

HOW MANY

HOURS

does it take to arrange a funeral in 2019?

To support the submissions it is making on behalf of members to the Competition & Markets Authority, the NAFD has undertaken a comparison of the number of employee hours it takes to arrange a straightforward traditional funeral today, compared to a decade ago.

The analysis is inclusive of collecting, preparing, caring for and storing the deceased person, all liaison with the family - including facilitating visits to see their loved one - booking all arrangements and completing paperwork, carrying out a typical funeral service, following up payment and arranging any memorial items.

These are the initial results. They are based on contributions from small independent or family firms, mid-sized firms and larger providers.

How do they compare to your own experience?

For some businesses, the average hours may be fewer but, for others, greater. For example, one medium-sized firm has calculated the average 'employee weeks' per funeral in their business today, compared to when they joined the business, because of the changing nature of the funerals they are arranging. They say: "We currently need 1.85 employee weeks to deliver a

funeral (74 hours). This is an increase of 85% in 40 years."

Based upon a £2,000 funeral director's fee, the 2019 hours total of 52 hours and 42 minutes equates to an hourly rate of circa £38 an hour per employee - a figure which is, of course, inclusive of all employee costs such as National Insurance, taxes, pension contributions, training/professional development and all other operational costs associated with running the business - not the employee's rate of pay.

How many hours does it take your firm to arrange a funeral?

Please help the NAFD to ensure that this research is as robust and comprehensive as possible. Email pr@nafd.org.uk with your comments, additions, alternative suggestions and thoughts on this table. We would like to hear from you, whether it is to agree that it reflects your own experience, or to add your own data into the range presented.

Activity	Description	Time required 2019 (range in brackets if applicable)	Time required 2009 (range in brackets if applicable)	Notes
First call	Answering telephone (on a 24/7 basis via rota) to be advised by a family that someone has died and/or an enquiry about making funeral arrangements or collection of the body. Follow-up calls to colleagues as appropriate.	22 minutes (15-30 minutes)	22 minutes (15-30 minutes)	No change
Arrangement meeting	Travelling to client's home or held funeral home. Discussion of funeral arrangements, finances, choices, etc. First meeting often very emotional for family and funeral director will seek to provide support/guidance and also encourage them to talk about the person that has died – helps with grieving and with funeral arrangements.	2 hours (1.5-2.5 hours)	37 minutes (30-45 minutes)	Previously there were fewer variables in funeral arrangements so the meeting generally completed in a shorter period of time. Today, meetings often more complex and there are more instances of abandonment, as people are now encouraged to shop around.
Removal	Bringing the body from the place of death/where it is currently being cared for to the funeral director's mortuary (two people).	5 hours (2 hours x 2 or 3 people)	4 hours (2 hours x 2 people)	Number of people increases where it's a death at home (e.g. more complex removal from upstairs with narrow stairwells/no lift). Deaths at home are increasing.
Officiant	Calling the minister or celebrant to book them for the funeral and discussing the details.	22 minutes (15-30 minutes)	7 minutes (5-10 minutes)	Previously a simple call to book a Minister. Now each funeral service is tailored and there's a wider range of off cians available.
Family liaison		1.5 hours (1-2 hours)	20 minutes (10-30 minutes)	More complex arrangements and increased instances of family discord resulting in additional discussion/negotiation to reach agreement on plans.
Crematorium/Cemetery	Calling the crematorium/cemetery to book a funeral slot.	12 minutes (10-15 minutes)	12 minutes (10-15 minutes)	No change
Caring for the deceased person	Lining the coffin (if required), washing, dressing and putting deceased person into the coffin (two people).	3 hours (1-2 hours x 2 people)	4 hours (2 hours x 2 people)	Slightly reduced as many coffins are now delivered already lined by the manufacturer.
Embalming, hair and cosmetic treatment (if required)	Embalming deceased person, styling hair and, dependent upon cause of death/length of time elapsed/client requests, applying make-up and other restorative treatments prior to viewing.	2 hours (1-3 hours)	2 hours (1-3 hours)	No change.
Certification and paperwork	Liaising with the doctor/coroner/procurator fiscal – as appropriate to particular funeral and filling out paperwork.	2 hours (1hr 45 mins - 2 hours 15 mins)	1 hour 15 mins (1-1.5 hours)	An Increased length of time due to pressure on services which means more chasing/waiting time. Depending on the area, there can sometimes be the need to collect the certificate from the coroner. Submission of other forms (eg cremation, burial, etc.)
Viewing	Making arrangements for family viewing. Preparing room/deceased person/briefing family/accompanying family if requested.	1 hour +	1 hour +	Can be significantly more than one hour as some client families visit multiple times, or for longer periods.
Out of hours viewing	Making additional arrangements for family viewing outside of normal working hours/at weekends.	1 hour	1 hour	No change.

