

# Arranging your child's funeral



A guide for bereaved parents, families,  
and carers



## **Arranging your child's funeral**

Arranging a child's funeral is one of the most difficult things that a family can face. We would like to offer our deepest sympathy at this difficult time.

The amount of time that passes from the death of a child until their funeral can vary. While there might be religious or cultural reasons for holding a funeral quickly, there is usually no need to hurry. Families can take all the time they need to make sure that the funeral is arranged in a way that will be meaningful.

It is important to do whatever feels right for you and your family. You are doing the best you can for your child in the most difficult circumstances.

## **Help with the arrangements**

There are different ways to organise a funeral. Most people find it helpful to use a funeral director to make the arrangements on their behalf. You might already know a local funeral director you would like to use. It can be useful to speak to different funeral directors to get an idea of their services, and any costs involved, before making a decision. Details of the main professional associations for funeral directors can be found at the end of this booklet.

Alternatively, you may decide to make some or all of the arrangements yourself or with the help of family and friends. The Natural Death Centre and Good Funeral Guide websites have useful advice and information about how to do this (see end of booklet for contact details).

## **Will there be any costs?**

In Scotland, burial or cremation is usually provided free of charge for a child or young person (aged 17 or under) and many funeral directors do not charge for their services. However there may be costs such as flowers, a notice in the newspaper, a reception after the funeral or a headstone or memorial. These costs can vary considerably. When arranging the funeral, be sure that you understand any costs involved and the help that may be available if you need it.

## **Help with funeral costs**

If you need help with funeral costs and are receiving certain benefits or tax credits, you may be entitled to a Funeral Support Payment which helps pay towards funeral costs if you live in Scotland. You can use the payment for funeral costs for a baby, child, or adult, including babies who were stillborn.

It may not cover the full cost of the funeral but should help pay for some costs. It can be paid either to you or the funeral director helping to plan the funeral.

Only one person can receive a Funeral Support Payment for a funeral being arranged. The person claiming must be the child's parent, close relative, or have parental responsibilities.

You can apply for a Funeral Support Payment from the date of your child's death and up to six months after the funeral. Contact details are at the back of this leaflet. Information is also available from your funeral director.

## Decisions about your child's funeral

Funerals and memorial services can be held in a number of different settings, for example a place of worship or at a cemetery or crematorium. A funeral director can give you detailed advice about facilities in your area but the following information may be helpful in thinking about your choices. One of the main decisions you will have to make is whether to organise a burial or cremation.

### Burial

If you decide on a burial for your child you may already have a family connection with a particular area or cemetery. If not, it can be helpful to visit local cemeteries to choose a place that you feel is suitable. Some cemeteries have special areas for babies and young infants.

Burial is usually provided free of charge but you would have to pay for any marker or headstone you may wish to add. Cemeteries have different rules about the type of headstones and memorials that are allowed. There may also be restrictions about what you can place on the grave. A funeral director or cemetery manager can talk you through all the options.

### Cremation

Your funeral director will be able to advise you about facilities in your area.

You also have a choice about what will happen to your child's ashes. Crematorium staff will make every effort to ensure that all the ashes are gathered following cremation. If your child was very young, the national guidance on infant cremation advises that recovery of ashes cannot be absolutely guaranteed. There may be very rare instances when it is not possible.

After the cremation you can ask for your child's ashes to be scattered or buried at the crematorium or ask that they are kept so you can make other arrangements. A funeral director can talk you through all the options to help you reach a decision that feels right for you. We understand that this can feel like a very difficult decision, so please take your time to think about all the different choices.

## Planning the service

A religious ceremony can be arranged and conducted by a minister, priest, imam, rabbi or other religious leader from your faith or belief group. A non-religious ceremony can be conducted by a humanist or civil celebrant. A hospital chaplain can conduct either a religious or non-religious funeral service if you wish. If you are not sure who to contact, a funeral director can help you with this.

Your chosen funeral director will help and guide you through:

- Planning the service
- Where your child is to be cared for before the funeral
- Choosing a coffin
- Thinking about clothes and special items for your child
- Transport to the funeral
- What to wear
- Flower arrangements
- Readings, poems, music, or hymns
- Putting a notice in the newspaper or online if you wish
- Preparing and printing an order of service
- A book or cards to record who was present at the funeral
- Arrangements for after the funeral
- Whether you would like for donations to be made at the funeral
- Any other details to celebrate your child's life.

## Caring for yourself

The choices to make can feel overwhelming, particularly during a time of sadness and grief. It is common to feel exhausted by the physical and emotional effort of organising a funeral and support from friends or close family can be very helpful. Decisions do not usually need to be made quickly and while it might feel very difficult to talk about, families can take time to discuss how to celebrate and remember their child's life in a way that is truly special to them.

## **Useful contacts**

The main professional associations for funeral directors in the UK are the National Association of Funeral Directors and the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors. Members of these associations must follow a code of practice.

### **The National Association of Funeral Directors**

Phone: 0121 711 1343

Website: [www.nafd.org.uk](http://www.nafd.org.uk)

### **The Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors**

Phone: 0345 230 6777 / 01279 726777

Website: [www.saif.org.uk](http://www.saif.org.uk)

**The following websites have useful information about organising a funeral yourself, including natural funeral options, purchasing an alternative coffin, etc.**

### **The Natural Death Centre**

Phone: 01962 712 690

Website: [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

### **The Good Funeral Guide**

Website: [www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk](http://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk)

**Help with funeral costs may be available from:**

### **Social Security Scotland**

Phone: 0800 182 2222

Website: [www.mygov.scot/benefits/funeral-support](http://www.mygov.scot/benefits/funeral-support)

### **Department for Work & Pensions**

Phone: 0800 151 2012

Website: [www.gov.uk/funeral-payments](http://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments)

