

What if I cannot attend the funeral service?

Information Leaflet for Patients, Friends and Family

Families may find it difficult to honour their loved one in circumstances where they are not able to attend the funeral service – this leaflet has been devised to suggest ways you can still participate in the service without actually attending.

Prior to the Funeral

If you are unable to attend a funeral service due to current social distancing restrictions you may wish to write a letter or prepare a drawing/painting as a way of saying goodbye.

If possible, you could ask the funeral director for it to be placed in the coffin.

If you are not able to get a handwritten note to the funeral director, emailing or texting it to them to print out or sending them a photograph to print out is another option.

If you are unable to attend a funeral service you may wish to mark the day of the funeral in some way or hold a memorial service at a future time – you may even like to do both.

Marking the Day of the Funeral

Confirm the date and time of the funeral. If you live with other people, tell them what you are planning for that day and time. If you wish, you could ask them to be with you for comfort and to have someone speak or share a reading/poem/prayer.

If you have contact with other friends or family who also cannot attend, arrange a time to speak with them on the day.

Tell those who will be attending the funeral service what you have planned. It could be a comfort to them to know that other people are thinking of them and remembering with them.

For those who feel comfortable with technology, you could even have a virtual service again via WhatsApp, FaceTime, Skype or Zoom. These apps have group call options, either with just audio or video. Some are available through a web browser on a laptop or computer and some need you to download an app on a phone. Be aware that some may have call time limits if using them for free, like Zoom which is 40 minutes.

Your Environment

Decide where in your home or garden you would like to be - somewhere you feel comfortable and which best allows you to remember and reflect.

You may want to choose a spot to have as a focal point, in particular if you are communicating with others. So for example you may want to sit at a table and have photos, mementos or candles on show.

You may choose to dress as you would if you were going to the funeral to help you mark it as a specific moment rather than any other day. You may opt to wear a certain colour or at least one item in a certain colour – this is a way of connecting to others on the day.

You may want to light a candle, if you have one.

You may want to play a certain song or piece of music. You will more than likely be able to find on Spotify or YouTube for free or buy it on iTunes.

Poems, extracts from books or prayers are often read at funerals. You can still choose a reading and share it, or write something yourself, you may find it easier to write this as a letter.

Some people (in particular children), find drawing or painting as a good way of expressing emotions. You may want to complete any drawings/paintings prior to the day of the funeral so these can be displayed.

Give yourself time and space to remember – you may not want to write something or to read out anything and that is absolutely fine. You can always just take some time to sit with your thoughts and memories, or even to talk to them in your head.

These are a few ideas – you may think of others or have your own cultural rituals that you would like to follow. You must do whatever feels right for you – there are no rules.

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

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