Bereavement Services – An Introduction

As part of our commitment to improve bereavement services North East Lincolnshire Council has committed itself to developing and enhancing the Burial and Cremation services that it provides.

An essential part of this is the ‘Charter for the Bereaved’ and we are working towards this. This charter is intended to define the rights of every individual who experiences bereavement and will give families greater influence over the choices available for the funeral arrangements including environmental and cost issues.

The information provided here is intended to assist individuals and families regardless of whether or not a funeral director is used but we recognise that it will be of particular interest to those people who wish to arrange a funeral with minimum or no assistance from a funeral director. Whatever you decide, the staff at Bereavement Services will assist you with any queries that you may have.

These details are intended to assist you in obtaining a dignified, personal and meaningful funeral service. North East Lincolnshire Council does not wish to promote any particular type of arrangement; this information is intended to widen your choice when making the funeral arrangements.

You may not be aware that you can arrange both cremation and burial with limited or no assistance from a funeral director. This information should assist you.

When a death occurs

Should the death occur at home, contact the General Practitioner who attended the deceased during their last illness – usually the family Doctor. Provided that the person has died from 'natural causes' the Doctor should be able to confirm death and subsequently issue a ‘Cause of Death Certificate’. There is no fee payable for this and the certificate may be issued immediately or alternatively, be made available for collection later from the surgery.

If the death occurs in hospital, it is usually the Doctor who was in attendance during the deceased’s last illness that will issue the ‘Cause of Death Certificate’. Locally, at the Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital, you will collect this certificate from the Cashiers Office along with any personal belongings. You will be advised to either telephone them before you leave home or advised of a time to call and collect the certificate.
In the case of a sudden but 'natural causes' death, the Coroner may be called upon. It may be that after consultation with the Coroner, a Doctor can issue a certificate of cause of death supported with an additional certificate from the Coroner (Coroners 'A' certificate). In this case a post mortem will not be held and the Coroners certificate will usually go direct to the Registrar of Births and Deaths at the Register Office.

However, in the event of a sudden death where the Doctor is unable to advise the Coroner on the medical history of the deceased, the Coroner may deem it necessary to hold a post mortem to establish the cause of death. In these cases the Coroner will issue a certificate stating what the cause was found to be. This certificate is referred to as the Coroners ‘B’ Certificate and is required by the Registrar of Births and Deaths to register the death. If you intend for the funeral arrangements to be a cremation, you should advise the Coroner of this, as he/she will issue Form 6 for Cremation, which you pass to the Crematorium. All of these certificates are free of charge.

If the death is unnatural, attended by suspicious circumstances, violence, suicide, neglect or as the result of an accident or industrial disease then the Coroner will insist that a post mortem is conducted and an inquest held. Once the inquest has been officially opened the Coroner will supply you with either the cremation form, Form 6 or a Burial Order so that the funeral may proceed. Again, no fee is charged for these certificates.

**Registration of the Death**

There is a legal requirement for each and every death that occurs within England and Wales to be registered with a Registrar of Births and Deaths. This should be done within 5 days of the date of death, with the Registrar for the district in which the death occurred but if it is difficult to attend at that office in person, it is possible to provide the information to another Registrar (still in person) nearer to you. That Registrar will then post the details onto the appropriate Registrar of Births and Deaths. Please be aware that this process will take a little longer and to allow time for the postal service.

The nearest surviving relative of the deceased should attend at the Register Office to register the death. I would recommend that you telephone the Register Office prior to attending for several reasons:

- The Register Office may operate an appointment system – North East Lincolnshire Register Office do and you can contact them on 01472 324861.
- If you are unsure that you are officially the nearest surviving relative, speak to the Registrar of Births and Deaths first and he/she will advise you.
- If you are awaiting certificates from the Coroner the Registrar will be able to advise you if they have received them yet.

