

# Doing it yourself (DIY) Funerals

You do not have to employ a funeral director and may decide to take care of the arrangements yourself. This section outlines how to arrange a simple funeral without a funeral director, or only in part. Doing it yourself can be less expensive but may take more organisation and work.

**If the death is expected, it may help to start thinking about arrangements and to plan ahead of time.**

## **Care of the person who has died**

A hospital, hospice or public mortuary can usually look after the person who has died for a reasonable period of time. If the person died at home, you must call a doctor, or call 999 if the death was unexpected.

If the death does not need to be referred to the coroner (or Procurator Fiscal in Scotland), you can choose to care for the person at home. You can lay them out in a cool space, ideally for under a week, while you make funeral arrangements.

You can find out more detailed instructions on caring for a body at home in Pushing Up The Daisies' booklet: [Practical Care of Someone at Home After Their Last Breath.](#)

Some people choose to instruct a funeral director to care for the body only. There would be a charge for this, but it can be useful to use a funeral director's refrigeration facilities if there is nowhere cool at home or the weather is warm. You may wish to contact funeral directors ahead of time to see if they will do this and how much they would charge.

## **Paperwork for Cremation or Burial in England & Wales**

A death needs to be confirmed by a medical professional. The death needs to be registered and funeral arrangements can't go ahead without the Certificate for Burial or Cremation or Certificate of Registration of Death, except in certain circumstances where the

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Coroner carries out a post-mortem examination.

For more information about registering a death, please see:

[Registering a death | quakersocialaction.org.uk](https://www.quakersocialaction.org.uk)

The paperwork required for a cremation in England & Wales is:

- **The Certificate for burial or cremation** (often called the ‘Green form’ as it’s printed on green paper). This will be given to you at the registry office when you register the death. This is replaced by the **Certificate of coroner (Cremation 6)** if the coroner carries out a post-mortem examination.
- **Application for cremation of the body of a person who has died (Cremation 1)** should be filled in by the person taking responsibility for the funeral arrangements, and who will be the primary contact for the crematorium. You can get blank forms from a funeral director, crematorium or online at [Cremation application form - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- Crematoria often have their own forms for information such as music requirements and other details. This is often called the **Particulars or Preliminary information form**. Some crematoria have these forms available to download from their website, but they will also have copies available at their office.
- Generally, crematorium staff are willing and able to help with the forms needed but will sometimes charge for this service. The forms normally need to be delivered to the crematorium at least 72 hours before the date of the funeral.

The paperwork required for a burial in England & Wales is:

- **The Certificate for burial or cremation** (often called the ‘Green form’ as it’s printed on green paper). This will be given to you at the registry office when you register the death. If the coroner carries out a post-mortem examination and orders an inquest, they will issue a **Coroner’s order for burial (Form 101)** in place of the Certificate for burial or cremation.

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- **The Cemetery instruction forms** are different between individual cemeteries and burial grounds. Sometimes they will be available to download from the cemetery website, or you may need to contact their office to get a copy.
  - The forms must be completed by the person who will own the exclusive rights to burial in the grave, and their signature will be required for any memorial to be placed, or any future burials.
  - If the burial is in a grave that is already owned, the named owner of the exclusive rights of burial in the grave will need to sign the cemetery forms to give permission for the burial. The cemetery office may need to see a copy of the deeds to the grave before reopening the plot. If the deeds are not available or cannot be found, the cemetery will advise of their procedure.
  - If the named owner is the person who has died, the cemetery may require the ownership to be transferred.

### **Paperwork for Cremation or Burial in Scotland**

A death needs to be confirmed by a medical professional. You must register the death and can't go ahead without the Certificate for Burial or Cremation or Certificate of Registration of Death.

For more information about registering a death, please see:

[Registering a death | quakersocialaction.org.uk](https://www.quakersocialaction.org.uk)

The paperwork required for a cremation in Scotland is:

- **The Certificate of registration of death (Form 14)** which you will get from the registry office when you register the death.
- **The Procurator Fiscal's Certificate (Form E1)** if the procurator fiscal carries out a post-mortem examination. This would need to be collected from the procurator fiscal's office.

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- **Application for Cremation (Form A)** should be filled in by the person taking responsibility for the funeral arrangements, and who will be the primary contact for the crematorium. You can get blank forms from a funeral director, crematorium or online at [Form A1: application for cremation of an adult or a child \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/form-a1/application-for-cremation-of-an-adult-or-a-child/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)
- Crematoria often have their own forms for information such as music requirements and other details. This is often called a **Supplementary application form**. Some crematoria have these forms available to download from their website, but they will also have copies available at their office.
- Generally, crematorium staff are willing and able to help with the forms needed but will sometimes charge for this service. The forms normally need to be delivered to the crematorium at least 72 hours before the date of the funeral. The crematorium staff will then oversee all of the documents and complete the last section of the **Application for cremation (Form A)** to authorize the cremation to take place legally.

The paperwork required for a burial in Scotland is:

- **The Certificate of registration of death (Form 14)** which you will get from the registry office when you register the death.
- **The Application for burial** forms are standardized for all cemeteries and burial grounds in Scotland. They are available from cemetery offices, or can be downloaded here: [Burial: statutory forms - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/burial-statutory-forms/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)
  - The forms must be completed by the person who will own the exclusive rights to burial in the lair/grave, and their signature will be required for any memorial to be placed, or any future burials.

There may be an additional form for the purchase of the lair rights, and these can be obtained from the cemetery office.

