



### **Social isolation and funerals**

Not being able to go to or participate in the funeral or memorial service of someone we care about can be distressing. Attending a funeral or memorial service can be an important part of our grieving and healing process, to be together with and support others, to give thanks, pay our respects, do what we feel is right.

There are various things that we can do which may be helpful when we can't attend. Services might be live streamed or recorded so we can watch via a computer or phone. It is worth asking those arranging a funeral if this is possible.

Sometimes when there is a funeral service this may also be followed by a memorial service some weeks or months later. So if people cannot get to the funeral they might be able to attend the memorial service. Many organisations such as churches and hospices, like Weston Hospicecare, offer regular memorial events.

If you know when a service or event is going to take place but can't attend then you might like to think about doing something special at the same time. This might be lighting a candle or incense at home alone or with other members of your household, saying some prayers, reading from religious texts, meditating, playing some music, displaying a photo of your loved one, arranging some flowers or other meaningful objects or having some special food. Wearing particular clothes or going for a walk or drive to a special place might also be possible for you. For some observing a period of mourning may be important. Some religious organisations will be able to offer resources online if you don't have any yourself. You could also contact us here at the hospice or your local minister or religious representative for materials and information.

After or before a funeral has taken place it may be possible to send a card or email to family or make a donation to charity in memory of someone. If there is to be a burial or interment of ashes it will usually be possible for close family to arrange for a memorial stone to be placed. This can be a helpful thing in the grieving process. It may also be possible to visit alone a grave or place where ashes may be scattered any time afterwards. Many find these visits helpful. Ask the family of the person who has died if you do not know where to visit.

Being unable to attend a service or event for any reason can leave a lasting memory that we find difficult. Many organisations offer counselling and support that can help with this, to help you talk about and address your needs. The various support organisations will be looking in to how they can offer more telephone and online support.

The situation regarding funerals and how they can take place is changing daily. The current situation is that a funeral can be organised as normal with funeral directors but they are requesting that people limit visits to the premises to keep funeral directors safe and well.

The latest guidance is that 10 people only can attend a service in the crematorium chapel, they must be spread out in line with social distancing guidelines and follow any venue policies. Anyone else present will have to be outside.

Please use phone and email as much as possible to contact the funeral director you are using and be aware that they might well not be able to facilitate viewings or visits to their premises.

If you require any further assistance or information, I am happy to discuss arrangements and offer support. Please contact me via 01934 423900.

Karen Murphy

Spiritual Lead

23/03/2020