



If you have to organise a funeral for someone and there are no clear instructions in the will, bear in mind that you can organise the procedure without using the services of a funeral director. The Cemeteries and Crematorium Department of your local authority can offer help and guidance, and there are many sources of help online, for instance the Natural Death Centre at www.naturaldeath.org.uk At the current time, when the high prices charged by funeral companies are under government investigation, an alternative funeral can also cost much less. If you're on certain benefits you might be able to get help paying for the funeral.

Citizens Advice has guidance for people planning a funeral for themselves or their near ones:

- Shop around and get quotes from local funeral directors. These quotes can vary surprisingly, sometimes by as much as £2,000. Also, try asking for a "basic funeral" and get the costs itemized so you can see what you are paying for.
- Choose "direct burial" – that way, there is no need to pay for embalming or visiting rights.
- Purchase a biodegradable cardboard or cloth-covered coffin, or a wicker basket.
- A woodland or "natural" burial site is an option. There are 200 of them around Britain and several in Oxfordshire.

For more help, contact Citizens Advice on Adviceline 03 444 111444, or drop in to your nearest Citizens Advice. For locations and opening hours see www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale

