaker at all if you don't want to.

In the past, families cared for those who died with the help of the local community, but in the 21st century UK this might seem hard, if not impossible, with an increasingly fragmented society. If you are considering a family run funeral please contact the Crematorium Office or The Natural Death Centre Helpline for advice and guidance.

For families who prefer to engage a funeral director to assist them, we recommend taking time to find the right person who will provide you with guidance and support during the difficult time following a death. Unfortunately, not all undertakers are the same and it is important that you find one who will support you to have the type of funeral that you want, rather than steering you down the route of settling for what they wish to provide.

How do I find a good funeral director?

On our website <http://kentandsussexcrematorium.com/forms-and-documents/> you will find a range of suggested questions that should assist you in selecting a Funeral Director suited to your needs.

Is a good funeral going to be expensive?

A good funeral doesn't have to cost more than average, and funerals primarily organised by families will frequently cost much less than those provided by funeral directing companies. Unfortunately funerals nowadays have become increasingly expensive, and relatively few people qualify for State help with the funeral costs, so finding a funeral director with transparent pricing is essential.

Following the death of a loved one, the last thing you will feel like doing is ringing a round a lot of different companies making enquiries. We therefore suggest a trusted friend or family member be asked gathering this information for you. With a couple of hours work, and a list of suitable questions, your friend should be able to provide you with information about the flexibility of the funeral directors, their prices, and even whether they sound like competent, and nice, people.

Utilising the 'funeral choice' website <http://www.yourfuneralchoice.com/> can also assist this process by providing price comparison data of local companies in your post code area.

It is worth taking the time to find the right company as they will not only be taking care of the person but the family left behind by helping you create a funeral ceremony that will become a lasting memory for everyone.