

# Crematorium staff work hard to ensure service is 'second to none'

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When a friend of mine died completely unexpected and far far too young earlier this year, his family found a letter which was only to be opened in the event of his death.

Obviously he had made a will too but the letter made it clear how much he loved his family, how proud he was and what he wanted at his funeral.

It got me thinking that when it comes to dying we are so often afraid to talk about what we want when we shuffle off life's mortal perch.

My friend's letter and the comfort it gave his devastated family back in January this year prompted me to write my own one to my children, which has been put in a safe place should I drop down dead or get hit by a bus any time

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**LISA FIDDIMORE**

soon.

In it I list the music I want at a service, what I want to be dressed in and tell them how much I love them and that the two of them are without question the best thing that ever happened to me in my 51 colourful years on planet Earth.

Although I too have made a will pointing out who gets what when it comes to dividing up the Field heirlooms, the letter I have penned makes clear that I want to be created - dressed in my favourite red dress, with a small bottle of Sav Blanc by my side, photos of my children and naturally a copy of the Herald.

I have been behind the scenes of a crematorium before at Eastbourne's Hide Hollow but talk of death



prompted me to pay a visit to the newly opened Wealden Crematorium.

The state of the art purpose built modern facility sits in 25 acres in the middle of the Wealden countryside and is a 25 minute drive up the A267 road towards Tunbridge Wells. It opened its doors in April this year, has a ceremony hall that can seat more than 120 mourners with ample standing room, can carry out eight full services a day Monday to Friday and even Saturday mornings.

Services can be relayed

outside to an undercover area with screens and speakers for large attendances, there is a facility to webcast the service throughout the world for relatives and friends living away, photographic tributes can be shown during the ceremony and there is a large flower court for floral tributes.

All the staff say they work to ensure the service provided at the crematorium is second to none and are dedicated to treating everyone with dignity and respect.

There are seven full and

part-time staff including admin officer Lisa Fiddimore and cremation officer Alex Heyland-Part, who operates the one single cremator.

"Seventy six per cent of deaths are cremations now," says Lisa, "and we are here to help, whether it be arranging a funeral, attending one or choosing a memorial to remember someone special. We also have a book of remembrance, sanctums for ashes, trees that can be dedicated and plaques. We are surrounded by wildflower meadows,

woodland and pasture with sheep grazing which makes the crematorium a peaceful and sensitive setting to say goodbye to loved ones and to remember them forever."

There is a wonderful atmosphere at Wealden Crematorium and no hushed tones when death is discussed.

That is just how it should be.

In addition, we all agreed how important it is to let your loved ones know what you want when your time is up and not in a "make a stuffy will filled with legal jargon" way

either.

Be honest and don't be afraid. It's the one thing we can be sure of: we are all going to die, some earlier than others or in more unexpected circumstances. Have that conversation with your loved ones, write that letter. Encourage your relatives too as well.

Or as I have pointed out before: you could end up saying farewell to your 90-year-old grandfather at his funeral with music chosen by his teenage niece. And rap artist Stormzy blaring out.