Ashes Policy

We are committed to caring sensitively and respectfully for all of those entrusted to us. Our policies and processes for infant cremation are aligned to the latest guidance on infant cremation. Recommendations Lord Bonomy’s Infant Cremation Commission (June 2014 Scotland).

This guidance is fully supported by the national representative bodies, the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA), the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), the Cremation Society of Great Britain (CSGB) and the Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries (APCC).

Belfast City Council Ashes Policy

Definition of ‘ashes’

In line with Lord Bonomy’s recommendations we consider cremated remains and ashes to be the same thing and we support the commission’s definition that ashes are “all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process, and following the removal of any metal.”

Return of ashes

Our approach to the cremation of babies and infants is designed to maximise the recovery of ashes. This includes the use of a cremation tray designed to retain ashes where practical, and the maintenance of operational conditions that will minimise the loss of any ashes during the process of cremation.

We will employ best practice, for example we use specialist computer programmes and metal trays and our staff are vigilant during the cremation process and will adjust operational conditions when necessary to protect the ashes of babies and infants and to maximise their recovery.

We are confident that the equipment and processes adopted for infant cremation maximises the likelihood of recovering ashes. In any rare instance of non-recovery of ashes, we will conduct a review of the cremation process within 48 hours to understand why this is the case. The results of this review will be documented and contain details of any adjustments of our procedure deemed necessary, and will be available to next of kin/parent(s) if they wish to view these. We will adhere to our identification procedure that guarantees that the ashes resulting from individual cremations returned to parents are those of their baby.
Shared cremations

Where a shared cremation has been authorised, and hence ashes are not individually identifiable, we will take the same care throughout the cremation process, including steps to maximise the recovery of ashes, and will scatter the ashes within the designated babies garden of remembrance area. This location will be recorded for future reference.

Disposal of ashes

In relation to the disposal of ashes in the case of a private cremation, we will only act upon the written instruction of the parent who is acting as the Applicant for Cremation or other person nominated in writing by the parent.

In the case of shared cremations, we will only act on the written instruction of the designated person at the relevant hospital, who is acting as the Applicant.

Ashes will be held at the crematorium for up to 16 weeks to await collection by representatives or instructions as to their disposal. Where no further instructions have been received within the sixteen-week period, a further fourteen days' notice will be given in writing to the Applicant, following which the ashes will be scattered within the designated babies garden of remembrance area, should no further instructions have been received.

Disposal of metals - The applicant should give consent for disposal of metals recovered from an individual cremation and must be provided with information on the options available.

Record-keeping

All cremations of babies and infants will be registered at the crematorium, with all information as contained in forms and certificates being retained indefinitely.

If ashes are scattered or buried within the grounds of the crematorium the final resting place will be recorded. Where ashes are to be collected, the details of any person authorised by the applicant to remove or collect the ashes, and the date on which the ashes were collected will be recorded.

Our policy is designed to provide an audit trail from the receipt of initial funeral instructions to the final disposal of ashes, either by collection, by scattering in the designated babies garden of remembrance area or burial in other such designated areas.

Questions or queries

If you have any questions or queries about the cremation of your baby, please speak to a member of our crematorium team on 028 9044 8342 or email crematorium@belfastcity.gov.uk