

Information about Funerals during the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic



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National and Local Guidance

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the **National Association of Funeral Directors** (NAFD) is working to keep funeral directors updated regularly as circumstances change, or when new information comes to light. There are still some areas that need clarification from Government, but this is a fast moving situation and they are learning about COVID-19 every day.

NAFD has set up a page to share advice and guidance for anyone who loses a loved one during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. <https://nafd.org.uk/funeral-advice/>

Frequently Asked Questions about funerals during COVID-19. **Correct at 3 April 2020** - <https://nafd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-FAQ-3-April-2020-Final.pdf>

Public Health England produced ‘Guidance for managing a funeral during coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic’ on 19 April 2020 see link for details - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>. In addition to this publication please check the following websites for up to date information - www.gov.uk and Leeds City Council website - <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/births-deaths-and-marriages/death/bereavement-services/make-funeral-arrangements>

Down To Earth: A Meaningful Funeral During The Coronavirus Pandemic

Quaker Social Action - <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/> helps people on low incomes in East London and the UK to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives.

Founded 150 years ago by the religious group Quakers, today they are an independent charity inspired by Quaker values like equality in their work against poverty and injustice.

Quaker Social Action: Down To Earth was set up to provide practical support for people struggling with funeral costs - <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth>

The **Down to Earth** website offers a wealth of information to help people organise a meaningful funeral and feel connected during the coronavirus – see link for more details - <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/coronavirus-organising-meaningful-funeral>.

We have pulled the following information from **Down To Earth** website in the hope that their information reaches more people.

What can I do if I can't have a funeral service or if I cannot attend because of coronavirus?

During a time of bereavement many people want to be comforted by family and friends, so it may be very distressing not to be able to have everyone around you due to all the restrictions. It may feel particularly isolating attending the service on your own/with few others, especially if you know lots of people would ordinarily have been present. Not being a part of it may also be very difficult for those who cannot attend. Here are some ideas on **how to feel more connected**.

Memorial Service - There are no rules on when a memorial service can be held, this could happen at any point in the future, when restrictions have been lifted and could be a way for everyone who knew the deceased to come together and share their memories. It may even feel more fitting to you to remember them at a more positive time.

Even if you hope to do this, you may still want to mark the day of their cremation or burial in some way. If a small funeral service is happening, but you are unable to attend – ask those who are attending if they are able to help you experience it in some way. See below for ideas:

Share the funeral details – tell anyone who would ordinarily have attended the date, time and place. This will enable them to mark the time in their own way wherever they are, which may help them in their grief and, knowing they are doing so, could be of comfort to you. You could also tell them of any music or readings you have chosen so they can try accessing them at home.

Webcasting - find out if it's possible to 'webcast' the service. It would be filmed and you would be able to provide login details

to others so they could watch it live online or for a limited period of time after the service. Ask your funeral director, minister/celebrant or crematorium if they can help with this. Be aware that crematoriums often charge a fee for this, though some may waive this in the current circumstances.

Due to the increase in the use of webcasting some problems with live streaming are being reported and with delays to videos being uploaded – it may be best to check the current situation with your chosen crematorium to avoid distress on the day.

Live video call – if webcasting isn't available perhaps someone can 'stream' it live on their phone or iPad/tablet, for example by using a video call on **WhatsApp**, **FaceTime**, **Skype** or **Zoom**.

Personal video – if the WiFi connection isn't good enough for a live video call, consider filming it on your phone or video recorder to send to people later. Ask the funeral director if they can do this so you can be fully present during the service. Check how much storage space you have left on your phone beforehand as videos use up quite a lot of space – you may have to delete some data, like photos, or transfer them to another device.

Voice call or audio recording – we can't account for how good the sound quality would be, but if no video options are possible, you could try making a phone call to someone and simply placing the phone as close as possible to where the minister/celebrant or family/friends will be speaking at the start of the service. Or try using a voice recorder app to record the service or individual eulogies and readings that are given. Again, check your storage space.

Connect with others – after the service, consider contacting people who haven't been able to attend so you can share the

experience and both discuss memories of the person who has died. It may be difficult emotionally to speak to lots of people so you could also use email for those who have access to it, including sharing the eulogies and readings that were given. You could also share photos of the person who has died.

If you would normally be arranging the service and would have asked everyone to dress in a particular way – some people choose for mourners to wear colour, possibly the deceased's favourite one, instead of black – you could still ask everyone to do this regardless of whether they can attend, as a way of connecting to each other on the day.

Order of service – these are not a requirement and do incur an extra cost, but if you choose to have them you could send copies to people who weren't able to attend. In the current climate, it is best to avoid going to a shop to buy stamps where possible, so see if you can get a copy that could be emailed or use **Royal Mail online postage** if you have a printer.

If you want to have orders of service and need to keep costs down, consider whether it could just be a sheet of A4 rather than a booklet, or design and print them at home if you're able.

Even if you do have a small service now, there are no rules on when a **memorial service** can be held.

