



MAKING INFORMED CHOICES WHEN PLANNING A FUNERAL

A guide for queer people

Ash Hayhurst

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Some LGBTQ+ people may ask - how can I be sure my wishes will be respected when I die? If you are a queer person, and you have found yourself asking this question, this booklet is for you. You may also find it useful if you work with queer people in a professional capacity.

There is a glossary of terms at the end of this booklet. It also includes words relating to the funeral profession that some people may not have come across before.

A note about the language used in this booklet:

I use the term queer as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, agender, genderfluid, intersex, pansexual people, and many others. I note that the term queer was once used as a slur which has now been reclaimed by some of the LGBTQ+ community to symbolise unity and camaraderie among queer people. Not everybody feels comfortable with this term, so if you are unsure about how a person identifies, wait to be led by them rather than labelling them yourself. You can ask which terms they prefer to use.

I use the term trans as an umbrella term to include anyone who identifies as a gender different from that which they were assigned at birth. I see gender identity as a spectrum. Everyone is an individual who has the right to identify in a way that feels comfortable to them. I recognise that some trans people do not pursue medical transition. That does not mean that they are any 'less trans' than someone who has undergone surgery or is taking hormone replacement therapy.

I hope that everyone reading this booklet feels included by the language I use. It is just as important to respect the diverse range of genders and sexual orientations in life as it is in death.

Who wrote this booklet and why?

Hi, my name is Ash, my pronouns are he and him, and I am a queer, trans, funeral professional working at Chelsea Funeral Directors. During my training, I realised that many queer people may not have access to information that could help them feel more empowered about the rights and choices they have around death and dying. While talking with other funeral professionals and queer people, I also realised that friends, partners, and families of queer people have questions about what they would do if their loved one died. I hope that this booklet will help answer some of those questions, and give some ideas for practical arrangements that can be made now, to help put people's minds at ease.

This booklet is the result of a partnership between myself and Ava Korwin, the founder of LGBTQ Equality Weddings. Ava's pronouns are she and her. We joined together with Octavian Starr to host a stall at the Full Circle Festival at Mortlake Crematorium in June 2019. We wanted to create a resource for people to take away with them that would benefit the queer community.

Ava's work as a queer inclusivity consultant goes beyond the wedding industry; she and her team also work with multi-industry businesses to empower and educate them, promoting equality for all. Ava is also a Diversity Role Model, visiting schools to speak about her lived experience as a queer person. You can find out more about LGBTQ Equality Weddings and the wonderful sponsors who

helped make this booklet possible, on the back cover.

Octavian Starr is a senior specialist support worker, giving vital support to vulnerable queer youth. He is also a freelance equalities trainer with over ten years of experience. He has advised a range of charities and clients, including Mermaids UK, All About Trans, Amazon, Morgan Stanley, Homes England, Goldsmiths University, and the National Maritime Museum.

Are people in the funeral profession queer-friendly?

Unfortunately, the reality is that you may come across people who are not queer-friendly. However, my experience so far as an out trans man in the funeral profession has been really warm and encouraging. People who work in the funeral profession are generally compassionate and empathetic, and they will likely have chosen this career because they want to help people. In my experience, funeral professionals are committed to caring for the person who has died with dignity and respect, and they will have cared for people from all kinds of backgrounds.

The most important thing to remember when you are looking for a funeral director is that you have a choice. Many people are unaware that you do not have to use a funeral director at all. I will explore this option more in the section 'Arranging the funeral'.

Don't forget, queer people work in the funeral profession too!

Confidentiality

Some people may have concerns about how they can keep information private when a person has died. If you are using a local, family-run funeral home, you could check to see if they are a member of SAIF (the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors). SAIF's Code of Practice requires members to *'treat as confidential all information obtained in relation to their clients and carry out their duties with total regard for the laws of privacy and data protection'*. Another option would be to use a funeral director recommended by The Good Funeral Guide. Members of NAFD (National Association of Funeral Directors) are also bound by a robust Code of Practice, which is published on their website. All of these organisations have high industry standards and I feel confident in recommending them to anyone who is reading this booklet. Links to their websites can be found at the end of this booklet.

