

# Funeral arrangements

## A family member has died, can I go to the funeral?

There are some new rules about who can and can't go to a funeral because of coronavirus. This may be upsetting and can be difficult for everyone involved.

Remember that these rules may well change over time and you should check the most up to date guidance.

At the moment, funerals can still take place and organisations that provide funeral services, such as funeral directors, are allowed to stay open.

Check with your funeral director, local council or the place where you intend to have the funeral about their current services and who can attend. They may have changed their usual services and they may have restrictions in place.

Currently, only immediate family can attend funerals. The people this includes will be different for each person but might include someone's partner or spouse and the people they are closest to. If someone in the immediate family needs a carer to be able to go to the funeral, they can also attend.

There may be rules on how many people can attend a funeral. Check with the funeral director, your local council or the place where the funeral is being held. It might be difficult or upsetting to organise a funeral or go to a funeral where only some people can go.



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If you're not able to attend the funeral, this can also be very upsetting. There is more information below about dealing with this, including ideas about what might help.

If you or someone you live with has symptoms of coronavirus, you won't be able to attend a funeral. GOV.UK and NHS have advice on what you should do, including how long you need to stay at home for.

If you're extremely vulnerable or vulnerable, you may decide to stay at home to protect yourself. This is your choice - you can decide whether or not to attend a funeral of someone in your immediate family. This is a very personal decision. It may be helpful to talk to someone about this, like a family member or friend.

The government's rules on social distancing apply to funerals. This means that people living in different households have to stay two metres apart from each other. Your normal reaction at a funeral might be to hug someone, hold their hand, shake their hand or place a hand on their shoulder. So, for some people, it might feel very strange and upsetting not to be able to do these things. There may be other things you can do to get support and to provide support to others, like talking on the phone afterwards or sending a card.



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I feel sad that my loved one can't have the funeral they would have wanted, how can I deal with this?

It might feel uncomfortable or upsetting to go to a funeral where only immediate family can attend and people can't be in close contact with each other.

You might feel lots of different things, including:

- lonely or unsupported because others can't be there or they can't be physically close to you
- sad, annoyed or angry that your loved one can't have the funeral that you would have wanted for them
- distracted and unable to focus on the person's life
- grateful that you're able to attend
- guilty or ashamed that you're able to attend when others can't
- anxious about upsetting other people who can't attend
- worried about your own safety or the safety of others.

These are feelings you might have as well as the grief you are feeling for the person who has died. This is understandably a very difficult situation for you to be in. It may also be difficult to accept, as rules on who can and can't attend funerals have changed so recently.

There may be family and friends who aren't able to go to the funeral due to the current rules or their personal situation. This might be very difficult for them and they may understandably be upset about this.



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For many people, going to a funeral is an important part of their grieving process. Here are some ideas about ways you can include people who can't attend:

- Send them details of any music, poems or readings from the funeral so they can listen to them or read them in their own time.
- Play a recorded message from them or read some words on their behalf.
- Light a candle or lay flowers on their behalf.
- Read the names of people who would like to have attended but weren't able to.
- Ask people to share their memories of the person – they could send letters, photos, favourite songs or recorded messages.
- Create a virtual memorial book where people can leave messages.
- You might want to take pictures, record the funeral or live stream it. Some funeral directors may be able to help you with this.
- Ask people to do something at the time of the funeral such as lighting a candle, saying a prayer or having a moment of reflection.
- Offer to hold a gathering at a later date to bring everyone together to remember the person together. This can help bring everyone together, support each other and say goodbye to the person. You might want to have a religious



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- ceremony, service or wake. You might choose to do something less formal, like going for a walk, meeting in their favourite place or going out for a meal.
- There is a lot of uncertainty at the moment, so it may be sensible not to choose a specific date. It's also important to wait until the government advises that it's safe to have a service or gathering. But even just knowing that you will do something and sharing ideas for it may be comforting.

You may not feel able to do these things and that's OK too. Remember that it's a difficult time for you as well – you are grieving for someone you cared about. You could see if another family member or friend would be able to help with these things.

## I'm sad because I can't go to my loved one's funeral, how do I cope?

If you can't go to a funeral of someone you cared about, this can be very upsetting. For many people, funerals are an important part of their grieving process. You might feel:

- annoyed, angry or frustrated that you're unable to go to something so important
- undervalued or ignored if you aren't considered someone's immediate family but you still had a very close relationship with them
- supported if people have tried to involve you in some way
- sad that you are missing an important part of saying goodbye





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- lonely or isolated as you're unable to share your grief with others and get support
- worried about not having closure and how this will affect your grief
- guilty if you are unable to attend because of your personal circumstances, even if this is not your fault.

You may also feel annoyed towards the people who can go to the funeral. This is an understandable feeling to have. Try to remember that they are also experiencing a loss and things may be hard for them too.

These are feelings you might have as well as your own grief for the person who has died. This is understandably a very difficult situation for you to be in. It may also be hard to accept, as rules on who can and can't attend funerals have changed so recently.

These are all very normal feelings to have, given the circumstances. There are other ways you can say goodbye and get support during this time – we have some things that could help below.

- You could ask someone who is going to the funeral if there are ways that you could be involved even though you can't attend.
- You might want to find your own way of remembering the person and saying goodbye.



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- We know that this won't be the same as going to the funeral, but it may still help. Here are some ideas about what you could do:
- Take some time to reflect on your relationship with the person – you might want to light a candle, look at photos, listen to music that reminds you of them, write down your memories or draw a picture.
- Speak to other people about the person who died – it may help to share memories together.
- Make a donation to a charity in their name.
- Create a memory book or video to reflect on your loved one's life. You could create something physical, like a book or box, or create something online that can be
- shared with other family and friends.
- Plan for things you might be able to do in the future, like planting a tree in their memory or visiting a place that was special to your relationship.
- You might have a lot of different feelings about the person dying and about not being able to say goodbye as you would have wanted to.

Try to remember that this is not your fault. Many of these things are outside of your control. Try to recognise the feelings that you are having and understand that these are a normal response to very difficult circumstances.



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It may help to talk to someone about how you're feeling. You could talk to other family or friends. They might have similar thoughts and feelings.

It may also help to talk to someone who isn't in the same situation, like a friend who didn't know the person who died so well.

There are bereavement services available locally and nationally. Please see the [Other Resources](#) leaflet for information.

The following websites offer useful information and advice:

- Marie Curie - If you can't attend a funeral - <https://standre.ws/missingfuneral>
- Marie Curie - Getting support - <https://standre.ws/gettingsupport>
- Government Covid-19 Guidance for Households with Possible Coronavirus Infection - <https://standre.ws/Gov-covid19Government>
- Full Guidance on Staying at Home and Away from Others - <https://standre.ws/GovStayatHome>
- NHS advice, including for those classed as vulnerable - <https://standre.ws/NHSCovid-19>
- Advice for the extremely vulnerable - <https://standre.ws/ExtVulnerable>
- Government advice on shielding the extremely vulnerable <https://standre.ws/GovShielding>

