

Planning a funeral in exceptional times

Planning a funeral during the COVID-19 pandemic

If you're caring for someone who is very sick and are worried they may die, or someone you love has just died, you may have some concerns about what might happen at a funeral during this COVID-19 response period.

In Ireland, funerals are how we celebrate and commemorate those who have died. As you navigate this new reality please remember death ends a life, not a relationship and your connection with the person who has died will remain.

In these difficult times, everyone is working together to help each other. We at The Irish Hospice Foundation send our heartfelt condolences to you as you enter this different journey.

However, we can support ourselves and each other in different ways.

We have prepared some information we hope will help and inform you at this very difficult time as part of our 'Care and Inform' series.

We intend to prepare more advice at a later stage and will update this information as more advice is issued.

All advice is in line with HSE advice.

Planning a funeral during this current physical distancing phase

We appreciate that physical distancing requirements make this bereavement and funeral even more difficult but there are immediate steps you can take to plan the funeral of someone you love or care about.

- Do contact your preferred funeral director as soon as you are able. Your funeral director will be equipped with most up-to-date information and procedures due to the COVID-19 response period. They will guide you through the process, and ensure you are cared and minded for
- Do ask as many questions as you need to
- Do let people know of the death - you can still place a death notice, but no times or venues of the funeral will be published online, by radio or in print
- Do remember the funeral/burial will be planned as private, for close family only. However, you can request a reading, or a poem to remember them by, even if the service is short
- Do remember that everybody will understand how difficult a funeral is at this exceptional time – people will respect and support you as best they can.

Where we can no longer reach out with our hands,
we must now reach out with our hearts.
Keep our distance but keep in touch, stay apart
but stay in contact.

GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

As it is not possible during this time to have public reposes or wakes in funeral homes, there are ways you can keep the funeral personal and beautiful, and to involve others in remembering your loved one.

- Do make use of RIP.ie online condolence book to record messages of love and appreciation
- Do think about hosting a memorial service at a later time, and plan that, in time, when you feel able
- Do ask people to send you a letter with their memories of the person who has died
- Do encourage children to draw pictures or write poems
- Do talk about the person who has died, within your household and beyond through telephone calls
- Do seek to keep in contact and try to be open to others contacting you. We can still be together when we are not together
- Do seek out the latest technology to help. You can use videoconferencing (Google hangouts, WhatsApp, Zoom etc) to come together with special people who cannot physically be with you
- Do stay in contact. But be mindful of the amount of contact you are able for.

You may find it useful to refer to our 'Grieving in Exceptional Times' resource
<https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Grieving-in-exceptional-times-.pdf>



How can we honour someone who has died without attending the funeral?

We are a nation of great culture and tradition and we can honour the person who has died in many ways. We are already seeing examples of how Irish people are finding new and innovative ways to support each other, some of the 'old' ways are also being revived.

Here are some of the ways you can help

- Be the person who organises friends and neighbours to stand at their gates/along the road (observing physical distancing) to show support to the grieving family
- Do post condolences and messages of support online on RIP.ie or on Social media
- Do take time to write letters of support and condolences, expressing your thoughts is very meaningful
- Do phone/text the bereaved person to keep in touch – not just immediately but in the weeks and months ahead.
- Do share photos, memories and stories virtually with each other

'One of the greatest gifts a person can give another is support'

This leaflet is brought to you by The Irish Hospice Foundation
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