It is good practice for everybody working within the funeral profession to assume that nobody knows about the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person who has died *unless* somebody has explicitly said so. This can help to avoid unintentionally 'outing' someone. There are a number of reasons for this:

-  Perhaps not everyone in the person's life knew that they were queer.
-  The person who has died may be trans, and have a Gender Recognition Certificate. This means their acquired gender must

be recognised for *all legal purposes*. The NHS Bereavement guide for trans people and their loved ones states that this applies to all aspects of life and death. There is a link to this document at the end of this booklet.

-  The person who has died may not have told people close to them about their trans history.
-  The person who has died may have been intersex and wished to keep that information private.
-  When someone dies, it can bring up complex emotions for the people around them.

All good funeral directors will understand how important it is to keep sensitive information private. If a funeral professional feels they need to disclose anything to a colleague, they should always ask your permission and explain the reasons why. One example might be if a trans person who has died wishes to be dressed with their prosthetics or have their chest bound. In this case, it would be appropriate to tell the embalmer or funeral staff so that they are able to care for the person who has died in accordance with their wishes.

Most funerals are held in public buildings, and are therefore public events that anyone can attend. It is worth noting that you can ask your funeral director not to give out any information about the funeral. It is also possible to have the funeral service listed as a private event in church and crematorium diaries. If this is a concern for you, I advise that you speak to your funeral director about your options.

Who can arrange a funeral?

Some queer people may be worried about estranged family members arranging their funeral, and not following their wishes or respecting their sexual orientation or gender identity. In theory, anyone can arrange and pay for a funeral. But it is worth bearing in mind that certain documents are legally required by the funeral director and crematorium or cemetery before a funeral can take place. These documents are given to the person who registers the death. In most cases, the next of kin will be the person who registers the death. So one thing you could do is make sure your medical records are updated with the contact details of a person you trust. Your next of kin does not have to be a family member. They can be a partner or friend.

Please be aware that giving a person the title of 'next of kin' does not give them any legal rights. You may wish to take additional steps to ensure your wishes are carried out by a person you trust. You can give your next of kin legal rights by giving them Lasting Power of Attorney. You can find more information about this at www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney

Registering a death

When a person dies, a number of things can happen all at once, and this can be very overwhelming while trying to navigate emotions of shock, grief, sadness, anger, or despair. It can be helpful to familiarise yourself with the process of registering a death before you actually need to do it. When registering a death it might be useful to know the following:

- The piece of legal documentation required to register a death is called 'The Medical Certificate Of The Cause Of Death' ('Medical Certificate'). This white form is filled out by the last doctor who treated the person who has died, and is usually given to the next of kin. It could be given to a hospital bereavement officer or hospice nurse. In cases where a death is referred to the coroner (for example, an unexpected or accidental death), there is a different process which is explained at www.gov.uk/register-a-death.
- A death should be registered within five days - this is five calendar days, including bank holidays and weekends.
- When registering a death, you may be asked for the NHS medical card or passport of the person who has died. But it is still possible to register a death without these, as long as you have the Medical Certificate (see point 1).
- The Registrar may ask the person registering the death (otherwise known as the Informant) for ID to prove who they are. It is worth noting, especially if you are a trans person registering a death, that you can still register the death without showing any ID.
- **When registering a death you do NOT need to give the name as it is written on the birth certificate, passport or medical card.** It does not even need to match the name on the Medical Certificate issued by the doctor. The information you give to the Registrar needs to be "believed to be true at the time of death". A trans person who does not have a Gender Recognition Certificate or has not changed their name by Deed Poll can still have their death registered in their new name and gender.

