

If you require further information , please contact Sandwell Valley Crematorium, where the staff will be pleased to assist you.

**Sandwell Bereavement Services** Sandwell Valley Crematorium Newton Road

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A Guide to an Independent Cremation Service

# Sandwell Bereavement Services Leaflet 7

**Introduction**

We are often requested to give information about cremations and there arrangement. This can be difficult because many correspondents know little about cremation in general and do not always make it clear whether they intend to use a funeral director or not. Other requests are about making funerals less formal and more of a celebration of the life of the deceased. More recently, concern about the environmental impact of cremation has increased interest in this respect.

In response to these requests, the enclosed notes set out the routine followed by a Funeral Director using our services, to which matters of interest to all the bereaved are added. This, it is hoped, will help the bereaved understand their rights and complete as little or as much of the funeral arrangements as they wish, even to carrying out the funeral without a Funeral Director.

The completion of these notes is intended to widen choice and help the bereaved and others obtain a satisfying funeral. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council does not wish to promote any particular type of arrangement or choice and it is hoped that these notes do not imply this. The Council does not provide a funeral directing service and cannot collect bodies and convey them to the crematorium.

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# Car Parking

Car parking is available in the grounds. Many of our visitors are distressed or distracted during visits and leave their handbags etc. clearly visible in parked cars. This has led to a spate of thefts and you should not leave valuables in vehicles.

# Improving Our Service

Bereavement is a very personal experience and as I am sure you realise, we may be unable to satisfy all needs. What may seem like very small irritations, can become very upsetting if they arise during a funeral. If you feel dissatisfied or wish to suggest improvements, please let us know. Your comments will be taken seriously and kept confidential. We exist to provide a service to you.

# Conclusion

For those who wish to consider the subject of funerals and dying, the Natural Death Centre offers a range of services. They are located at 20 Heber Road, London NW2 6AA. Telephone 020 8208 2835.They issue a handbook, which explains the difficulties of obtaining coffins and organising funerals, in a new and innovative way, as well as much other detail. Request a leaflet on the Natural Death Centre if you require more details.

Many other publications are also available through the Natural Death Centre.

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# 14. Miscellaneous

**Flowers:** You can provide your own funeral flowers, including dried or garden flowers, without using a commercial florist.

**Obituaries:** If you require these in local newspapers you can do this for yourself or through your Funeral Director. Due to hoax calls, they may not accept your order by telephone. If you call at their offices, you should take some evidence of the death to prove you are genuine.

**Location:** We have photocopied plans showing our location, available on request.

**Fees:** A table of fees is available on request. Fees increase each year usually from April. The cremation fee covers Chapel use, organist or music system, cremation and the strewing of the remains on our monthly January – December Gardens or placement in the Garden of Remem- brance. All fees must be paid in advance of the funeral.

# Book of Remembrance - Opening times

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | April - September | October - March |
| Monday - Friday | 9.00am - 7.00pm | 9.00am - 4.00pm |

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Funerals can be arranged from anywhere in the country without difficulty, although the distance can increase the costs. If you use a Funeral Director, you can choose one from your locality or alternatively, contact one in Sandwell. Some Funeral Directors are members of the National Association of Funeral Directors (N.A.F.D.) and have a Code of Practice. Under this code, they should offer you a price list, at your request.

The crematorium is entered from either Newton Road or Forge Lane. Please note that the postal address can be found on the reverse of this guide.

You can contact us on 0121 569 6700 during the following times:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday – Wednesday** | 9.00am | - 4.30pm |
| **Thursday** | 10.00am | - 4.30pm |
| **Friday** | 9.00am | - 4.00pm |
| **Saturday** | 9.00am | - 12.30pm |

Please state that you require a cremation booking. The provisional booking ensures that a day and time is reserved for your funeral arrangement, so that all other aspects can be organised. Cremation Service times are every 45 minutes If you require more time, this can be booked, but does incur an extra charge. The time you book is when you will arrive at the chapel entrance, ready to begin the service. The full service and committal time booked give approximately 5 minutes to enter the chapel and 5 minutes to exit the chapel allowing 30 minutes for the service at Sandwell Valley Crematorium and 20 minutes for the service at Rowley Regis Crematorium.