Practicalities and connecting with others

When? Confirm the date and, if possible, the time of the cremation or burial with the funeral director or crematorium/cemetery. If they are not able to confirm the actual time, perhaps choose a time for yourself so you can carve out time dedicated to remembering the person who has died.

If you live with other people, especially people who did not know the deceased, tell them what you are planning for that day and at what time so they know to give you some quiet and space. Of course, if you wish, you could ask them to be with you for comfort and to have someone to talk to about the person who has died.

Connect with others - if you have contact with other friends or family of the deceased who also cannot attend, arrange a time to speak with them on the day. This could just be over the phone, or it could be a video call via WhatsApp, FaceTime, Skype or Zoom.

If there is a small service happening, tell those who will be attending what you have planned. It could be a comfort to them to know that other people are thinking of them and remembering the person who died. You could even send them photos perhaps, for example if you choose to set up a table with mementos and photographs of the deceased.

If you are not in touch with anyone else who knew them, make contact with someone you are close to who can listen to you talk about the person who has died and offer you comfort.

For those who feel comfortable with technology, you could even have a **virtual service** this way as all of these apps have group call options too, either with just audio or video. Some are available through a web browser on a laptop or computer and some need you to download an app on a phone. Be aware that some may have call time limits if using them for free, like Zoom which is 40 minutes.

Your Environment

Where? Decide where in your property or garden you would like to be - somewhere you feel comfortable and which best allows you to remember that person.

What's around you? Make your environment as helpful as possible for remembering them. Maybe have a clean and a tidy up.

Where is your focus? You may want to choose a spot to have as a focal point, like a table for example, to place any photos, mementos or candles.

What to wear? Consider dressing as you would if you were going to the funeral to help you mark it as a specific moment rather than any other day. If you would normally be arranging the service and would have asked everyone to dress in a particular way – some people choose for mourners to wear colour, possibly the deceased's favourite one, instead of black – you could still ask everyone to do this as a way of connecting to each other on the day.

Marking the day and remembering the person who has died

Candle – you might want to light a candle, if you have one.

Mementos – get out objects that remind you of them: it could be photos, letters, cards or gifts they gave you.

Music – choose something that they liked. If you don't own a particular, favourite piece of music and you have access to the internet you will probably be able to find it online – try Spotify

or YouTube for free or buy it on iTunes. If they liked a particular radio programme or station you could play that instead.

Write a eulogy or a letter – eulogies are often delivered at funerals. Eulogy means ‘high praise’, and is the telling of someone’s life: values, interests and personality. You can still write one and you can still share it. When writing it, think about what that person meant to you, what they contributed to your life and the lives of those around them, and memories of them from throughout their life; funny memories can be very welcome on such a difficult day. Alternatively, you could do all of this as a letter to the person who has died.

Share these by reading them out to people you live with or over the phone / via video call or you could even just email it to other people who knew them. If it is a letter you could also read it to a photo of the person perhaps, if you have one.

Choose a reading – at funerals people often read poems, extracts of text or prayers that express how they feel, are reflective of the person who died or that meant something to them. You can still choose a reading and share it, in the same way as a eulogy or letter.

Drawings – another way of expressing how you feel or what the person meant to you, especially for young children in your household who knew the deceased.

Another way of saying ‘goodbye’ - writing a letter to the person who has died or doing a drawing for them can also be a way of saying ‘goodbye’ if you have not been able to do this.

If possible, you could also arrange for it to be placed in the coffin and even ask the funeral director if they can place it into the

person's hand, if you wish. Your loved one will then be touching what you have touched; this can be comforting if you have been unable to hold their hand while they were dying.

If you are not able to get a handwritten note to the funeral director, emailing it to them to print out is another option and will still mean your thoughts are with the person who has died.

You may also find this comforting if you are concerned that the person will be 'alone' at the committal or burial.

Give yourself time and space to remember them – you may not want to write something or to read out anything and that is absolutely fine. You can always just take some time to sit with your thoughts and memories, or even to talk to them in your head.

These are just some thoughts – you may think of others or have your own cultural rituals that you would like to follow. You must do whatever feels right for you – there are no rules.

Who pays for the funeral?

Sometimes, the person who's died has already paid for their funeral. Or they've left some money in their estate to cover it.

If so, the executor of the estate will take care of paying the funeral bill.

Otherwise, usually a relative or friend pays for the funeral.

Support with Funeral Costs

It is likely that total funeral costs will be lower in some cases, as some of the things you might normally associate with a funeral (a printed order of service, some types of floral tributes, receptions afterwards etc.) are not currently applicable.

For people who are having difficulty in covering the cost of a funeral consider the following:

Government support and the Department of Work and Pensions – You may be eligible for the Social Fund **Funeral Expenses Payment**. Spouses or civil partners may be eligible for the **Bereavement Support Payment**. Funeral Expenses Payment, see link for details, **eligibility and how to apply** - <https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments>

Shop around - Ten Steps To An Affordable Funeral - <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachments/10%20Steps%20to%20an%20affordable%20funeral.pdf>

Keep costs down - visit Quaker Social Action Down To Earth link - <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/raising-money-toward-funeral-costs>

Compare funeral director prices across the city - visit <https://www.yourfuneralchoice.com/>

Compare funeral prices across the UK - at <https://beyond.life/funeral-directors/west-yorkshire/leeds>

Grants from work-related charities & organisations - Check if there are any grants available by entering your details on the [Turn2us website](#) or tel no: 0808 802 2000.

