

The Charter for the Bereaved

Mid Devon District Council has adopted the Charter for the Bereaved issued by the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration. The Charter is a commitment to improving service by confronting rather than disguising the death experience and by reducing ignorance. It defines the right of every individual who experiences bereavement and gives the bereaved greater influence over the arrangement of funerals, thereby controlling costs and offering more satisfaction.

The Charter clearly puts the bereaved at the centre of the process and recognises that the quality of their experience is paramount. Only statutory requirements in regard of Health and Safety may impinge upon this and if this is the case, reasons will be given clearly.

The Charter guarantees 33 rights, of which 27 are relevant to Mid Devon. These are integrated into the services we offer. We see the Charter rights as a minimum and our service extends well beyond these requirements. We will seek to constantly improve the service above and beyond the requirements of the Charter, especially in regard to local conditions and practice. Consultation with the public, elected members and other stakeholders will be central to future developments.

'The Guiding Principles' as issued by the I.B.C.A.

Caring for the Community

All burial facilities shall be managed with competence and efficiency, to ensure that the entire bereavement experience occurs without error or insensitivity, and meets the religious secular, ethnic and cultural needs of the bereaved. The service shall comply with all statutory and Health and Safety requirements.

Service Sensitivity

The burial of a human body is a highly emotional occasion for those taking part. Each cemetery must be managed to create and maintain an atmosphere of solace and respect throughout the entire proceedings. This sensitivity must extend to all staff and contractors working at facilities, through the application of bereavement sensitive specifications. Members will respond sympathetically to individual funeral needs and shall give a justifiable reason for refusing any specific request.

Staff

All staff should possess qualifications and undergo recognised training specific to their duties. At the senior management level, the appointment of staff in possession of the Diploma of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration should be seen as a minimum requirement. The appointment of all staff must emphasise the need for proper conduct and demeanour, as well as technical expertise.

Staff must act and speak in a manner that recognises the sensitivity of bereavement, both during and outside working hours and should not accept gratuities. Suitable name badges should identify all staff.

Environmental issues

Every Charter member shall minimise the impact of bereavement upon the environment. This should encourage the greater use of earth friendly materials, particularly in coffins and containers used for burial or cremation, a reduction in fossil fuel usage and emissions to air and the use of suitable ground for burial so that water borne pollution shall not occur.

Individual Disposal

The importance of human beings as individuals and the manner in which they inter-relate with relatives and friends does not diminish in significance following death. It is important for the bereaved to know that the burial or cremation is individually carried out and the following requirements must, therefore, be met.

General Conditions

No coffin/container/shroud shall be accepted at a cemetery unless the name of the deceased therein is clearly shown. The identity shown on the coffin/container/shroud shall be verified at every funeral. If burial is to occur, the body and its coffin/container/shroud shall be placed in the identified grave.

Requirements Relating to Burial

After the coffin/container/shroud and body have been committed into the grave, they shall not be removed or otherwise disturbed except for lawful exhumation, by licence and/or faculty or by the order of a coroner. Immediately after the mourners have departed the graveside, the grave shall be entirely backfilled and made tidy. This work will be completed on the day of the burial and must not extend overnight.

Inspection

Everyone has the right to inspect the cemetery during normal working hours, upon application to the manager of the facility.

Everyone has the right to inspect our burial records during normal working hours. A fee may be charged for staff time when assisting in lengthy or complicated searches.

Professional Genealogists will be liable to be charged at all times.

Short copies of the charter are available at our office and may be purchased for £5. The full copy can be examined at our offices or purchased for £53.50.