



Thinking about ?

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# Direct Cremation



**The Cremation Society**  
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Whether you are thinking about a direct cremation for yourself or for someone close who has died, this leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have and identify things it is helpful to consider in deciding what is right for you and your family.

### What is direct cremation?

Traditionally a direct cremation is where the person who has died is collected from the place of death and is cremated (once the necessary paperwork has been completed) at a crematorium, **without a service** and without any mourners being present.

It is sometimes referred to as an 'unattended cremation' or a 'simple cremation'.

Direct cremation is not a new concept, having been available for many years but there is now a lot more awareness of this as an option.

### Why have a direct cremation?

There are many reasons why someone might choose direct cremation for themselves or someone close. These include practical reasons – it can be hard to get family and friends together on a particular day, especially at short notice; there may be difficulties getting time away from work; family may live abroad; there may be health issues; there may be estrangements/conflict within a family or there may not be any family or friends.

Some people choose direct cremation because of their beliefs and values – they do not think it is important and see no need to have a funeral.

Arranging a funeral can feel like a lot of decisions to make at a very challenging time and it may feel easier to opt for a direct cremation. Some people may choose direct cremation thinking that they are saving those closest to them from having to arrange a funeral.



**There may be a plan to have a later ceremony or event** e.g. at the scattering of the ashes or the person who has died may be remembered in a completely different way, such as a visit to a favourite restaurant, or a walk in the countryside.

Some people may choose direct cremation for financial reasons as the cost is lower than for a traditional cremation.

Whatever the reasons for considering direct cremation, it is important to discuss this with those closest to you, if you are thinking of this for yourself, or with others who have been bereaved, if you are arranging this for someone who has died.

Aspects such as viewing someone after their death and making choices (such as the clothes to be cremated in), can be important for those who are bereaved, and may help in their grief. Funerals can be significant for many reasons including helping those who are bereaved face the reality of a death; observing religious rituals; bringing people together to remember someone who has died, to celebrate their life and to say goodbye and to support each other in bereavement. Having an open discussion in advance of taking out a direct cremation plan may help to avoid unintended upset or unnecessary costs of cancelling any contract.

### **Does having a direct cremation mean a more personal ceremony later?**

A direct cremation may include a personal ceremony, held on the same day or many weeks or even months later. For some there will be no event held, either because one is not felt to be needed or it may be that the timing is never right to get everyone together who are closest to the person who has died.

It is worth remembering that you can say goodbye to someone who has died in your own way. A personal ceremony or event may be separate from a direct (or unattended) cremation or at a personal attended cremation service. All this can be discussed with a funeral director.



### What questions should I ask when arranging a direct cremation?

There are many direct cremation providers on the market – some are more established than others. Different direct cremation providers offer varying options, so it is important to fully understand what is included in whatever direct cremation package you look at.

Funeral directors can provide expert guidance on the practical steps to take after someone has died, including advice on direct cremation if this is being considered. Most funeral directors now offer direct cremation as one of their services.

**Depending on what is important for you and your family, you may want to ask the following questions:**

### How quickly will the person who has died be collected and where will they be cared for before the cremation?

This will depend on the provider and you should check this with them. If someone dies at home, some providers are not able to collect them out of hours or at weekends or there may be an additional charge for this.

### Will my family be able to view my body?

With many online providers, it is usually the case that family will not be able to visit and view your body. You should think about how important this will be to those who will be bereaved after your death as some family or friends may want to be able to do this as part of their grieving process. Many funeral directors may provide the option of being able to view the body as part of their direct cremation packages.



### Will my family be able to choose clothes for me?

It is usually the case that the person who has died can only be dressed in the clothes they died in or a gown provided by the direct cremation provider.

### Will my family know when and where I am going to be cremated?

Some direct cremation providers do not allow family members to know when or where the cremation is going to take place.

Depending on the provider, the cremation may not take place locally and could be carried out many miles away. If the choice of crematorium is important to you or your family, you should check with the direct cremation provider where the cremation will actually take place.

### Can anyone attend the cremation?

You will need to check this with the provider as some direct cremation providers do offer optional extras such as a small number of people present. This is not what would be considered to be a direct cremation.

### How are the ashes returned?

Some providers will simply scatter the ashes in a memorial garden (also known as a garden of remembrance) but many will return the ashes on request – and there is often an additional charge for this.

### What extra costs might there be?

If you decide to take out a direct cremation pre-paid plan, or if you are buying a direct cremation for someone close, it is important to check what is included in the advertised price. There may be additional costs covering urgent collection of the person who has died, the return of ashes, or the choice of crematorium.



### What if my wishes change? Or my family want something different?

In England and Wales, funeral wishes are not legally binding (the position in Scotland is slightly different because of new rules around who can organise a funeral). However, if you or your family change your mind and wish to cancel a pre-paid direct cremation plan, some providers will charge a cancellation fee. You should check with the provider before taking out any plan, to ensure that there is the choice to change instructions without paying a penalty.

It is important that people have options and that these are informed choices.

Direct cremation will suit some, it will not be right for others.

If you are considering direct cremation for yourself, think about – what is important to you? What do you want? But also – what do those closest to you want and need?

This is why it is important to discuss your funeral wishes with your family in advance.

### If you would like more information or support, the following resources may be helpful:

Ataloss – helping bereaved people find support and wellbeing

Child Bereavement UK – rebuilding lives together

Cruse Bereavement Support

Down to Earth – practical support with funeral costs

Sands – saving babies' lives – supporting bereaved families



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