

Charter for the Bereaved

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) produced this Charter in 1996 and in January 2004 Wandsworth's Bereavement Services was granted Charter Status after satisfying the ICCM that it fully met all the criteria expected.

The Charter:-

- is a commitment to improving the service by confronting rather than disguising the death experience, and by reducing ignorance.
- is intended to define the rights of every individual who experiences bereavement.
- will set standards of the service related to burial, cremation and funerals generally. It is a written statement of what can be expected and this can be measured for judging the service received.
- recognises that bereavement services are critical to the health of the nation. That the benefits of a meaningful funeral are immeasurable, influencing both the physical and mental wellbeing of us all.
- will give the bereaved greater influence over the arrangement of funerals, thereby controlling costs and offering more satisfaction.

THE CHARTER IDENTIFIES THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS

Burial procedure

1. It is your right to have a burial organised and conducted in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring cemetery staff.
2. It is your right to inspect statutory cemetery records.

Grave choice

3. It is your right to purchase a private grave for a period not exceeding 100 years (This Right of Burial is a grave for one or more burials, and upon which you can place a memorial. To this purchase cost, a burial fee is also payable)
4. It is your right to choose to be buried in an un-purchased grave. (You cannot reserve space for further burials in this type of grave, nor do you have any right to place a memorial. Further un-related burials will occur in the future. For each burial, a fee is payable.

Cemetery memorials

5. It is your right to place a memorial within the constraints of regulations in force or to leave the grave unmarked.
6. It is your right and responsibility to maintain a memorial upon a grave during the period of the grave right granted to you. The memorial cannot be disturbed or moved during this period without your express permission, unless it poses a safety hazard. The safe erection and maintenance of the memorial is your responsibility.
7. Except where Charter members are sole suppliers of memorials, it is your right to use any memorial mason of your choice, provided they are not prohibited by the Charter member.

Baby and infant graves

8. It is your right to be offered an individual grave for a baby or infant.
9. It is your right to be able to purchase an adult grave for the burial of a baby or infant, with sufficient depth remaining to allow adult burials.

Burials in private land

10. It is your right to receive factual information on burial in private land, for example Gardens, farms, orchards, etc.

Cremation procedure

11. It is your right to organise and conduct a cremation in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent and caring crematorium staff.

12. It is your right to inspect the crematorium under normal working conditions.

Cremated remains & memorialisation

13. It is your right to be offered a book of Remembrance memorial set in a Hall of Remembrance. This must include a designated place for floral tributes.

Ceremonies and belief

14. It is your right to hold a burial or cremation service at the cemetery or crematorium and define the type of music and ceremony.

15. It is your right to define the type of religious or secular (non-religious) format of the service.

Coffins and alternatives

16. It is your right to choose the type and design of coffin, within the constraints of availability, regulations and safe material.

17. It is your right to obtain a coffin via your Charter member (bio-degradable type).

Communication

18. It is your right to receive a prompt response to any form of Communication within the specified time set by the Charter member.

19. It is your right to be given a table of cemetery and crematorium fees upon request.

Environmental issues

20. It is your right to be made aware of all known environmental issues relating to bereavement services. (Full details are given in the reference copy of the Charter for the Bereaved).

Social and community

21. It is your right to receive a service that recognises your needs without unfairness or discrimination, for example religious belief, ethnic needs, disability, etc.

Funerals without a funeral director (independent)

22. It is your right to organise a funeral without the use of a funeral director.

23. It is your right, as an executor (or next of kin) to be given the body by a mortuary, hospital, etc. in order to carry out a funeral.

24. It is your right to be given a leaflet by your Charter member describing how to arrange an independent funeral.

Maintenance of grounds and grave digging

25. It is your right to be shown a specified standard of grounds maintenance. Where standards fail to meet the specification, you have the right to complain.

Regulations

26. It is your right to be given a list of regulations used by your Charter member.

27. It is your right to be given a written explanation of the reason why a regulation has been used to restrict or otherwise influence your rights.

Staff and expertise

28. It is your right to receive a quality service provided by trained and qualified staff. Where service standards fail, you have the right to question the level of expertise shown and to receive assurances regarding the ability of those involved.

Inspection

29. It is your right to be given an inspection of the cemetery or crematorium at any reasonable time.

30. It is your right to be given a copy of the 'Guiding Principles of Burial and Cremation Services' or the 'Code of Cremation Practice' under which your Charter member operates.

Grievance procedure

31. It is your right to use the grievance procedure if you are dissatisfied about any service provided by your Charter member, or can be requested on-line by sending us an email. You can complain 'on the spot' if you have the opportunity. If you continue to be dissatisfied, a series of stages leading to arbitration can be followed. Copies of the grievance procedure are available from your Charter member. Any Charter member who fails to offer the specified rights will have their Charter membership withdrawn.

Using a funeral director

32. It is your right to be given a copy of the item 'information on using a funeral director' (from the reference copy of the Charter For the Bereaved) by your Charter member. A small fee may be payable. This describes the funeral 'package', the absence of price transparency, the impact of large commercial firms, funeral pre-payment plans, etc.

Embalming

33. It is your right to be given a copy of the item 'information on embalming' (from the reference copy of the Charter for the Bereaved) by your Charter member. A small fee may be payable. This describes the process of embalming, often referred to as cosmetic treatment by funeral directors. It addresses the issues of environmental impact and whether the process is necessary.