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Your booking notice should allow sufficient time to obtain medical forms, prior to the service - a period of 4 days is usually sufficient allowing you to view the medical forms should you wish. If the death is reported to the Coroner or occurs on a Public Holiday, more time may be

required.

The information you need to give over the telephone is as follows:

1. Date of service
2. Time of service
3. Name of deceased
4. Funeral directors name, or your name and telephone number if not using a Funeral Director.

The above is the minimum required, you can add the following details if you know them. Otherwise, you will notify us of these details on the forms you will provide subsequently. All the forms are available from our offices.

1. Religious or non religious service
2. Full service or Committal

( see "The Committal" later in these notes).

1. Music (see "Music" later in these notes).
2. Final placement of cremated remains (see same section later in notes)

Please repeat the funeral booking time with whoever answers the telephone, to ensure the correct day and time are reserved for you.

Now that a provisional booking is made a series of arrangements must be organised as soon as possible. These may look difficult but they soon fall into place as you progress. The most important is to ensure that the

required forms are prepared, which are as follows: 3

# Preview

We operate the crematorium in accordance with the Code of Cremation Practice and the Guiding Principles developed through the Charter for the Bereaved. Copies of the Code of Cremation Practice and Guiding Principles are available upon request from the office or from the Crematorium.

Useful information is also provided in a free leaflet called "**Cremation - Your Questions Answered**" also available from us.

You can inspect the cremation equipment and if you wish, witness the placing of the coffin in the cremator. The cremation takes approximately two hours to complete. You can collect the cremated remains the following day if you wish to. We can provide various containers, according to the final placement of the cremated remains. If you intend burying them at a cemetery (other than one of the boroughs Cemeteries), or a churchyard, you will need a disposal certificate. This will also be necessary if you place them at another crematorium. The cremated remains will weigh up to 6 lbs/2.8 kg and are of a granular texture.

# Cremated remains

We will write to you following the cremation to outline current options available for final placement of the cremated remains. Please note that we are legally required to obtain the signature of the applicant for directions over this placement. You will notify us of your original decision when you complete the Order for Cremation form. The letter following the cremation gives you the opportunity to change your mind if you so wish.

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Many people find this part of the service highly emotional and sometimes very upsetting. At your request, although the committal prayer may be read, the curtains can remain open until the mourners have left the chapel.

Our own staff will then close the curtains.

# Music

We provide an organist for every service, which is inclusive in the cremation fee. The organist can play music on entry and exit and for hymns. A list of available hymns and music can be obtained from Sandwell Valley Crematorium. There are over 70 hymns printed in our hymn book. The organist will play, ability permitting, your selection of music. He/she will require 24 hours notice and sheet music prepared for the organ. Most classical music is not prepared for the organ and cannot be played. The organ is complex and expensive and we have a rota for authorised organists.

Some people find the organ too "churchlike", or prefer music favoured by the deceased or themselves. If you wish, our staff can play your music on our CD unit or tape deck. If you wish to sing, you will need to provide leaflets for items not printed in our service book.

# Service Books

We provide books for Traditional Church of England and Catholic services. You can provide your own books or leaflets if you prefer, but we must receive these the day prior to your service.

You are welcome to inspect our Chapels prior to any service you wish to arrange. Staff are available to advise and help you make the best use of our facilities please call 0121 569 6700 to arrange an appointment.

# Order for cremation

This form gives us all the information we require in writing. It confirms any details missing from your telephone booking. The details that follow in this document will help you complete this form.

# Form 1 - Application for Cremation

This form must be completed by the nearest surviving relative or executor. If not, a reason why some other person has applied must be given. The details required are quite straightforward and should pose no difficulties. A householder known to the applicant must countersign the form.

