

Questions to ask a Funeral Director

Updated 25th March 2020

It can be overwhelming and worrying contacting a Funeral Director for the first time. Often, family and friends are in shock and may not know where to start.

Below is a comprehensive list of questions you may want to consider when talking to a Funeral Director.

Don't be afraid to ask questions and to shop around – you must feel comfortable and be certain that your loved one will be well looked over and cared for in accordance with your family's wishes.

Please see separate list of questions specifically related to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic at the end of the document.

1. Who would be looking after us / our family?
 - a. Would it be the same person throughout from initial contact, through making all of the arrangements to the carrying out of the ceremony?
2. Is your company run by a family or part of a chain?
(Often funeral director businesses retain the names of the original owners long after the business has been sold on to a larger group.)
3. Does your company belong to a trade organisation?
Have you a copy of their code of conduct available for us if so?
4. Would you come to our home to discuss the arrangements? At our convenience? Is there any cost for this?
5. Who would be looking after the body of the person who has died? Can we meet them?
6. Where will the person who has died be looked after and kept until the funeral? Can we have a look please? (This may not be something that everyone wants to do, but the response to the question is a good guide to the standards of the non-public area of the premises!)
7. Do you recommend embalming? Why?
(The process of embalming is often coyly referred to as 'temporary preservation' or 'hygienic treatment', and is a toxic, invasive procedure that is generally unnecessary and never a legal requirement unless the person who has died is to be transported internationally. Some funeral directors will encourage families to agree to it by implying that it would be too distressing to see an un-embalmed body – this is rarely the case.)
8. Can we help care for the person who has died by washing and dressing him / her?

9. Are there any restrictions on spending time with the person who has died? What are they? Are there any costs involved?
10. If we want to look after the person who has died at home until the funeral, would you help us to do so? What would be involved? What costs would this incur?
11. Does your price list break everything down so we can choose as much or as little from you as we want?
12. Can we have a price list e-mailed / sent to us please?
13. What types of coffin do you offer? What do you know about the different types and where they are sourced from? If we don't like any of them, can you obtain alternatives? Can we supply our own coffin if we choose?
14. What do you know about the choices of where to bury or cremate the person who has died? Are there any natural burial grounds nearby? What can you tell us about them?
15. If we want the funeral on a particular day and at a specific time would you be able to accommodate this?
16. What types of transport do you offer to take the coffin to the funeral ceremony? Can we provide our own transport as an alternative if we wanted?
17. Can our family and friends carry the coffin? Can we lower it into the grave?
18. If we organised transport and / or pall bearing ourselves, what difference would this make to the costs of your service?
19. What type of funeral ceremony could we have? And where? Do we need to have someone leading the ceremony?
If so, who would you suggest? Why? How much input can we have into the ceremony?
20. How can we make our ceremony special?
(A good funeral director will be able to come up with appropriate suggestions by finding out about the needs of the family and the wishes and personality of the person who has died)
21. What makes your company the right one for us to choose?

COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic key questions to ask a Funeral Director

- What are the maximum number of attendees allowed at the funeral?
- Are there any restrictions on who can attend the funeral?
 - E.g. just close family?
- Can the funeral be live streamed?
 - Who will operate / organise this?
 - Will the funeral director provide equipment and instructions?
- Is there a minimum or maximum time frame for the funeral to take place?
 - E.g. can it wait until the crisis subsides?
- What is your direct cremation offering and how much does this cost?
- Do you have a payment plan / financial assistance in the event that I cannot cover the cost of the funeral due to the coronavirus crisis?
- What are the latest guidelines around how I can care for the person who has died?
- What should I expect the ceremony to look like in light of the coronavirus restrictions?
 - What can I do to make it more personal?