- If you are registering a death with a name different from that which is on the Medical Certificate or the person's bank details, it would be wise to give their previous name(s) to avoid any confusion with the will or estate of the person who has died.
- There is a service called 'Tell Us Once', which lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go. The Registrar will be able to advise you how to do this.
- Once you have completed the process of registering the death, you will be given the death certificate (which is technically called the Certified Entry of Death). You will also be given 'The Green Certificate Of Registration For Burial and Cremation'. This is what you need to give to the funeral director in order for the funeral to legally take place.

For anyone who is concerned that estranged family members may try to arrange a funeral which invalidates their queer identity, knowing how this process works may be very empowering. If you have appointed a person you trust as your next of kin, it is quite likely they will be the person who will register your death. This means they will be in possession of the documentation required for the funeral to legally go ahead. Please remember that if you want to give your next of kin legal rights, you will need to grant them Lasting Power of Attorney.

Arranging the funeral

Every funeral is unique and individual, and it can be whatever you want it to be. You can ask your funeral director to put you in touch with a queer-affirming minister (links to queer faith networks are included at the end of this booklet). If you are not religious, you can work with a celebrant. Celebrants are not usually connected to any religion, and they often also perform ceremonies for births, marriages, and civil partnerships.

The minister or celebrant will usually meet with the person arranging the funeral to ask about the person who has died. They may ask you about their life and help you to choose readings, music, or poetry for the service.

You do not have to use a funeral director if you do not want to. There are no laws preventing you from bringing the person who has died into your own care, and arranging everything yourself. Cemeteries and crematoria who have adopted the 'Charter for the Bereaved' will be able to offer help and advice if you wish to arrange a funeral yourself. If you would like more information about this, I recommend visiting the Good Funeral Guide website. A good place to start may be the 'do it all yourself' page, which you can find at www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk/do-it-all-yourself.

You might find it useful to do a bit of research before you actually need to arrange a funeral. This way you can make an informed choice later on. Most funeral directors will have a

website, some of which state clearly that they are queer-friendly. Some websites may have an 'equalities statement' or a rainbow flag visible. One way to get a sense of the people who work there is to see if there are staff biographies in the 'about' section. You might find that some people have links with the queer community and clergy. Most funeral directors will be happy to have a chat on the phone and answer your questions. You should be made to feel welcome to ask about prices without being obliged to use their services.

Dressing the person who has died

It is perfectly okay for the person who has died to be dressed in clothes that are not 'gender conforming', and your funeral director should be supportive of this. This is about what the person who has died would want, not about gender norms.

The only restrictions to this would be certain materials which are not allowed in a cremator, for example, rubber, PVC, some plastics, non-combustible metals and some types of glitter. The reason for this is to reduce the environmental impact on emissions.

You may find that your funeral director says that no shoes are allowed. This is usually because most shoes have rubber soles. In the event of a natural burial, you may be asked to ensure all clothing is made from natural fibres. All funeral directors, crematoria and cemeteries will be able to advise you if you have questions.

Some people may wish to help with dressing the person who has died. Or they may wish to paint their nails, style their hair, or put a piece of jewellery on them. This experience can be powerfully moving, and a good funeral director will support you to do this if you wish.

Some trans people who have not undergone surgery may have questions about restrictions on how they can be dressed, particularly if they normally wear prosthetics. As long as the prosthetics are not made from materials that are restricted for environmental reasons, this won't be a problem. One alternative to prosthetic breasts could be to use two small biodegradable bags filled with barley or lentils. This might be useful to know if the person wishes to have a natural burial. Wigs and hair pieces are allowed in the cremator, but if you are unsure about anything, you can always ask.

For trans men, gender non-conforming people and non-binary people who bind their chests, it may not always be possible to be dressed in a binder because of how tight the garment is. It would be appropriate to suggest the use of K-tape (athletic tape), wide medical tape, or bandages to flatten the chest.

Sometimes, people's weight can go up or down if they have been unwell for a long time. It is worth bearing this in mind to ensure any clothing fits comfortably.



Who is allowed to collect the ashes?