If you have a ‘Certificate of Cause of Death’ from the Doctor, take this certificate with you, as the Registrar will require it. The Doctor should also give you a printed slip ‘Notice to Informant’ advising you of the additional information that the Registrar will need to know:
• Full name and surname of the deceased, including maiden and previous names.
• Date and place of death
• Date and place of Birth
• Usual home address
• Occupation, prior to retirement if retired
• Marital status and date of birth of surviving spouse
• Details of any pensions paid from public funds or benefits they were receiving

The Registrar of Births and Deaths will provide you with a Green Form, free of charge, this certificate is very important as any burial or cremation cannot proceed without it. In case of the Coroner issuing a Certificate the Green Form will not be issued but the burial or cremation authority must be given the coroners Certificate B for a burial or Form 6 for a cremation, in place of the Green Form.

**Funeral Arrangements**

All arrangements for cremation and any interment/burials within Scartho Road or Cleethorpes Cemeteries must be made with the Bereavement Services, Grimsby Crematorium, Weelsby Avenue, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN32 0BA. Telephone 01472 324869.

The arrangements may be made over the telephone and via the postal service but you may find it easier to arrange to call and visit the office in person. We can arrange for a member of staff to sit and talk the arrangement through with you and assist you in establishing the individual requirements for the funeral. All fees and charges are payable in advance of the service; cheques should be made payable to North East Lincolnshire Council.

It is important to remember that an Independent Funeral will require the family to spend time making arrangements which include:
• Preparation and storage of the body
• Provision of a casket or coffin
• Arranging a vehicle to collect and transport the coffin
• Supplying people to act as bearers (people who carry the coffin into the chapel or to the graveside).

You may find it helpful to view the Crematorium or Cemetery chapels and the various facilities available. We can help you complete the necessary forms and advise you on the type of coffin or container acceptable within the legislation. More detailed information can be found towards the end of this leaflet.

The body of any person will not be accepted for interment/burial or cremation unless it is enclosed within a coffin, casket or container of a design acceptable to the Bereavement Service Manager. An identification plate or tag must also be secured on the container. Consideration must be given to ensuring that the proceedings are conducted in a dignified manner, without disturbance or wilful offence to other mourners or the Bereavement Service staff.
A time will be agreed for the funeral cortege to arrive and you will need to consider what means of transportation you will use. Once the body has been conveyed to the Crematorium or the Cemetery it is not acceptable for any items or parts to be removed from the coffin. Please ensure that any personal items that you do not wish to be cremated or buried have been removed prior to your arrival.

At the Crematorium, the Chapel attendant will greet you and will advise and, if necessary, guide you. You will need to provide bearers, these are people responsible for conveying the coffin reverently from the vehicle to the catafalque. There is a coffin bier (a special trolley) available for you to use but the need to lift and lower the coffin from the vehicle and onto the catafalque still exists.

Within the cemeteries, the Cemetery Attendant will greet you by the graveside and will advise and guide you, but you will need to provide bearers to convey the coffin from the vehicle to the grave. The Cemetery Attendant will advise you when to lower the coffin and provide the necessary webbing to enable you to do this. Careful attention must be paid with regard to health and safety risks at the graveside and it may be wise for bearers to talk the procedure through with the Cemetery Attendant before the day of the funeral.

**Necessary Paperwork**

**Interment/Burial**

At least 3 clear working days notice must be given to the Bereavement Service office before the interment may take place.

An appropriate Notice of Interment form must be completed and the Certificate for Burial (either the Green Form or the form provided by the Coroner) together with the appropriate fee must be delivered to the Bereavement Service Office at least 48 hours before the proposed interment.

**Cremation**

**Form 1 - Application for Cremation** must be completed by the near relative, executor or the person authorised to apply for the cremation. **Forms 4, 5 and 10 Medical Certificates** are also required. **Form 4** must be completed and signed by the Doctor who attended the deceased during the last illness and must certify the cause of death. **Form 5** is a confirmatory certificate which must be signed by a second Doctor – of not less than five years standing - who must also certify the cause of death. Both of the Doctors must have viewed the body of deceased. The Doctor will make a charge for this certificate. **The Certificate of Burial or Cremation** the Green form obtained from the Registrar of Births & Deaths) together with the **Form 1 – Application for Cremation** must be submitted to the Medical Referee (at the very latest) 9.00 am the day before the cremation. The Medical Referee attends the Bereavement Service Office daily and provided that all the paperwork is correct, will issue a certificate authorising the cremation to take place, **Form 10**.
If the Coroner has been involved and a Certificate/ Form 6 has been issued then Form 1 – Application for Cremation is the only other certificate that will be required. These forms must still be authorised by the Medical Referee.

