The Funeral Director will contact the cemetery or crematorium and arrange the date and time of the funeral and will ensure that the certificates and forms are completed and taken to the cemetery or crematorium office.

Details will be given about the form of service and the music, if required. The Funeral Director will pay the various fees involved, called disbursements. These include the cemetery or crematorium fees, ministers' fee, etc. The provision of floral tributes and newspaper obituaries if required will also be arranged. A hearse and following limousines will be provided and the funeral will take place under the guidance of the Funeral Director. Subsequently, an account will be sent after the funeral. The account should be itemised and should clearly define the disbursements paid on behalf of the person arranging the funeral.

If you require further information please contact us at:

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

West Bromwich West Midlands B71 3SX

**Tel:** 0121 569 6700 **Fax:** 0121 567 5165

**Email:** [bereavement\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:bereavement_services@sandwell.gov.uk)

Information on using a

Funeral Director

**Sandwell Bereavement Services Leaflet 15**

This Charter is unable to offer you rights and standards related to the use of a Funeral Director. In view of this, information is included to help you understand how funeral directing operates. It will enable you to ask questions appropriate to your needs when you consider the arrangement of a funeral.

Although Charter members can advise you about funeral arrangements, they are not able to recommend a particular Funeral Director. You can obtain details about contacting your local Funeral Directors in telephone directories, newspapers or through your Citizens Advice Bureau or Charter Member.

Funeral directing as a profession appeared in the latter part of the 1700's. Prior to that date, funerals were organised through individuals, such as a joiner, a gravedigger and the clergy, followed by a churchyard burial. In Victorian times, the commercial involvement In death was developed, and this led to the greater use of the Funeral Director with the hearse, coffin and black attire. The Funeral Director developed the role of organiser, providing the furnishings and the transport to carry out a funeral. Funerals have hardly altered in the intervening period, with petrol engines replacing horsepower and cremation replacing burial in churchyards. The predominance of men in the Victorian period remains unchanged and there are currently very few women acting as Funeral Directors or bearers.

Most people are unaware that Funeral Directors can set up in business without training or qualifications, and no “licence" is necessary. No universal standard applies and consequently, separating a good Funeral Director from an indifferent one is difficult.

Some Funeral Directors are members of professional organisations, who may operate a code of conduct and a complaints procedure. The National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) are examples of these.

Funeral Directors have attracted adverse criticism, and yet their role and function is rarely understood. They organise a funeral with distressed people, often people who have no expectations of a funeral and its arrangements. Funerals are a "crisis" buy and unlike any other purchase. Although many practicable operations are necessary, the satisfaction relies upon the funeral meeting philosophical and other more complex needs. A casual comment, a joke or using the incorrect name, are all aspects that can destroy the quality of the funeral. If Funeral Directors fail to deliver their service, it can be due to the distress and crisis associated with the death. This emphasises the need for everybody to be informed and prepared for death and funerals. The completion of wills and funeral directives empowers the bereaved and reduces their reliance on the Funeral Director at the critical time of a death.

The Funeral Directors "package" is briefly outlined as follows. The executor or the person arranging the funeral telephones the Funeral Director, who will arrange to see them and discuss the funeral arrangements. The Funeral Director will collect the body either from home, a mortuary or

a nursing home and prepare it for viewing, which may include routine embalming (cosmetic treatment). A choice of coffins is usually offered and the deceased can be viewed by appointment, in a Chapel of Rest. On some occasions, the coffined body will be taken back to the deceased's home, if the family so wish.