Activity	Description	Time required 2019 (range in brackets if applicable)	Time required 2009 (range in brackets if applicable)	Notes
Client liaison	Various calls to client to update them on arrangements and ask/answer questions.	3 hours +	30 minutes	Greater number of variables to discuss now – plus greater client involvement. Length of time between death and funeral means more interaction.
Flowers, music and notices	Taking flower specification from client and arranging with florist, booking notice in local paper or arranging online, working with family to choose funeral music, sourcing CDs or musicians then arranging with service venue.	1.5 hours (1-2 hours)	1.5 hours (1-2 hours)	No change
Charitable donations	Collating, managing, banking of any cash collections, setting up and managing the process if online.	2-3 hours	2-3 hours	Increase of online donations management will eventually lead to reduction in time, but most funerals today still have a cash collection at the service too.
Order of Service	Taking brief from family for design, supporting family in sourcing information, pictures, etc. Liaising with printer. Approval of proof, etc.	3 hours+	N/A	Ten years ago far fewer people had OOS. Now ordered for the majority of funerals. Often complex to source content, proof and sign off with client. OOS set up, proof printed, family back in to view and discuss. Very often a second proof printed, etc.
Deliveries	Taking delivery/administration of family's choice of coffin/casket, floral tributes, memorials, etc.	45 minutes (30 minutes - 1 hour)	30 minutes (15-45 mins)	Increased time due to greater likelihood of bespoke coffin/casket choice and other funeral options.
Preparing the fleet	Hearse and limousines need to be washed, polished and valeted ahead of funeral services. If a special vehicle is requested (coloured hearse, horse and carriage, etc, then arranging hire and collection.	2 hours (1 hour + per vehicle – based on 1 hearse and one limousine)	2 hour per vehicle (1 hour + per vehicle – based on 1 hearse and one limousine)	Vehicles often hired in as per family's request. Generally provided with a driver. If funeral firm offers hire service they may then be providing a vehicle and driver to another firm – resulting in a day out of the business for the driver.
Conducting the funeral	On average three members of staff (funeral director, driver and one bearer if trolley used). Additional bearers as required if coffin to be shoulder borne.	16.5 hours + (3+ hours x 4-7 people)	9 hours (3 hours X 3 people)	Increased numbers of bearers due to health and safety concerns/heavier coffins. Certain religious funeral services can be significantly longer than 3 hours.
Travel time	To and from client home, travel on the day of the funeral, etc.	1+ hours Depends upon the funeral	1+ hours Depended upon the funeral	No change. Note: funeral vehicles drive at slow speeds due to the nature of their journeys – even when families are not in the vehicles. Traffic has increased which has slowed overall journey times down.

Activity	Description	Time required 2019 (range in brackets if applicable)	Time required 2009 (range in brackets if applicable)	Notes
Aftercare	Invoicing, follow-up calls re memorials, collection of ashes and other administrative tasks.	2.5 hours+ (2 – 3+ hours)	1 hour	Greater variety in memorial options, what to do with ashes - generally requires more liaison. Increases in family conflict/financial issues results in increased administration time securing invoice payment. Increased time chasing unpaid invoices.
Personalisation	Doves/butterfly/balloon releases, sourcing and management of horse and carriage in the cortege, sourcing unusual funeral vehicles, dressing funeral team in particular colour or theme, etc.	1 hour 30 mins (1-2 hours + Depends upon the funeral)	Rarely applicable	All personalised elements incur additional arranging time.
Total average employee hours		52 hours, 42 mins	32 hours, 53 mins	

Additional considerations

Social Fund funerals	Completing form SF200 with families and liaising with statutory bodies and other organisations.	1-2 hours+	1-2 hours	No change to time to complete form, although DWP taking steps to simplify it now. However, often increased time working through the client's financial issues and concerns.
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