

# LEEDS CITY COUNCIL BEREAVEMENT SERVICES GUIDANCE NOTES FOR

## OWN ARRANGED FUNERALS

Although most funerals are arranged by funeral directors there is no reason why you shouldn't do part, or all, yourself. Most funeral directors are willing for you to take as active a part as you want to in the arrangements. Be it burial or cremation it can be arranged independently but be prepared, you need to be able to cope with many rules and regulations, and the paperwork that goes with them, and be an extremely good organiser.

The New Natural death handbook covers everything you need to know about arranging a funeral yourself, you can find them on [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk). Or contact The Natural Death Centre, 20 Heber Road, London NW2 6AA Tel:020 8208 2853. Alternatively visit [www.diyfunerals.co.uk](http://www.diyfunerals.co.uk) on their new website, there are also other websites available for help on arranging do it yourself funerals.

A funeral can be either by burial or by cremation. You can organize it with or without the help of a funeral director, and personalize it as much as you wish. In some cases the deceased may have planned their own funeral in advance.

You can arrange a funeral without the help of a funeral director. If you wish to do this, contact the Cemeteries and Crematoria Department of your Local Authority for advice and guidance. You can also get help and information from The Natural Death Centre.

### Timing

Bear in mind that you can't finalize the date for the funeral until after the death has been registered. If the death has to be reported to the coroner, the date when the funeral can be held will be affected

### Taking the deceased's wishes into account

Remember to check the deceased's will or other written instructions for special wishes about their funeral or what should happen to their body. (However, the executor doesn't have to follow the instructions about the funeral left in the will.)

### Funeral options

If there are no clear wishes it's generally up to the executor/administrator or nearest relative to decide whether the body is to be cremated or buried.

There are very few legal controls governing the disposal of a body in the United Kingdom. The only requirement is that the death is certified and registered and the body properly taken care of, by either burial or cremation.

Depending on whether it is burial or cremation there are some strict Rules & Regulation to be adhered to. A Burial or Cremation may not take place unless Statutory paperwork is completed and supplied to the Cemetery or Crematorium concerned.

In Leeds all paperwork must be handed in to the Bereavement Services Administration Office at Farnley Hall by at least 10:00 am two full working days in advance of the funeral taking place, the paperwork and further information may be obtained from the Office as above during normal working hours Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

## **Detailed Planning of the funeral**

The key decisions that need to be made for the funeral are listed below. If you're using a funeral director they will help you with all of this.

- where the body should rest before the funeral
- time and place of the funeral (though this can only be finalized once the death is registered)
- type of service (religious or other) and who will conduct it/contribute
- how much to spend on the funeral (see also 'Costs' below)
- whether to have flowers or instead donate money to a chosen charity
- where to donate flowers after the funeral
- invitations
- notice in the newspapers

## **Costs**

If you arrange a funeral you are responsible for paying the bill, so first check where the money will come from and if there will be enough.

Funeral costs can be paid in different ways including:

- from the deceased's estate
- the deceased may have been paying into a funeral scheme or have a prepaid funeral plan, you will need to check the deceased's paperwork to see if a plan exists
- money from a life insurance policy or pension scheme

In some cases the deceased's bank or building society may agree to release funds to pay for funeral costs. In others you or the executor may need to pay and then recover the money from the estate later.

## **Help with funeral costs if you're on a low income**

If using a Funeral Director you may be able to get a one-off Funeral Payment to help pay funeral costs if you're the deceased's spouse, civil partner or partner and are receiving benefits because you are on a low income. Further information may be obtained by contacting the Department of Work & Pensions.

## **Further information regarding Registrars**

### **Why do I need to register a death?**

You are legally required to register a death. You need to register a death to obtain documents for the funeral director (if using one) and Cemeteries & Crematoria Department, also for dealing with any money or property belonging to the person who died.

### **Who can register a death?**

One of the following people must register the death

- A relative of the deceased.
- A person present at the death.
- A person arranging the funeral (not the undertaker).

In certain circumstances others such as the administrator or the occupier of the place where the death took place can register.

If you don't know whether you can register the death please contact the Register Office.

### **When should the death be registered?**

A death should be registered within five days unless the coroner is investigating the death. The registration takes around 30 minutes.

### **Where should the death be registered?**

By law a death has to be registered in the registration district where it happened but you can visit any office in Leeds. To find out where our offices are and when they are open follow the link <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/page.aspx?pageidentifier=07b7d020-9b9e-4ac0-97a2-d51f41f43071> to Register offices in Leeds.

If you do not live in Leeds you can visit any register office in England and Wales to give details of the registration and these will be passed to the appropriate office. The documents you need will be posted out to you after two or three days. **(Registration of this type can take time and the funeral may be delayed)**

Please contact us if you need further information.

### **What information will the registrar need?**

You will need to know the following information.

The date and place of death.

The full name and surname and if the deceased was a married woman, the surname/family name used before marriage.

The date and place of birth.

The occupation. If the deceased was married or in a civil partnership, the full name and occupation of the spouse or civil partner.

The usual address.

If the deceased was married or in a civil partnership, the date of birth of their spouse or civil partner.

Whether the deceased received a pension or allowance from public funds, for example civil service or army pension.

If you have the medical card please bring that along with you.