A form called 'Application for cremation of the body of a person who has died' will need to be completed before a cremation can go ahead. It has a section called 'Applicants instructions for ashes'. The person arranging the funeral (usually the next of kin) will record what happens to the ashes in this section. They may wish for the ashes to be scattered or interred (buried) by the crematorium. Or they might want to collect the ashes either in person or via the funeral director. Or they could ask for the ashes to be held by the crematorium or funeral director until they have made a decision.

Whichever option is chosen, the ashes would never be given to just anyone. The funeral director or crematorium will have a record of who is allowed to collect the ashes, and they will ask for ID before doing so.

So, what can I do to ensure my wishes are respected after I die?

If you are worried about having your sexuality or gender identity respected after death, here are a few things you could do:

- Appoint someone you trust as your next of kin. Remember to update this on your medical records. You could make sure this person's details are available in your wallet or as an ICE (in case of emergency) contact on your phone.
- Give your next of kin 'Lasting Power of Attorney'. This lets you appoint one or more people to help you make decisions or to make decisions on your behalf if you have an accident or an illness and cannot make your own decisions.
- Remember that marriage and civil partnerships give you the same legal rights in the event of death. If you are the civil partner of someone whose family are trying to push you out of the funeral arrangements, you have the same rights as a married spouse would in the same circumstances.
- Write a will and have it notarised. Appoint someone you trust to be the executor of your will. If you have both a will and a letter of wishes, make sure they do not conflict with each other to avoid any confusion.
- Arrange a pre-paid funeral plan - these plans can be as detailed as you wish and many of them can be paid in monthly instalments.

- If you are a trans person at the beginning of your transition, you could change your name by deed poll and update your medical records and banking information so that you have identification in the correct name and gender.
- Update your organ donor status, and if you intend to leave your body for medical research make sure you have completed any relevant legal paperwork (please see the links at the end of this booklet for more information).



I hope that the information in this booklet has been useful to you, and that it will help empower you to make more informed choices.

Making decisions about funerals and thinking about what may happen when we die can be distressing, so be sure to take some time to digest this information at your own pace, and reach out for support if you need to.

Support and further information

Bereavement and mental health support

Calm www.thecalmzone.net

Child bereavement UK www.childbereavementuk.org

Cruse www.cruse.org.uk

Mind www.mind.org.uk

Papyrus suicide prevention www.papyrus-uk.org

Samaritans www.samaritans.org or 116 123

Sands www.sands.org.uk

The Good Grief Trust www.thegoodgrieftrust.org

Support for LGBTQ+ people

Action for Trans Health www.actionfortranshealth.org.uk

LGBT Switchboard www.switchboard.lgbt or 0300 330 0630

CliniQ www.cliniq.org.uk

FTM London www.ftmlondon.net

Galop www.galop.org.uk

Mermaids www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Press For Change www.pfc.org.uk

Stonewall Housing www.stonewallhousing.org

The Outside Project www.lgbtiqoutside.org

Guides and Information

A-Z of Governmental Guidance www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages

Body Donation www.hta.gov.uk/donating-your-body

Celebrant Directory www.thecelebrantdirectory.com

Death Cafe www.deathcafe.com

Diversity Role Models www.diversityrolemodels.org

Down To Earth (help with funeral costs)

www.quakersocialaction.org.uk

GIRES www.gires.org.uk

Good Funeral Guide www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk

Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management www.iccm-uk.com

Lasting Power of Attorney www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney

My Genderation www.mygenderation.com

NAFD National Association of Funeral Directors www.nafd.org.uk

NHS Bereavement: A guide for Transsexual, Transgender people and their loved ones (2007) This document has been archived but a PDF download is available from www.scottishtrans.org/resources

Organ Donation www.organdonation.nhs.uk

Register office finder www.gov.uk/register-offices

SAIF National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors www.saif.org.uk