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- If the burial is in a lair/grave that is already owned, the named owner of the exclusive rights of burial in the lair/grave will need to sign the cemetery forms to give permission for the burial. If the named owner is unable to complete the forms themselves, they will need to provide written permission, which should accompany the application for burial.
- If the named owner is the person who has died, the cemetery may require the ownership to be transferred.
- The cemetery office may need to see a copy of the deeds to the lair/grave before reopening it. If the deeds are not available or cannot be found, the cemetery will advise of their procedure.

### **Paperwork for Cremation or Burial in Northern Ireland**

A death needs to be confirmed by a medical professional. You must register the death and can't go ahead without the Certificate for Burial or Cremation or Certificate of Registration of Death.

For more information about registering a death, please see:

[Registering a death | quakersocialaction.org.uk](https://www.quakersocialaction.org.uk).

The paperwork required for a cremation in Northern Ireland is:

- **Certificate for Burial or Cremation (Form GRO21)** which is obtained from the registry office at the point of registering the death.
- **Application for Cremation (Form A)** is available at funeral directors, crematoria or online: [FormA-Cremations.pdf \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)
- **Certificate of Medical Attendant (Form B)** this is completed by a doctor who was involved in the care of the person who has died during their last illness. You will need to inform the hospital bereavement office (if the person died in hospital) or the deceased person's GP surgery that the funeral is to be a cremation, so that they know to complete this form. This will need to be collected by someone to take to the crematorium.

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- **Confirmatory Medical Certificate (Form C)** this needs to be completed by a doctor who is independent from the doctor who completed the Certificate of Medical Attendant.
- The Certificate of Medical Attendant and Confirmatory Medical Certificate are replaced by the **Coroner's Authority for Cremation (Form 20)** if the Coroner carries out a post-mortem examination.
- **Pacemakers and Fixion Form**, completed by the same doctor who completed the Certificate of Medical Attendant (Form B), or the Coroner.
- **Applicant's instructions to crematorium form**, which includes questions about what will happen to the cremated remains and any metals remaining from the cremation process. It also requires information about the coffin, and any contents.
- Generally, crematorium staff are willing and able to help with the forms needed but will sometimes charge for this service. The forms normally need to be delivered to the crematorium at least 72 hours before the date of the funeral. The crematorium staff will then arrange for a medical referee (a doctor who is independent of the doctor who completed the Certificate of Medical Attendant (Form B)) to complete the **Authority to Cremate (Form F)** to authorize the cremation to take place legally.

The paperwork required for a burial in Northern Ireland is:

- **Certificate for Burial or Cremation (Form GRO21)** which is produced by the registry office at the point of registering the death.
- **The Cemetery instruction forms** are different between individual cemeteries and burial grounds. Sometimes they will be available to download from the cemetery website, or you may need to contact their office to get a copy.
  - The forms must be completed by the person who will own the exclusive rights to burial in the grave, and their signature will be required for any memorial to be placed, or any future burials.

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- If the burial is in a grave that is already owned, the named owner of the exclusive rights of burial in the grave will need to sign the cemetery forms to give permission for the burial. The cemetery office may need to see a copy of the deeds to the grave before reopening the plot. If the deeds are not available or cannot be found, the cemetery will advise of their procedure.
- If the named owner is the person who has died, the cemetery may require the ownership to be transferred.

### **Arranging the ceremony**

Information about prices and services offered by your local cemetery and crematoria are often online, though you may have to call.

Some crematoria and council websites provide step-by-step advice to arranging a personal cremation without a funeral director.

If you are having a ceremony at the crematorium or cemetery chapel, you will need to let their offices know any requirements or preferences for this, particularly any music requirements. Many cemetery and crematorium offices will have their own forms for this purpose.

### **Buying a suitable coffin**

The crematorium can offer guidance about a suitable coffin and personal items that can be put inside. Crematoria require coffins to be compliant with Government regulations on emissions and may ask that coffins are accredited by the Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers' Association or other authority. If you are looking to purchase a coffin yourself, there are different options online, but it is important to check the crematorium or cemetery's requirements first.

Hospital mortuary staff may help you place the person who has died inside the coffin. If you have opted for a funeral director just to care for the person who has died, your coffin can be delivered to them, however please be aware that some do charge a handling fee.

### **Finding an officiant, or leading a ceremony yourself**

You can ask a faith leader or any independent funeral celebrant (non-religious) to lead the service. The crematorium may have a list of local contacts or there are some online, searchable websites. Alternatively, you or someone you know could prepare and lead the service.

### **Transporting the person who has died**

You can transport the coffin to the ceremony yourself using an estate car or van. Alternatively, you can look for professional transport, such as through a funeral director or other company. An online search of 'funeral services' or 'carriage masters' shows different options.

### **Burying a body on private land or in a garden**

It is possible to do this, but there are certain rules that must be followed regarding paperwork, distance to types of water and the depth of the grave. You must have consent from the owner of the freehold of the land and burial of a body must not be prohibited in the land title deeds.

The Natural Death Centre have resources on their website <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/> and give advice on doing some or all elements of a funeral yourself on their helpline: **01962 712 690**

## **Down to Earth stories...**

Following our guide, Michael planned a simple 'DIY' funeral by arranging for his mum's body to be looked after at the hospice for a week while he arranged a faith leader, cardboard coffin and crematorium slot.

The full cost of the funeral came to around £1,200. Afterwards Michael said that it had been a tough but spiritually rewarding experience.

**“A friend led a simple ceremony. The care home laid on tea and coffee afterwards and mum's favourite cake was eaten in her honour. Those who attended said that it was one of the most moving funerals that they had ever attended.”**

Find out more about Down to Earth at [www.downtoearthsupport.org.uk](http://www.downtoearthsupport.org.uk)