



Arranging your baby's funeral

A guide for bereaved parents,
families and carers

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We would like to offer you and your family our deepest sympathy at this difficult time. The thought of arranging your baby's funeral can feel very daunting. Unless there are particular religious or cultural reasons for holding the funeral quickly, there is usually no need to hurry. You can take all the time you need to make sure that the funeral is arranged in a way that will be meaningful to you and your family.

Your religion, culture or family traditions may guide you in the many choices that are available, but arrangements for a baby's funeral are often quite different from the way adults' funerals are conducted. This is the final physical act of caring for your baby. It is a time, amid profound grief, when you can acknowledge your baby and the meaning their life holds.

It is important to do whatever feels right for you and your family. Do not feel pushed or rushed to make decisions you are not comfortable with. This booklet contains information about the choices available, and suggestions of other things you may want to think about. We hope you find it helpful.

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, or family and friends may have recommendations. 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. You could ask a family member or friend to help make these initial enquiries for you. 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 baby 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 you or your partner get certain benefits or tax credits, you may be entitled to a Funeral Support Payment from Social Security Scotland. To be eligible, you or your partner must get one of the following:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- A disability element of Working Tax Credit
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit

You must also be the baby's parent, close relative or have parental responsibilities. The Funeral Support Payment can help towards funeral expenses, travel and transport costs. There is a fixed limit which may be less than the full cost of the funeral.

You can apply for a Funeral Support Payment from the date of your baby's death up to six months after the funeral. You can apply online, by phone or by post. Contact details are at the back of this leaflet. A funeral director can also give you information about this.

The Funeral Support Payment is for people who live in Scotland but a similar payment may be available from the Department for Work and Pensions if you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Decisions about your baby'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 the 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 baby 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.

If your baby is to be buried you have some choices:

- You could have a ceremony (e.g. in a place of worship) before going to the cemetery for the burial.
- A ceremony can be held at the graveside.
- You can make the funeral open to everyone or arrange for all or part of it to be private or for close family only.
- You can arrange a burial and have a separate memorial service at a different time.

Cremation

There are three crematoriums in Edinburgh and one in Livingston, however other areas may not have a crematorium nearby. A funeral director will be able to advise you about facilities in your area.

If you decide on a cremation then you have some choices:

- You could have a ceremony (e.g. in a place of worship) before the cremation.
- A ceremony can be held at the crematorium.
- You can make the funeral open to everyone or arrange for all or part of it to be private or for close family only.
- You can arrange a cremation and have a separate memorial service at a different time

You also have a choice about what will happen to your baby's ashes. The ashes are all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process, once any metal has been removed. Crematorium staff will make every effort to ensure that ashes are gathered following cremation, however this cannot be absolutely guaranteed. There may be very rare instances when it is not possible.

After the cremation you can ask for your baby's ashes to be scattered or buried at the crematorium or ask that they are kept so you can make other arrangements. Some people bury their baby's ashes in a cemetery or scatter them in a place that is special to them. Others choose to keep them at home or to have jewellery made using some of the ashes. A funeral director can talk you through all the options to help you reach a decision that feels right for you.

Planning the service

If you would like to arrange a religious ceremony you should contact the appropriate person from your faith or belief group. Alternatively you can have a non-religious ceremony 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.

The person you choose to conduct the funeral will want to plan the service with you. They will ask you to think about the service and whether you would like music, poems, readings, hymns or songs. They may have suggestions but it should be your choice. They will also ask you about special things you may wish to be said about your baby. Family members or friends can take part in the service if you would like this.

Other details to think about...

Where your baby is cared for before the funeral - Upon your instructions, your chosen funeral director will contact the hospital to take your baby into their care. You will be able to visit and spend time with your baby at the funeral director's premises if you wish. It may also be possible for your baby to be brought home before the funeral.

Choosing a coffin - You can have a 'traditional' wooden coffin for your baby or choose something a bit different. Coffins are now available in a wide range of materials, designs and colours. Some families choose a plain coffin and then have it decorated, or invite family and close friends to write messages on it. A funeral director may offer you a range of options but if you would prefer something different, just ask. Alternatively there are companies that produce coffins for babies and sell directly to the public. The Natural Death Centre and Good Funeral Guide websites have lists of recommended companies (contact details on back page).

Thinking about clothes and special items for your baby – You may want your baby to be dressed in a particular outfit or wrapped in a special blanket for the funeral. You may also wish to put special items into the coffin such as a soft toy, a letter or a poem. If you have other children they might like to draw a picture or write a message to put in the coffin. If your baby is being cremated you should ask the funeral director or crematorium about any restrictions on what you can put in, as there are strict rules about what can be cremated.

Transport for the funeral - A funeral director can arrange suitable transport for your baby and close family members on the day of the funeral. For a baby they may have a car that can carry a smaller coffin and also have space for the family. There may also be alternatives to a traditional hearse so you should talk about the options.

What to wear - Black is often worn at funerals but any colour can be appropriate for a baby's funeral. Some families invite people to come dressed in a special colour or theme, or simply ask for 'bright colours only'. Your personal choice and comfort, whether informal or formal, is the most important factor. It should feel right for you.

Flowers - You can choose whether or not to have flowers on or with your baby's coffin. A florist can provide a floral arrangement or you can provide your own. You can also decide whether or not you want other people to send or bring flowers. After the funeral you may want to take some of the flowers home to press and keep as mementos. You may also want to keep any message cards that are sent with the flowers.

Putting a notice in the newspaper or online - This can include an announcement of your baby's death and details of the time, date and place of the funeral service.

A printed order of service - You may decide to have a personalised order of service with a photo of your baby and details of the ceremony such as the words and music that are used. If you are inviting people to meet up after the funeral you could also include the address and directions to the venue. A family member or friend can often make these for you, or a funeral director can arrange to have them printed although there may be a small charge for this.

Service attendance cards - This can be a good way for people to leave their names at the service, along with a message if they wish. As you may not see everyone at the service, these cards can act as a reminder of who came on the day and the messages can bring comfort.

Donations - You may decide to ask for donations to a named charity. Families sometimes request this instead of flowers. A funeral director can help organise a collection plate and ensure the safekeeping of donations to give to you later.

After the funeral - Some families invite people to meet up for a reception or tea after the funeral but you may prefer to be alone or with close family. There's no right or wrong thing to do. It must suit you and your family.

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

The Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

Phone: 0345 230 6777

Website: 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

Website: www.naturaldeath.org.uk

The Good Funeral Guide

Website: 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

Department for Work & Pensions

Phone: 0800 731 0469

Website: www.gov.uk/funeral-payments