LGBT Faith Networks

Inclusive Church www.inclusive-church.org

One Body One Faith www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk

Two23 www.two23.net

The Sibyls www.sibyls.gndr.org.uk

Hidayah www.hidayahlgbt.co.uk

London Queer Muslims www.londonqueermuslims.com

Jewish LGBT+ Group www.jglg.org.uk

Jewish Queer Youth (JQY) www.jqyouth.org

Quaker Gender and Sexual Diversity Community
www.QGSDC.org.uk

Unitarians don't have a specific LGBTQ+ network as they support equality of respect and opportunity for everyone.
www.unitarian.org.uk

Glossary of Terms

Agender Someone who doesn't identify as any gender.

Ashes This is the word most often used to describe human remains after a cremation. They are sometimes called 'human remains' or 'cremains'.

Bereavement A period of mourning after a loss, or death of a loved one.

Bisexual Someone who is attracted to more than one gender.

Body donation Giving your whole body to medical research and education after you have died. You can only do this if you have given your written and witnessed consent to a local medical school. Nobody can decide this for you after you have died. If you wish to donate your body you can find more information from the Human Tissue Authority. You can find a link to their website at the end of this booklet.

Celebrant A funeral celebrant leads the ceremony. They are not usually associated with any religion. They will meet with whoever is arranging the funeral to decide what will be said about the person who has died, and if there will be music, readings, or poetry. Many celebrants also perform ceremonies for marriages, civil partnerships, and births.

Chest binding Flattening the breasts to create a more masculine appearance. This is usually achieved by using a binder, which is a tight garment worn under clothing. Some trans men, non-binary people and gender non-conforming people bind their chests, but not all do.

Civil Partnership A legal relationship between two people of the same sex. Civil partnerships were introduced in the UK in 2005, when same-sex couples were not allowed to marry.

Coroner Unexpected, sudden or violent deaths are referred to the Coroner's office so that they can decide if there needs to be an investigation into the cause of death. They might decide that an inquest or an autopsy is needed to find out why the person died.

Cremation When a body is cremated, it is burned at an extreme heat until it is reduced to its basic chemical components (often called 'ashes', 'remains' or 'cremains').

Cremator The machine used to cremate the body.

Crematorium This is the name of the building in which the cremation ceremony takes place. The ceremony will take place in a chapel and will be led by a celebrant or minister. At the end of the funeral, curtains may

close around the coffin.

Death Cafe An event where people gather to drink tea, eat cake, and discuss death. Its aim is to 'increase awareness of death and help people make the most of their (finite) lives'.

Deed Poll A legal document that proves a change of name.

Embalmer A person who prepares the body of a person who has died so that they can be viewed by their loved ones. This involves a hygienic treatment that preserves the body. It is not a legal requirement for the body to be embalmed before viewing.

Executor See will.

Funeral Arranger The person who organises the funeral according to the instructions of the family or friends of the person who has died. They will book the church or crematorium, arrange the music, liaise with ministers, celebrants and musicians, and ensure all of the legal paperwork is completed so that the funeral can legally take place. They may also help to prepare the person who has died for a viewing.

Funeral Director This is the person who, on the day of the funeral, ensures that everything goes smoothly. They will often be wearing a top hat.

Funeral Home This is one of the phrases used to describe the place where funeral professionals work. It is also known as a 'Funeral Directors', which can sometimes be confusing.

Gay A person who is attracted to someone of the same sex. Most people use this word to mean gay men, but some women also identify as gay.

Genderfluid A person whose gender varies over time, moving between masculine and feminine.

Gender Identity Your gender identity is what you feel you are, rather than what your body tells other people you are. It's your internal sense of gender.

Gender Recognition Certificate Also referred to as a GRC. This ensures that a trans person's acquired gender must be legally recognised, and gives them extra protections against discrimination or disclosure of their trans identity.

Intersex a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

Lasting Power of Attorney A legal document that lets you appoint one or more people to help you make decisions on your behalf.

Lesbian A woman who is attracted to other women.

