



About direct cremation

It is important to understand that a direct cremation is not a funeral.

Direct cremation is a service where the body of the person who has died is taken for cremation without any of the usual elements of a funeral.

While this may be the preferred choice for some people, we think that it is essential to understand exactly what 'direct cremation' or 'pure cremation' (as many now call it) means.

We also strongly urge anyone considering choosing a direct cremation to think carefully about how family and friends might feel about this decision and the impact that it might have, and to talk to those who would be affected by the absence of the usual rituals of farewell.

For many people, a good funeral can be an essential part of the grieving process. Without a gathering of family and friends at a ceremony of some kind to remember and honour the person who has died, some people may find it harder to cope with their loss.

There are different kinds of direct cremation providers:

Local direct cremation offered by funeral directors

All funeral directors can provide you with a local direct cremation (an unattended cremation service) if this is what you want.

A local direct cremation arranged through a funeral director means that the person who has died will be collected and cared for by the people working for your local funeral director, and they will be cremated at a local crematorium.

The person who has died will be cared for in the same way as others who are having an attended funeral, in premises local to you.

Some funeral directors offering local direct cremation may be able to arrange for you to spend time with the person who has died, or may agree to dress the person in clothes you provide or place items in the coffin; this will vary from company to company, so you will need to ask.

Similarly, a local direct cremation may be very restricted in what is permitted by the crematorium, but equally, family may be allowed to gather outside or to carry the coffin, music might be allowed while the coffin is carried in or other accommodations may be possible. Again, you will need to ask when discussing the arrangements.

A funeral director offering local direct cremation will be able to offer you suggestions and advice, including helping you think about whether you might like to hold a ceremony or gathering instead of a funeral ceremony if a direct cremation is chosen. There will be many ways of honouring the person who has died that might help bereaved family and friends mark their death, and a funeral director will be able to offer ideas, suggest venues and help with arrangements if need be.

Online direct cremation providers

Where direct cremation is provided by an online direct cremation provider, the service will be very limited. It is likely that:

- ◆ There will be no opportunity for family or friends to spend time with the body of the person who has died.
- ◆ The person who has died will not be attended to, i.e. washed and dressed before being placed in the coffin.
- ◆ You will not be able to ask for the person to be dressed in particular clothing, nor arrange for items to be placed in the coffin with them.
- ◆ You will not choose the coffin.
- ◆ You will not choose the crematorium, nor the date and time of the cremation.
- ◆ You may not be told the date and time of the cremation.
- ◆ There will be no prayers or rituals, and no ceremony.
- ◆ The cremation may take place in another part of the country, involving long distance transport by van.
- ◆ There will be no hearse involved.
- ◆ There will be no funeral director involved (other than perhaps subcontracted funeral staff collecting the person who has died). Arrangements will be made over the phone.
- ◆ It may be several weeks or longer before cremated remains are returned.

Have a look through our suggested questions to ask a direct cremation provider, whether you are thinking about a direct cremation for yourself or for someone close to you.

The questions can be asked of either kind of direct cremation provider, both local and online, and should help you reach a decision about whether to proceed or to look elsewhere.

Not all of these questions may be relevant, and some of this information may be available on companies' websites, but these questions are designed to help you think about what matters to you and to help you find out more about a direct cremation provider before you commit to using them, or to buying a pre-paid direct cremation plan.



Questions to ask a direct cremation provider

General questions

- ◆ Can you explain how your company operates?
- ◆ Who owns your company?
- ◆ How many staff do you have?
- ◆ Whereabouts are you based?
- ◆ What facilities do you have for the care of people prior to their cremation?
- ◆ How long has your company been in business?

Arranging the cremation

- ◆ How is the necessary paperwork completed?
- ◆ When is payment required?
- ◆ Are there any additional costs e.g. for removal of pacemakers or implants, for immediate collection of the person who has died or for people who are very heavy or large?

The person who has died

- ◆ If someone dies in hospital, how soon after their death will they be collected?
- ◆ If someone dies at home, how soon after their death will they be collected?
- ◆ Who will collect and care for the person who has died? Are these people sub-contracted by your company or are they your dedicated staff members?
- ◆ Whereabouts will the person be taken to?
- ◆ Will they remain there until the day of the cremation, or will they be moved elsewhere at some point?
- ◆ Will there be any opportunity for family and friends to spend time with the person who has died?
- ◆ How will the person be looked after? By whom? What is usually done when someone is brought into your care?
- ◆ What kind of coffin will be provided?
- ◆ How long will it be before the date of the cremation?

The cremation

- ◆ Where will the person be cremated? Which crematorium will be used?
- ◆ How will the person be taken to the crematorium? What kind of vehicle will be used?
- ◆ Will the person's coffin be transported individually, or are multiple coffins delivered to the crematorium at the same time?
- ◆ Will we be told what day and at what time this will take place?
- ◆ Are family and friends allowed to be at the crematorium when the cremation takes place? Inside the building or just in the grounds?
- ◆ Will music be played when the coffin is taken into the crematorium? If so, can we choose it?
- ◆ If family members want to witness the coffin being placed in the cremator will this be allowed? Will there be an additional fee for this?

After the cremation

- ◆ How will the cremated remains be returned to me?
- ◆ Who will do this? Will it be by pre-arrangement?
- ◆ Will the person returning the cremated remains be able to answer any questions I may have?
- ◆ How long will this be after the cremation?
- ◆ Will you contact us after the cremation / return of the cremated remains? What for?

Lastly, when talking to a member of staff at either a local funeral director company or an online direct cremation provider about direct cremation, do pay attention to the language that is used.

It can be careless - or misleading – to talk about 'the funeral' when discussing a direct cremation, and staff answering question or explaining details to potential clients should be mindful of not implying that what is on offer is anything other than what it is.

Remember, a direct cremation is not a funeral.