

Easthampstead Park Cemetery & Crematorium

Practical advice to help you carry out a burial yourself



It is often assumed that funerals can only be completed by using a Funeral Director.

Although a funeral director will be invited to organise the majority of funerals, some people prefer to make the arrangements themselves. As we have adopted the Charter for the Bereaved we are committed to helping you arrange a funeral of your choice. If you would like to arrange a burial yourself, this leaflet provides some guidance. We recognise that everyone is an individual and we welcome you to come and discuss your personal requirements with us.

Laying out the body

At home

The body should be laid out as soon as possible after the death. Laying out is done by washing the body, stopping the natural orifices with cotton wool and cloth, and dressing the deceased. The head can be supported by a pillow, eyelids closed, the jaw supported and the arms and feet straightened. The deceased's general appearance can be tidied, for example: false teeth put in place, hair brushed or face shaved.

You can ask a funeral director to come to take the body away, or to lay it out at home. They can charge for this service. The room in which the body is being kept should be cool and airy.

In a hospital

The hospital will usually carry out the laying out of the body and then take it to the mortuary.

You have a common law right as executor or administrator to be given care of the deceased.

You will need to telephone (usually the Patient Affairs or Bereavement Office) to arrange a suitable time to attend the mortuary.

Purchasing or making a coffin

Coffins can be made from traditional woods, biodegradable material, wicker, bamboo, cardboard or a cloth burial shroud. Alternatively you may wish to make or paint the coffin yourself.

There are many different coffin suppliers and the Cemetery Office can provide you with an information sheet on how to make a coffin or where a coffin or alternative can be purchased.

The Cemetery Office will need to know in advance the outside measurements of the coffin, (width, length & height) in order that they can prepare the grave to the appropriate size.

Transportation of a coffin

You will need to consider how you will transport the coffin from the house or hospital to the cemetery. Vehicles that have been used are an estate car, transit van, hired traditional hearse or a horse-drawn hearse.

Registering of the death

The law requires that every death in this country be registered. The doctor who was looking after the deceased, or the coroner, will issue a medical certificate that states the cause of death. There is no charge for this certificate. The doctor will usually give this to the next of kin to enable them to register the death. In this country, deaths should be registered within five days of the death. The death must be registered in the area the death occurred. For example if the death occurred at Heatherwood Hospital, the death would be registered at

Windsor and Maidenhead Registry Office.

You may contact the Registrars Office to check their opening times, or if you have any queries. You will usually have to go in person to the office to register the death, ensuring you have the medical certificate of cause of death with you. Once the registration has been completed, the Registrar can issue copy of the entry in the register - this is often referred to as the Death Certificate. You may need to purchase a few copies of the Death Certificate to enable you to deal with closing bank accounts, apply for probate etc.

Registrar's and Coroner's certificates

The Registrar, once the death has been registered, will issue a certificate, which authorises a burial or cremation to take place. This is generally referred to as the "green certificate" or "disposal certificate". We cannot allow a burial or cremation unless we have received this certificate. The certificate is free of charge. If the death has been referred to the Coroner, it cannot be registered until the Registrar has received authority from the Coroner. If there is no inquest the Coroner may issue a "Pink Form" (Form 100) which gives the cause of death so that registration can take place. The Form may be sent directly to the Registrars or you may be asked to deliver it. If there is to be an inquest then the Coroner will issue a Coroners Order for Burial known as Form 100.

Choose or confirm a burial space

Burial in a new grave

You may contact the Cemetery Office and a member of staff will meet with you and show you all the available options. They will be able to explain if there are certain regulations that apply to certain areas. A leaflet explaining the different types of graves is available to help you make a fully informed decision.

You may have a burial space of your choice in any of our cemeteries, depending on

availability. You will need to complete an application for a burial in a new grave. The Cemetery Office will supply and help you to complete this form.

A burial in an existing grave

To allow a burial in an existing grave, the Registered Grave Owner must complete and sign a burial application form. However, the Registered Grave Owner has the automatic right to be buried in the grave. In this case, the next of kin or Executor of the deceased can request the opening of the grave. If the Grave Owner is deceased and a burial is required of another person in the grave, a transfer of ownership, must be completed first. The Cemetery Office will be able to advise you if there is space remaining in a grave for a burial, and if a transfer is required.

At the Cemetery

You will have arranged a time with the cemetery for the burial. When you arrive at the cemetery at this pre-arranged time, you will be met by a member of staff at the entrance. This member of staff is there to assist and guide you, and also to ensure the burial takes place correctly. The cemetery staff have to complete statutory forms to say that the burial has taken place.

Service in chapel

You are welcome to hold a funeral service in our chapels. The chapels are used by those of varied faiths and cultures. Each chapel has music facilities and if you prefer live music a keyboard is available for use. You can place personal items in the chapels, for example scented candles or balloons. Staff will be pleased to show you the chapels when you begin to make your arrangements.

It is often assumed, wrongly, that you must have a Minister to officiate at a burial service. The service can be taken by anyone of your choice, for example a representative of your faith, by friends and family or you can hold a silent service.

Lowering the coffin

You will need to have at least four people to assist you at the cemetery. They will need to be able to take the coffin from the vehicle, and to lower the coffin into the grave. The cemetery will provide lowering webs and a member of staff will be with you to offer advice and guidance.

After the burial service

Unless otherwise requested, the cemetery staff will fill in the grave. They will place any floral tributes on top. They will leave the area neat and tidy. Graves are always filled in on the day the burial takes place.

As previously mentioned, this leaflet includes some guidelines. We recognise everyone is an individual and we will help you to make the funeral you are arranging as personal and individual as you wish.