Letter of Wishes This is a letter that gives guidance to people after you have died. This is not a legal document and is therefore not legally binding, but it can be helpful in letting people know what your wishes are after you die.

Medical transition Some trans people seek medical treatment to change their body so that it aligns with their internal sense of who they are. This could involve surgery or hormone replacement therapy.

Minister A term often used to describe a person authorised to conduct religious services, for example a priest. They will help the family and friends of the person who has died to choose the contents of the funeral service, and conduct it on the day of the funeral.

Natural burial A safe and legal burial practice that uses biodegradable containers and avoids embalming fluids and materials that have a negative impact on the environment. More information about natural burial can be found on the Good Funeral Guide website.

Non-binary A person who does not identify exclusively as male or female. Some Non-binary people may also identify as trans, genderfluid, or genderqueer. They might use a gender neutral pronoun such as they, xie, xe or ve. Some non-binary people may seek medical transition, but others do not.

Pansexual A person who is attracted to people of any gender.

Pronouns In this booklet we are referring to pronouns such as he, she, and they. Some trans people may use the gender neutral pronoun 'they'. Other gender neutral pronouns include ze, zie, xe, ne or ve.

Register Office A place where marriages and civil ceremonies are performed. It is also the place where the records of births, deaths, and marriages are kept.

Registrar An official record keeper.

Tell Us Once A service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go.

Transition The process of change that a trans person goes through in order to feel more aligned with their gender. Transition can be social or medical.

Social transition may involve a change of name, wearing different clothing, using different pronouns, and changing documentation to reflect the gender they are. Medical transition may involve hormone replacement therapy and surgical procedures. Every trans person's transition is unique, and there is no right or wrong way to transition.

Trans man Someone who was assigned female at birth, but is male. Trans men are men.

Trans woman Someone who was assigned male at birth, but is female. Trans women are women.

Will A legal document recording what you wish to happen to your property after you die. Usually a person is named as the executor of the will, and it is their job to carry out your wishes and manage your estate.



Thank You

This booklet would not have been possible without the advice and encouragement from Ash's friends and colleagues at Chelsea Funeral Directors and Mortlake Crematorium. Thank you also to Marilisa, Tati, Gaynor, and Mon.

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Jo Beddington, Humanist Celebrant
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LGBTQ Equality Weddings and
LGBTQ Equality Businesses
www.lgbtqequalityweddings.com

MATKOR Trades, Plumbing, Heating, & Building
Services (West London)
matkortrades@gmail.com

LGBTQ Equality Businesses

If you would like to know more about supporting your queer clients, whether you're in the funeral industry or beyond, LGBTQ Equality Businesses can help. Ash Hayhurst and Octavian Starr both support the founder Ava Korwin by offering advice, consultancy, and industry expertise.

Ash is a queer, trans funeral professional who feels passionate about giving people the tools to make positive changes that will benefit the queer community. Octavian is a specialist support worker and equalities trainer, with extensive experience supporting a wide range of UK charities and large organisations.

The primary focus of LGBTQ Equality Businesses is to support their clients with inclusive language and positive representation. Language is a powerful tool which can create a feeling of belonging. Often, and unintentionally, it can also have the opposite effect. LGBTQ Equality Businesses offers an inclusivity language review service that can help make sure everyone feels embraced. They review websites, booking forms, and contracts and provide recommendations on how to remove and avoid assumptions, accidental stereotypes, and language that may inadvertently exclude. Following the implementation of their recommendations, they provide their clients with an LGBTQ Equality Business logo to show that they are a safe space for the queer community.

LGBTQ Equality Businesses and LGBTQ Equality Weddings have extensive review experience. They have successfully helped to diversify the clients of many ceremony-based businesses, including naming day celebrants, florists, and funeral celebrants. You can read their testimonials at www.lgbtqequalityweddings.com/testimonials and enquire about their Not Just Weddings services at www.lgbtqequalityweddings.com/not-just-weddings