



WORKING TO RAISE STANDARDS IN BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

FORMAL DECLARATION - GUIDANCE NOTE

What is a Formal Declaration?

A Letter of Wishes is a personal document that accompanies your will. It provides guidance to those responsible for managing your estate after your death. While not legally binding, it offers valuable insight into your preferences and intentions, helping executors, trustees, and family members carry out your wishes with compassion and clarity.

Does a Formal Declaration Replace a Will?

No. Formal Declaration does not replace a will and should not be treated as a legal substitute. Instead, it complements your will by offering practical and emotional guidance—particularly in matters such as funeral arrangements, personal belongings, and family considerations.

Who Should Use a Formal Declaration?

Everyone should have a valid will in place. In Islam, the importance of preparing a will is deeply rooted in faith. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"It is not permissible for any Muslim who has something to will to stay for two nights without having his last will and testament written and kept ready with him." (Sahih al-Bukhari 2738)

If you wish to provide specific instructions about your funeral arrangements, a Formal Declaration can be a meaningful way to express your preferences in accordance with your Islamic values.

What to Include

With regards to funeral wishes specifically, you may wish to include guidance on the following:

- That your funeral be conducted in accordance with Islamic principles
- Preferences regarding preparation, washing, and shrouding
- Funeral prayers and timing
- Preferred burial location
- Requests for non-invasive post-mortem procedures (e.g., MRI) if legally required
- Timely release of the body and prompt burial wherever practical
- Details of your pre-paid funeral plan if one is in place.

In addition to funeral wishes, you can include other important points as guidance, such as, who will care for your children if they are below 18, details of debts owed/due, clarifying ownership of assets.

Key Tips for Writing a Formal Declaration

- ✓ Keep it simple and provide clear, actionable instructions
- ✓ Use plain language that is easily understood
- ✓ Review and update your Letter of Wishes regularly (minimum every 3 years or sooner if circumstances change significantly).
- ✓ Keep it private and share only with those who need to know
- ✓ Store it safely alongside your will
- ❖ Ensure it does not contradict your will
- ❖ Avoid including sensitive or ambiguous information
- ❖ Do not use it as a substitute for a legally valid will

The Formal declaration Template is prepared by the National Burial Council (NBC) to help you express your funeral preferences with clarity and dignity. You may wish to seek advice from a solicitor or trusted organisation to ensure your wishes are properly documented and respected.