



BEWLEY

Funeral Directors Limited

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A Guide to Being a Pallbearer

What to expect if you've been asked to be a pallbearer

A pallbearer is someone who helps carry a coffin or casket into the venue where the funeral is being held. Usually the pallbearers will carry the coffin from the hearse to where the service is being held. There may be around six to eight pallbearers, depending on the size of coffin.

Pallbearers are usually chosen by the closest relatives of the person who has died, and may be family members, close friends or co-workers. Although pallbearers have traditionally always been men, women are now also given the role. It is considered a great honour to be a pallbearer.

What to expect

It can be daunting to accept the role of pallbearer, but it usually means a lot to the bereaved to have their loved one's closest and most important friends carrying the coffin. Be assured that the funeral director will be on hand to offer advice and reassurance.

Make sure you arrive slightly early to the funeral so that the funeral director can give instructions to you and the other pallbearers. They will tell you how to carry the coffin, where exactly you have to walk, and your position in relation to the other pallbearers. It is likely that other pallbearers will also be doing this for the first time, so don't worry about asking questions.

Sometimes the pallbearers will also be asked to carry the coffin back to the hearse after the service if the cremation or burial is happening elsewhere. You should be told before the funeral begins if this is the case.

Choosing not to be a pallbearer

You do not have to accept the role of pallbearer if it is offered to you, though it is considered an honour to be asked. You might want to decline because you do not feel you are physically able to carry the coffin, as it is often quite heavy.

In this case you should politely decline the offer and explain why you do not think you would be suitable. The person arranging the funeral may offer to make you an honorary pallbearer instead.

Choosing pallbearers

If you are arranging your loved one's funeral, you may want to choose certain people to carry their coffin. Pallbearers can be almost anyone – grandchildren, siblings, close friends – as long as they are physically able to carry the coffin and walk steadily. Sometimes coffins can be carried on a trolley, which makes it easier for the pallbearers. You should discuss this with your funeral director.

You should also bear in mind that being a pallbearer can be a deeply emotional experience. Feeling the weight of the coffin can have a profound impact and some people may find it too distressing.

You do not have to choose friends or family to be pallbearers. The funeral director will be able to provide experienced pallbearers to carry the coffin, but this may cost extra.