



WHAT DO I DO NOW?

This information sheet has been prepared for families who have had a sudden and unexpected death in the family. It will not give you all the information but it does give some information about various people who will be involved with you and your family over the coming days.

The Police - By the time you read this list, you will have dealt with the Police. The Police are there to assess the situation, and contact any of the relevant authorities like Doctors, Coroners, Government Undertakers, other family members etc. Do not hesitate to ask them any questions you may have.

The Government Undertaker - When the death is sudden and unexpected, it is likely that a post-mortem will be carried out by the relevant Coroner. The Coroner has a contract with certain Funeral Directors to transfer the deceased to the Coroner's Mortuary (which in most cases is a local hospital mortuary). You have no obligation to use the Government Undertaker/Funeral Director to arrange the Funeral Service.

The Coroner - The Coroner's essential task is to find out the cause of death. While in some cases this may seem obvious, they need to find out if there are other circumstances surrounding the death, such as the presence of substances in the bloodstream, or other events that may have led up to the death (see "The Autopsy" below).

The Police, as part of their investigations, also provide reports that assist the Coroner in their work. Your Funeral Director will liaise with the Police and the Coroner and arrange the necessary paperwork required for your loved one to be released from the Coroner's Mortuary.

Do not expect the funeral service to take place quickly as the Autopsy and preparation of paperwork does take time. Your Funeral Director will advise you of how long this will be.

The Autopsy - Because your Doctor cannot accurately say why a death has occurred, an Autopsy is performed. (If a person dies and has not seen a Doctor for three months a post-mortem is a legal requirement) The Autopsy is a clinically invasive procedure which involves the examination of fluids and tissue within the body. While the thought of this procedure can be quite distressing, it is a legal requirement, and may provide more useful information for the family both now and in the future.

The Funeral Director - The Funeral Director can provide a lot of information and practical preparations concerning a funeral arrangement. They will arrange a time and place for the service, liaise with clergy or Funeral Celebrant, Doctor, cemeteries, crematoriums, florists and newspapers, provide chapel, or staff and vehicles, and anything else associated with the Funeral Service.



They can be contacted at any time of the day or night. When to actually call the Funeral Director is up to the family. You may even wish to just get some advice over the telephone, or compare what service the various Funeral Directors provide.

If you are comparing Funeral Directors particularly for price, make sure they are very clear about the service and facilities they provide, and check to see if there are any hidden costs that may apply. Remember that you are under no obligations to use the Funeral Director that transferred your loved one to the Coroner. A brochure has been provided which discusses various options available to you. It also allows you to fill out all the details that are required by the Registrar General when a death has occurred.

The Funeral Service - Essentially the Funeral Service allows us to pay tribute to, and reflect on, the life of the deceased. It affords comfort and support to the surviving family and friends. The funeral continues to serve two purposes. Firstly, it fulfils a social need for the legal and dignified removal of the body after death. Secondly, the funeral helps the bereaved to accept the reality of the death, and so take the first and most important step towards working through grief and renewing their own lives.

It is also important to give consideration to saying good-bye or seeing your loved one again. Viewing or saying good-bye is not morbid, it is quite normal and it plays an important role in helping the bereaved accept the death has occurred. Your Funeral Director will encourage you to provide clothing.

Costs - Funeral costs will vary depending on your requirements. As a general rule, burial is more expensive than cremation. Your Funeral Director will advise you of ways to control costs if that is your concern. Paupers Funerals are available but they are means tested by the Government, and they do not allow any choice as to when and where the burial or cremation is to take place.

SOME FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE

Do not be in a hurry to do anything. Some people think a funeral service must be held quickly. That is not the case.

Allow yourself time to make informed decisions about the funeral service for your loved one.

Give relatives and friends time to be there to provide comfort and support.

Do not be afraid to ask for help. In times of tragedy and sadness your friends and family will be only too happy to help.