Form H- Instructions for Cremation or Preliminary Form and Forms J and K – Instruction and Authorisation for the disposal of the Cremated Remains will also need to be completed and delivered to the Bereavement Service Office.

Sufficient notice must be given to enable all the statutory documentation to be completed before the cremation can take place. All paperwork must, at the very latest, be delivered to the Bereavement Service office by 9.00 am the day prior to the proposed cremation.

Funeral Service

Traditional funeral patterns do not have to be followed irrespective of whether or not a funeral director is involved. You may wish to involve a Minister of Religion or other recognised religious person, a humanist or similar independent celebrant or you may prefer to devise your own service with or without any religious content. Whatever you decide, we would ask that you be aware of the length of time you may need. Cremation bookings are made at 40 minute intervals and allow for 30 minutes chapel time but additional time may be arranged prior to the day of the funeral (should you need it).

There is also the opportunity for families to personalise the service or ceremony with their favourite pieces of music or poetry. At the Crematorium there is an organ, a music and media system and a hearing loop has been installed. There is also a microphone on the lectern. Both of the Cemetery Chapels have an organ and whilst there is no music system provided you may bring along your own. All the chapels have hymn books.

Coffin Construction

The body of any person will not be accepted for interment/burial or cremation unless it is enclosed within a coffin, casket or container of a design acceptable to the Bereavement Service Manager. No container of any design will be accepted unless it bears adequate particulars of the identity of the deceased person therein. Consideration must be given to ensuring that the proceedings are conducted in a dignified manner, without disturbance or wilful offence to other mourners or the Bereavement Service Staff.

This container may be purchased from a coffin supplier or funeral director or it may be home-made, cardboard, wicker, bamboo or of a ‘shroud-style’ provided that it includes suitable rigid support along the base and the foot end.

Home made coffins must be made of wood or a wood by-product which when placed in the cremator and subjected to the cremation process, is easily combustible and which does not emit smoke, give off toxic gas or leave retardant residue after final combustion. With the exception of high ferrous screws used to ensure the safe construction of the coffin, no metal of any kind shall be used. Cross pieces must not be attached to the bottom of the coffin.
If you wish to strengthen the bottom of the coffin, wooden strips may be placed lengthways. The coffin must not be painted or varnished but may be covered with a suitable cloth. Products containing any chloride or fluorides such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and melamine are prohibited. The use of polystyrene is restricted to the name plate only and must not exceed 90 grams in weight.

The use of sawdust or cotton wool as a lining inside the coffin must be avoided. If circumstances require, suitable sealing material may be used but no metal, rubber or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) will be permitted and on no account must pitch or similar substance be used.

On the reverse of Form H you will find guidance on the size of the coffin and notes regarding the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Disposal of Cremated Remains

Some thought should be given as to the disposal of the Cremated Remains once the service has taken place. Forms J and K (Instruction and Authorisation of the disposal of the Cremated Remains) should be completed before the service and delivered with all other paperwork to the Bereavement Service office. There are various options available:

- To scatter the cremated remains within the Crematorium grounds unwitnessed.
- To scatter the cremated remains within the Crematorium grounds with witness, an appointment would be necessary for this option.
- To retain the cremated remains for disposal elsewhere.
- To inter the cremated remains within a grave in Scartho Road Cemetery or Beacon Avenue Cemetery, Cleethorpes.

If either of the last options are chosen it will be necessary to provide a container for the cremated remains. These can be obtained either from the Crematorium or of ones own choice. The container must be of suitable materials e.g. a wooden casket; polytainer or an environmental friendly tube.

Reference Sources/Further Advice

The following publications may prove to be useful when planning an independent funeral.
‘The Natural Death Handbook’
‘Green Burial – The DIY Guide to Law and Practice’
‘The Daily Telegraph Guide to Funerals and Bereavement’
These publications can be found in the local library.

Further advice may be sought from various organisations including: The Natural Death Centre, 6 Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London, N4 2BT.
Telephone: 020 7359 8391
Online: [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

Or please contact the staff at Bereavement Services, Grimsby Crematorium