### **What documents will I receive from the Registrars?**

You will be given a form so you can make the funeral arrangements. If the death was referred to the coroner he may give you this form. Registrars also give you a form for social security. Both these documents are free of charge.

You may need certified copies of the register entry to deal with any money or property belonging to the person who died.

Certificates may be needed for:

Probate or letters of administration.

Banks and building society accounts.

Insurance companies.

Stocks and shares.

Solicitors.

**For Burial** the paperwork required is as follows:-

Certificate required for registration of death supplied by person who registers the cause of death i.e. GP or Hospital Doctor etc this is then taken to Registrars where the following should be issued ***(an appointment must be made at the Registrars Office to register the death):-***

Green Disposal from Registrar of Deaths or

for instance if sudden death a White Coroners Order for Burial.

Interment Forms to be supplied by Bereavement Services Administration Office to be completed by Executor or Applicant for Burial.

**For Cremation** the paperwork is different, the reason for this is that when a cremation is completed it is final and only the cremated remains of the deceased are left.

Certificate required for registration of death supplied by person who registers the cause of death i.e. GP or Hospital Doctor etc., this is then taken to the Registrars where the following should be issued ***(an appointment must be made at the Registrars Office to register the death):-***

Green Disposal from Registrar of Deaths

Form 4 & 5, Form 4 issued by the GP or Hospital Doctor who has been treating deceased during the last illness and Form 5 by an independent GP or Hospital Doctor etc who has had nothing to do with the care of deceased during illness

Or if sudden death possibly a Yellow Coroners Certificate Form 6 for Cremation

Form 1 (Application for Cremation to take place) to be completed by Executor or Applicant for Cremation to take place

Preliminary Notice for Application for Cremation to take place, this has information regarding the kind of service i.e. Religious or Non Religious, type of music etc. to the rear of this for there is an Air Pollution Control Form again to be signed by Applicant for Cremation

Ashes Form and Environmental Form for the Recycling of any metals, this lets the Crematorium know what the wishes are for disposal of the deceased's ashes.

We ask that Cremated Remains are not strewn without permission from the Bereavement Services Administration Office at Farnley Hall. Strewing Appointments can only take place during the Crematoria normal working hours Monday to Friday

Cremated remains may be removed from the Crematorium with a certificate of cremation issued by the Authority where the cremation took place.

When cremated at one of the Leeds Crematoria the Cremated Remains of your loved ones may be strewn with previous relatives or at a new location within the grounds free of charge.

They can be scattered in a Garden of Remembrance at another Authority for which a fee may be payable, or in a favourite spot in the countryside.

Cremated remains may also be either strewn or interred in or on a private family grave, for which the grave owners permission must be sought, or may be strewn or interred in a new half plot grave which will entitle the grave owner to erect a head stone which must be purchased separately if required.

The remains can be buried in a church yard, the minister of the church must be contacted to arrange this.

The Cremated Remains could be retained on temporary hold at the Crematorium for a period not exceeding one month or they can be removed to a safe keeping of your choice until a decision is made for the final resting place.

An environmentally friendly coffin or casket should be obtained from either a coffin suppliers or alternatively made by a joiner or home made, these may be left untreated or covered in a non toxic varnish, paint or other coating, the coffin or casket should have a nameplate attached to the coffin for identification purposes.

### **Environmental Protection Act, 1990**

The above named Act places a statutory responsibility on the Cremation Authority to control the type of materials used in coffins and their fittings, and to prevent and render harmless emissions from the Crematorium.

There is also a requirement that Funeral Directors and families assist in the emission free process, by conforming with the instructions issued by the Federation of British Cremation Authorities.

### **Construction of the coffin**

The coffin must be made of wood or a wood by-product which when placed in a cremator and subjected to the accepted cremation processes, is easily combustible and which does not emit smoke, give off toxic gas or leave any retardant smears or drips after combustion. No metal furniture or fittings whatever shall be used on a coffin for cremation. No metal of any kind shall be used in the manufacture of such coffin except as necessary for its safe construction and then only metal of a high ferrous content. Cross pieces must not be attached to the bottom of the coffin. If it is desired to strengthen the bottom of the coffin, wooden strips may be placed lengthways for this purpose. The coffin must not be painted or varnished but may be covered with a suitable cloth. Products manufactured in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) must not be used in the construction of the coffin or its furnishings. The use of polystyrene must be restricted to the coffin nameplate only in which case it must not exceed 90 grams in weight.

### **Lining of the coffin**

The use of sawdust or cotton-wool must be avoided. If circumstances require, suitable sealing material may be used, but no metal, rubber or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) will be permitted and on no account must pitch or similar substance be used.

### **Size of coffin**

Where the external dimensions of a coffin are likely to exceed 81 inches (206cm) in length; 28 inches (71cm) in width; 22 inches (56cm) in depth the proper officer of the crematorium must be given advance notice.

### **Transportation**

A vehicle of a suitable nature (one which will carry a coffin or casket without having to leave the back of the vehicle open) such as a large estate car, covered van or similar, will be required to collect the body from the mortuary or hospital and delivered back home or direct to the Cemetery or Crematorium.

Alternatively a Hearse or Horse Drawn Carriage may be hired from a Funeral Directors or Carriage masters for the second part of the journey from home to the Cemetery or Crematorium.