



ARRANGING A FUNERAL FOR YOUR CHILD

Your guide



ERIC P
MASSIE
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Arranging a funeral for your child



*T*here are no words for the unfathomable loss felt by any parent upon the death of a child. It just seems so wrong that a parent should be arranging the funeral of their precious child. Yet, it's at this time, when you're wrestling with the agony and heartbreak, that you are expected to make practical arrangements for the funeral. You don't have to tackle this alone: we are here to help.

Our respectful and experienced staff will support you in laying your precious child to rest. We are dedicated to the highest levels of compassionate care and will look after you and your child with the utmost respect and dignity. The funeral you choose to have for your child is entirely up to you and we will do our best to realise your every wish in saying goodbye.



First Steps

There is no right or wrong time

Please don't wait to call us. There is no right or wrong time. We are here to offer guidance and take away worry or doubt at any point.



Looking after your child

The first thing you'll probably want to know is where will your child go and who is caring for them. We realise how important having your child at home with you may be – even for a time. Or we can care for them in our funeral home. We will support you whatever your preference.

Sometimes there can be delays, particularly where the death was sudden or unexplained. In this situation your child may need to stay in, or be taken to, hospital until the medical cause of death has been confirmed. However, you don't need to wait for medical certification to make plans; you can make arrangements whenever you feel ready.





Spending time with your child

There's also no right or wrong when it comes to spending time with your child. Parents frequently tell us it helps with the grieving process. For some, it provides a sense of peace, closure and a chance to say goodbye gently.

If you would like to spend time with your child we can arrange this in your home or our funeral home. This is often a very special time and you may wish to read a book, play particular music, bring a favourite toy, sports kit, jewellery, photos, drawings, cards or letters, which you may want to leave with your child.

Dressing your child

Despite the loss, you are still able to care for and make your child comfortable. This may include providing clothes, blankets, toys, jewellery or other familiar items that have meaning. For some this may mean a school uniform, others a sports kit or favourite outfit. Our experienced team will do whatever is required to make your child comfortable.

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First steps

Keepsakes

You may wish to leave personal items with your child such as a toy, photographs or other keepsake. If you choose to have a cremation, certain items cannot be cremated and we would return these to you before the funeral. Many hospitals provide keepsake items as part of their support to you.

Where possible, we can arrange prints of your child's hand or foot or a tiny lock of hair for you to keep.

It's so important that you feel able to ask us anything and we encourage questions, no matter what. Your child's funeral is unique



and you can personalise it in your own special way.

As part of our service we offer you a little keepsake bear. Made by hand and in pairs, one small teddy can be placed with your child in the coffin, if you wish, and the other is for you to keep.



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Registration

Registration is the formal process required. It is necessary to have done this in order to finalise the funeral arrangements which may have already started. You can contact us at any time you feel ready. The death certificate will be issued by your GP or hospital doctor and we can advise and help you with registration.

Arranging the funeral

Even at this early stage, you may feel the pressure of expectations. The loss of a child is so intensely personal you must feel free to choose what is right for you. For some, this will mean embracing a large public funeral whilst, for others, a more private, family led, informal event feels more appropriate. We are here to guide you if this is a difficult decision.

The next key decision is burial or cremation, so we've set out the key considerations of each.



Considerations for cremation

1. Choice of crematorium

If cremation is your preferred option, a very likely consideration will be your child's ashes. Ashes include everything remaining after the cremation process; your child, their coffin and any clothing or keepsakes that were cremated. Ashes can be significant: you can keep them close to you, bury or scatter them at any time, now or in the future – there are different options and you can have the space and time to consider what is right for your family.

In Scotland, there are no cremation fees from a Council crematoria for registered children under the age of 18. Also some private crematoria do not charge for services for under 18s. Your funeral director will guide you when it comes to choosing the most suitable crematorium depending on the number of people attending, location and technical facilities you might need for sound or weblinks.

2. Choice of coffin or casket

Having to choose a coffin for your child just doesn't seem right. We understand this is often a very hard decision, so alongside traditional wood or painted coffins, we offer alternatives. Increasingly we find the most appropriate coffin for a child has been themed towards their favourite pastimes; sports, hobbies, characters or other pastimes and passions. We also offer eco-friendly alternatives in wool, willow or wicker and these can come in grey, gold and cream colours.

3. Collecting Ashes

Typically, ashes are returned to us 2-3 days after the funeral. However, you can take as long as you need to decide what you want to do with them. Once you're ready you can collect them from us,

or ask us to deliver them to you, or ask for them to be scattered at the crematorium Garden of Rest. When considering the final resting place for ashes there are a number of options.

Storage of ashes can be in any receptacle you choose whether this is something you provide or something which we can offer. Options range from traditional urns and caskets to small boxes, bottles or even jewellery.

We can also provide scatter tubes in a variety of different styles and designs for scattering ashes in a place of personal significance.

The ashes' final resting place can provide a meaningful focus for you in years to come. This has the advantage of a specific and permanent place of memorial to visit or lay flowers over the coming years.



Considerations for burial

1. Choice of resting place

If burial is your preferred option, you'll need to decide whether there is an existing family grave that is right for your child, or whether to consider a new lair which may be used by other family members in time. For new graves the main decision is which cemetery to choose, a church, council or privately-owned cemetery, or a woodland burial site. In Scotland, there are no burial fees applicable in Council cemeteries for registered children under the age of 18. Some private cemeteries do not charge for fees related to under 18s.