Other help - see link for more details - <https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/help-paying-for-a-funeral>

Crowdfunding For Funerals

Crowdfunding is used to raise money for all kinds of reasons, including funeral costs. It involves creating an online page where people can donate to a particular cause.

It can create a space in which people feel more able to contribute, especially if they can only give a little. Lots of people donating small amounts can really add up.

- **Choose a website** – there are lots out there, but some popular examples are:
 - <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/start-crowdfunding>
 - <https://uk.gofundme.com/start/funeral-fundraising>
 - <https://gogetfunding.com/category/funerals-tributes/>
 - <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/categories/in-memory/funerals>
- Check if the website will still pay you the donations even if you don't reach your target.
- Check if the website charges any fees e.g. a % of each donation.
- State the amount you still need to raise.
- Write something explaining the difficulties you are facing and something about the person who has died.
- Tell people about the page – using social media can be a good way to spread the word to lots of people quickly.

Public Health Funeral

Public Health Funerals are arranged by Local Authorities for those people who have died and have no known relatives to arrange or pay for their funeral; or have relatives who do not want to, or are unable to arrange their funeral. Local Authorities have a responsibility to arrange such funerals. See link for more details - <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/births-deaths-and-marriages/death/public-health-funerals>

For more information or to make a referral contact to **Adult Social Care on 0113 222 4401**.

Guidance from Faith Organisations

The Church of England - see FAQ section 'Can funerals still go ahead?' - <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

The Catholic Church - <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/>

The Muslim Council of Britain - <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/coronavirus-guidance-for-mosques-and-madrassas/#deaths>

Leeds Joint Chevra Kadisha – Linda Schulman is the General Manager. Jewish families should contact the Chevra Kadisha in addition to contacting their synagogue. [www.shared.nasck.org/registered chevros/leeds.html](http://www.shared.nasck.org/registered_chevros/leeds.html). Aims: Chessed shel Emet (respect and dignity to the deceased). To perform the Mitzvot of Tahara (preparing the deceased for burial), performing Kri'yah, assist with Shmira and sole custodians of the Tahara House at Chapel Allerton Hospital.

N.B. Notification of death should first be made to the bereaved's own synagogue. Parents experiencing miscarriages or still births should contact their Rabbi or the General Manager. Out of hours the General Manager will always accept telephone calls, excluding Shabbat and Yom Tov, or return messages left on her answer machine.

For other faiths the recommendation is to contact their place of worship to make arrangements for the funeral including collection of the deceased.

Bereavement Support

Grief is a natural process. Bereavement counselling may help. If you want bereavement support, either generally or in relation to the fact you are not able to attend a loved one's funeral, there are lots of services that can help over the phone, by email, online chat or through forums with other bereaved people:

Covid-19 Support Line

St Gemma's and Wheatfields have joined together to provide telephone support to anyone in Leeds with family members or friends who are critically ill, or have died from Covid-19. The telephone support line is staffed by trained bereavement workers who will be able to listen and offer emotional support to callers.

St Gemma's Hospice - 0113 218 5544

Wheatfields Hospice - 0113 203 3369

Lines open - Monday – Friday - 9am - 4pm excluding bank holidays (If the phone line is engaged leave your name and number and they will return your call).

St Gemma's Bereavement Support Service -

<https://www.st-gemma.co.uk/bereavement-support>

Tel: 0113 218 5500

Cruse Bereavement Care - There is very useful information on this website on bereavement during the Corona virus.

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

www.cruse.org.uk/Leeds-area

Tel: 0113 234 4150

Free Cruse helpline - 0808 808 1677

helpline@cruse.org.uk

Grief Chat

<https://www.griefchat.co.uk/>

Bereavement Advice Centre - A free national helpline and website providing information, advice and signposting on any practical issue after the death of someone close.

www.bereavementadvice.org

Tel: 0800 634 9494

The Loss Foundation (free cancer bereavement support)

<https://thelossfoundation.org/>

Sue Ryder (free on-line bereavement counselling service)

<https://community.sueryder.org/>

Child Bereavement Network's directory of support for children

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/find-help-near-you.aspx>

Supporting bereaved children during the outbreak - <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>

Useful Websites

Quaker Social Action 'Down To Earth' website has some useful information: <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth/coronavirus-information-regarding-funerals>

The Good Funeral Guide has Q&A about funerals during the Coronavirus see link - <https://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk/blog/>

Help with funeral costs see link - <https://funeralcostshelp.co.uk/blog/charities-help-funeral-costs>

St Gemma's Hospice is a local, independent charity. The services St Gemma's Hospice provides are always free but we can only continue to do this through the generosity of our supporters. To find out more about how you can support our vital work please contact us on **0113 218 5555** or email fundraising@st-gemma.co.uk

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