# These forms can be collected from our office at Sandwell Valley Crematorium

1. **Forms 4, 5 and 10—Medical Forms**

You must notify the deceased's doctor, who attended their last illness and tell him/her you are arranging a cremation. Whether a GP or a hospital doctor, they will obtain these forms and complete them for you. The completed 4 & 5 forms currently cost about £142.00. On some occasions, the doctor will only need to complete form 4 if he/she knows the result of any post mortem.

This will reduce the cost of the forms by half. These doctor’s forms are printed by the council, with form 10 on the back page.

We will complete form 10 after you have passed the completed forms 4 & 5 to us. A Medical Referee appointed by the Council and approved by the Home Office will authorise and sign Form 10 to enable the cremation to take place. A funeral cannot take place without the Medical Referee's consent.

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If any of the doctors report the death to the Coroner (or Procurator Fiscal), he or she may issue a certificate for cremation which overrules the need for forms 4 & 5. This usually necessitates a post-mortem being organised and/or an inquest. Reporting the death in this way is quite usual and you should not be alarmed. If such a certificate is issued (free of charge) you will not need to pay for the doctor’s forms 4 & 5 as previously outlined. The Coroners Officer (often a former police officer) or other staff will keep you informed of progress by the Coroner (or Procurator).

The Form 10 and Medical Referee's authorisation is needed in all cases without exception.

# Registrar’s Certificate

This will be required, when a coroner’s or procurator fiscal's certificate is not issued. You will need to visit the Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages. The Registrar may have restricted opening hours and/or an appointment system, so please check. The registrar will issue a Certificate for Burial or Cremation, which you should pass to us as soon as possible. In Scotland, you will require an "Extract of an Entry in a register of Deaths, from a Registrar " This will allow the body to be taken into England for cremation. You will be charged a small fee for this certificate. This certificate must be taken to the Sandwell Registrars to obtain a certificate of no liability to register. When we receive this certificate from you it will allow us to carry out the cremation. This will complete the legal requirements and you must now consider organising the funeral.

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Some ministers will take a secular service for you if you have no religious belief but do not wish to use a secular officiant.

Some ministers will also take a part secular, part religious ceremony if those attending are of varying beliefs. You can devise your own service and deliver this yourself or through a family member or friend. In some cases, the service has been composed by the deceased person. Families, who have taken their own service or used a service composed by the deceased, have found it a very moving and emotional experience. It makes the service personal and might be preferred to the rather routine service which is normally offered. You can make the service more personal by using symbolism. For instance, each mourner could be given a rose. You could use rosemary, the herb for "remembrance".

Poetry or prose can be read or a tape/CD played in the

chapel. Whatever arrangements you make, if you arrange a minister it is courteous to ensure that he or she is happy with your plans. You can of course have the "religious" service first and follow this with a few minutes doing your own ceremony. Playing music or something personal might fit this section of the service. For large services where mourners may also be outside the chapel, loud speakers are available.

The service usually begins with the coffin being placed on a wheeled bier, which we provide, near to the entrance doors. You need to provide bearers, to wheel the coffin into the chapel and place it on the catafalque. The minister leads the coffin into the chapel, with the mourners following. You can decide how you wish to proceed.

# The Committal

The coffin rests on the catafalque during the service and the committal ceremony is usually towards the end of the service. This is done by the minister or person conducting the ser- vice, pressing a button, which closes the curtains. 10

# 8. The Funeral

You can follow the coffin, as a procession, from the house to the crematorium, to arrive at the agreed time. Alternatively, you can simply meet at the chapel entrance, the coffin being delivered a short while earlier.

When you arrive at the crematorium a member of staff will always receive and help you.

You can liaise with them and get them to assist wherever possible. The Crematorium Supervisor has the authority to assist without recourse to higher authority. Prior to entry into the chapel, the authorised member of staff will check the details including the nameplate on the coffin.