2. Order of events

Most people choose a service first followed by interment, but you are free to organise the events in whichever way you prefer. It's also up to you who you invite at each stage and how public or private you wish to make the day.



3. Choice of coffin or casket

Choosing a coffin for your child must just seem wrong. We understand this is often a very hard decision so, alongside traditional wood or painted coffins, we offer alternatives. Increasingly we find the most appropriate coffin for a child has been themed towards their favourite pastimes; sports, hobbies, characters or other pastimes and passions. We also offer eco-friendly alternatives in wool, willow or wicker and these can come in grey, gold and cream colours.



The service

1. Who will lead the ceremony?

The importance of using someone you're comfortable with, and who understands you and your family cannot be overstated. Trust and confidence matter and we will guide you in this decision wherever needed and liaise with whoever you feel is most appropriate to lead the ceremony, regardless of what type of service you choose.

2. Roles for family and friends

You may wish to include other special people in the ceremony such as close and extended family and friends, even teachers or coaches, by asking them to deliver a reflection or a reading. Readings can also include poems or passages from books as well as religious readings.

3. Saying Goodbye

The arrangements we make with you to lay your child to rest will be unique to what's right for you. Our role includes guiding you on decisions relating to music, orders of service, flowers and communication of the funeral through social media or other channels. Should you want to invite those close to you to meet up afterwards, we can help with the practical arrangements.

4. Music

Music can play a poignant part to your child's life, so you may wish to include it on entering your venue, on leaving, throughout the service or we can arrange for the organist to play softly in the background. Crematoria have sound systems but only some churches or other venues have suitable equipment. It may also be relevant to



have a school choir, orchestra or music group. A traditional hymn sheet may not be appropriate, however a handout containing photographs, readings and a running order of the event can provide a tangible memento for you and those who attend and send to those who are unable to be there on the day.

5. Flowers

Flowers are not an essential part of a funeral but a time honoured tradition. A formal arrangement may seem out of place. Your options may be shaped by the following considerations: are they to be left behind or taken to/from venues, would you like them to be donated to a hospice or church, are they to be left at a graveside, would family members like to take them away?

We can arrange flower orders for you including specific personalised tributes. Or to see the fullest range of possibilities you may wish to talk to your local florist directly. All local florists deliver to us as part of their service.

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6. Transport

Our fleet of funeral cars are all a distinctive silver E Class Mercedes Benz. Guided by your preference and the age of your child, we can use a car, limousine or hearse to transport your child to their final resting place. We know how meaningful that last journey can be and will work with you to customise the route as you desire.

7. Writing a funeral notice

Once the funeral details have been arranged, it's usual to notify friends and family of the arrangements, including date, time and location of the funeral, and preferences for flowers and privacy.

This is traditionally done with a newspaper notice, but we also offer you a place on our website to publish an online obituary and funeral details for mourners. People are also given space to leave messages of condolence for you online.

Increasingly, families are also using social media as this has become an effective way of reaching close contacts and wider friends. The popularity of social media tagging is also growing, and we can link to Facebook accounts, providing details of funerals as well as capturing feedback from mourners. Our Digital Death Guide contains

useful advice on using social media in this way which can be downloaded from our website ericmassie.co.uk.

Whatever you choose, your Eric P Massie funeral director is there to help you write exactly the notice you want to place. A sample notice can be found on our website.

8. Choosing a memorial

Memorials offer somewhere for parents, other family members and friends to visit; somewhere to lay flowers, cards or other tributes, in days, months and years to come. There are many options available.

For burials or ashes interment, you may want to add the child's name to an existing family stone or you might prefer to buy a new, bespoke memorial to mark the grave.

Other memorial options include planting of trees, plants or bushes in memorial gardens through to creating memory boxes to hold treasured items and keepsakes.

Whatever you choose, we are here to help and guide you, bearing in mind this decision may not be made for some time after the funeral.



After the funeral

Paying for the funeral

At Eric P Massie we do not charge for our professional funeral director services or the vehicle carrying the coffin for children under 16 years old. We do charge for the coffin, any mileage above 30 miles and any other vehicles required. Third party costs such as flowers, printing or purchase of a grave will incur a charge and form the deposit. We will always provide a full estimate in writing based on the funeral arrangements discussed. Invoices are issued after the funeral and payment is due within 30 days. A full range of payment options are available, or you may wish to pay online at ericmassie.co.uk.

After the Funeral

Whenever there is a death in the family – even for babies up to a year old - sadly there are other tasks which can be hard to face. However, if you don't advise some of the organisations below that you've experienced a tragic loss, you may continue to receive correspondence which can be distressing.

The 'Tell us Once' service

This is triggered at the registration of death and central and local Government agencies use your National Insurance details and the child's death certificate to update their records. This is particularly relevant if you are receiving Child Tax Credits, Child Benefit or any other benefit from HMRC. It will also be used for a passport as well as Council Tax.

We've put a small list of typical organisations you may want to contact - if relevant - to help with this process.

FINANCIAL

- Banks and building societies/premium bonds
- Holiday/family insurance policy provider

PERSONAL

- Nursery or childcare provider
- Schools, university or college
- GP, hospital, dentist, optician and anyone else providing medical care: NHS or private provider
- Libraries, children's services
- Church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other place of worship

Remember to review settings for other apps or organisations which are set up to send you highly personalised information about your child.

Lean on our experience

Eric P Massie has been looking after families in their time of need for generations. When you need us most, please call 01467 621 3688; there will always be someone here for you.

