

Guidelines for Pallbearers

This support sheet will assist those accepting the invitation to perform the role of pallbearer.

Who can be a pallbearer?

Usually this important role will be given to family members or close friends at the invitation of the immediate family of the deceased. Naturally both men and women are capable of performing this role provided they have a reasonable level of fitness.

Who should not be a pallbearer?

Young children and the elderly or infirm are not usually suitable to perform this role as it can be physically demanding. In some venues it is possible to wheel the coffin or casket on a 'church truck'. On these occasions you can ask the less physically able to assist.

Why is this role given to families instead of the funeral directors?

It is an honour reserved only for those closest to the deceased. Funeral directors can sometimes step in where family are unable to, but this is not the usual practice.

Who will tell me where to stand and what to do?

Your funeral director will give you clear instructions on how to correctly and safely lift and move with a coffin or casket. Usually the head end of the coffin is the heaviest, thus the strongest two of your six pallbearers should take the handles at this end.

How heavy will the coffin be and could I hurt myself?

Coffins and caskets alone, on average, can weigh around 25-40kg, but can weigh up to 100kg. The actual weight including the deceased will, of course, vary. We would suggest that only those of a reasonable level of fitness and the confidence to carry at least 25kg take on this important role.

Do I need to wear any special uniform to be a pallbearer?

No special uniform is required, however we do advise pallbearers to wear sturdy footwear. Often the ground around graves is uneven and can also be slippery during the winter months. High heel shoes are not appropriate, in the case of burials, thus if a pallbearer is wearing high heels to the funeral, we would suggest bringing along a second, more sturdy pair of shoes, to perform the pallbearing duties in cemeteries.