You are not required to hold a service or any formality prior to the cremation, if that is your wish. If no service is requested, we still book a service time, but the coffin is taken directly through the chapel and onto the catafalque. It is then committed for cremation. Under no circumstances are coffins accepted through the "back" door. Once a coffin has been received into the chapel, it may not be interfered with in any way and will enter the cremator exactly as it has been received.

If you wish to arrange a service, the following notes will give you a few ideas. You can arrange any minister to take the service for you. If you have a service in a church or chapel (fee payable) before you reach the crematorium, then the crematorium service is called a "committal". The minister then delivers only a very short (5 minutes) committal service at the crematorium chapel. Otherwise we refer to a "full" service, which includes prayers and a reading, which will usually take about 20 minutes with one or two hymns.

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# Container or Coffin

With cremation, a coffin is essential to allow us to place the body in the cremator. The base of the coffin must be hard and smooth to enable it to be placed in the cremator. The options are as follows:

You can purchase a standard coffin, from a Funeral Director. All standard coffins are made of chipboard with approved veneers and plastics for cremation purposes.

You can construct your own coffin, using chipboard or wood. The materials you use must be suitable for cremation and chipboard is generally preferred. Ferrous screws are acceptable in small numbers, and wood braces will give strength but must not be placed on the underside. No heavy metals, PVC or plastics generally should be used. Handles are useful but not strictly necessary.

New coffins, often of a "green" design are coming on to the market. Three types of cardboard coffin are available for cremation. These generally preclude plastics and thereby reduce emissions from the process. Artists are also decorating coffins, although this must be compatible with cremation. Gloss or extensive paint finishes are not acceptable. The coffin should have the full name of the deceased displayed, either on a plate, a card or painted or written on the lid or sides. As fluid can leak from the body, absorbent cloth or cotton wadding may be required. The maximum width of coffins for access into the cremator is 33”. To ensure compliance with the Environmental Protection Act, certain items such as glass, metal, anything which could cause damage to the cremators or to the environment cannot be placed in the coffin. All cremations are recorded by specialist equipment and any coffin causing an unacceptable reading is reported to the Environmental Health Officer. 6

# Transporting the Body

Although you may be able to hire a hearse from a local funeral director, historically, this has been difficult. The transport of a coffin, with or without the body, requires a suitable van or estate car for convenience. You can remove the passenger seat from a hatchback, to give sufficient space.

You need to transport the coffin from the mortuary, if the body is retained there. You have a common law right, as executor, to be given the body without the assistance of a Funeral Director. The principal mortuary for Sandwell is at Sandwell Hospital, West Bromwich, West Midlands B71 4HJ. You will need to telephone and arrange a collection time. The staff will usually place the body in the coffin and will advise over whether a post-mortem has been completed.

Once you have removed the body, or if the deceased died at home, you need to consider how to proceed. The body can be retained at home up to the time of the funeral, but you must have a cool room and no difficult stairs. You may need to consider your neighbours and only move the body when children or adults are not in the vicinity.

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# Facilities

The Chapels are laid out conventionally, the seating in rows. Approximately 120 mourners can be accommodated at Sandwell Valley Crematorium and 60 in the Chapel at Rowley Regis Crematorium, with additional standing room in both.

The lectern includes a microphone, with a "loop" system for the hard of hearing. Wheelchair access is available.

The chapel facilities are booked for 45 minutes, for your exclusive use. This allows 5 minutes to enter the chapel, 30 minutes for the service at Sandwell Valley Crematorium and 20 minutes at Rowley Regis Crematorium and 5 minutes to leave the chapel. You can book extra time at an extra charge. The use of the chapel and organist is included in the cremation fee. The chapel is dedicated and not consecrated, allowing use for both religious and non religious services. You can play music, read poetry, use musicians or organise dancing provided it is orderly and not excessively noisy.

We need to be notified of how you propose to organise your service. The use of the chapel is described in the next section. Viewing facilities to witness the charging of the coffin are available, 24 hours notice is required for this ser- vice. Music can be played of your choice and a washroom and toilet are provided.

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