

William Purves want to start a conversation with you

William Purves Funeral Directors is a well known name in Edinburgh. They look after the funeral arrangements for many people in Edinburgh after they have died. But did you know that they also look after the living – and that they really want you to start a conversation about your funeral right now?

They want to make that conversation an easier one to have, and to do so they have some guides on their website, and they are also happy to talk to you face to face to take instructions about your funeral and the way you would like it to be.

You are invited to write a Plan of Wishes or just start the discussion with those nearest and dearest to you. The firm believe that it is a good way to spare family any worry after your death about what you would have wanted. So set down those wishes now.



Andrew said : “We are big advocates for people actually having conversations before the time of need. I’ve met with many families, who suddenly are put in this difficult situation – a terrible situation. They’ve got so many things to think about and I’m asking them really hard questions. They’re trying to plan and think what their loved one would have wanted for a funeral, but they’ve got no idea.

“Either they didn’t want to have the conversation, or they just didn’t think about having that conversation. So we would say to people ‘Have those conversations’. It’s a difficult thing to start, it’s a difficult thing to bring up, but do have those conversations. And if you can’t have those conversations with your family, come and have the conversation with us. We do that free of charge and we keep on record what the person wants to have.

We suggested that it must seem a little peculiar going along to Purves’ beautiful offices without the immediate need of their services. Andrew agreed and said : “I think it can be! I think it can seem slightly strange for the person themselves doing that. And as a funeral director when I first started

doing it, it was slightly strange for me because I was used to dealing with the families and not necessarily with the person whose funeral it is going to be. But once you get over that, I think it can actually be a huge relief or release, because then you have notes and you have plans of what's going to happen for your funeral.

“And I think for some people, they then walk out of here with a plan and they know that they're not going to place that burden on their family, and that their wishes are going to be carried out.”

Get more information and guidance on how to plan your own set of wishes [here](#). the guide is available on the website www.williampurves.co.uk or from any one of the firm's 13 Edinburgh, Lothian or Fife branches. Alternatively telephone 0131 447 5858 to request a digital copy.

Listen to our full conversation with Tom Gordon and Andrew Purves here :



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Acorns Bereavement Support Programmes

The firm also offers a service to look after the living. The Acorns Bereavement Support Programmes are six weeks long and run four times a year. We met Andrew Purves who is one of the funeral directors – the fifth generation of the Purves family to become a funeral director.

And we also met with Tom Gordon, former chaplain at the Marie Curie Hospice and co lead of the bereavement support team at William Purves. He now facilitates the Acorns Bereavement Programmes, which he explained : “Although it’s a stand alone set of programmes, it’s under William Purves’ guidance and support.”

Tom continued : “As the company expanded with more and more people going through their hands, there was a concern that they had nowhere that they could refer people on to. It’s a way of normalising people’s reactions to loss when they don’t have anyone else even within families to speak with, but also with some guided conversation. Conversations are fine of themselves, but with good professionally trained people in different aspects of loss, we can help guide those conversations.”

Andrew admitted that the percentage of people who take up the offer of help is not huge, but he is very happy that they have it on offer. He said : “Some of them feel that it’s not for them, and that’s fine. Others feel that is something that they would like to attend. It’s something that we offer not just to our own clients, though, we make it available to anybody and

we get a number of referrals from doctors' surgeries from churches. Each programme is a six week programme and so somebody has to sign up. It's not just a matter of just turning up once and going away."

Tom took up the story. He said : "We encourage people to let us know if they're coming. And we encourage people to stay for the whole duration of the programme. Each week of the programme has a topic on a particular aspect of loss and we encourage people rather than saying, well, I'm interested in Cooking for One, or I don't know how to organise my finances, to come to the whole programme, because it's not just about the issues of loss. It's how we build relationships with each other, and how we learn from each other. And as one of our resource people says, it's the nods round the group that's just as important as anything anybody says as people are empathising on a particular aspect."

Tom has a variety of what he calls resource staff on hand and then for each of the topic weeks, they bring in specialists. He said : "We have a retired GP, we have a health and nutrition specialist, we have a financial outreach worker from the Citizens Advice Bureau, we have somebody who themselves has been bereaved over the last eight, nine years, on several occasions, several different bereavements. So we have these people that come and help us."

Tom is passionate that talking with others in a similar situation in an environment where expertise is on hand is key. He said : "We live in a society that purports to be more open and understanding of these issues. Actually, we don't and in bereavement people are closed down, and sometimes they feel shut off. So as Andrew was saying earlier, the majority of people will cope. They don't need any input or any environment in which to explore things, but for the people who do it takes them out of that isolation and checks out the normality of how they're feeling and how they're coping. And bizarrely, rather than everybody disappearing into a black hole of

depression, as we talk about death, you get flashes of light. Some days, I hear people saying 'That's the way I feel too' and so it goes on from there."

Tom went on : "Sometimes the reaction to loss won't fit other people's expectations. And one of the things that really matters in bereavement is that people take ownership of their own approach to loss. For example if you are not able to put your spouse's clothes out, even although your daughter thinks there must be something wrong with you because you still have them in the wardrobe.

"When you talk with somebody, the clothes being in a wardrobe, that can give them comfort. And actually, as on one occasion, a bereaved husband said, I take my wife's blouse off the hanger, and I smell her perfume. That's what matters to him, not whether his daughter thinks he's stuck because he hasn't got the clothes to the charity shop yet. So if we can help people take ownership of the planning of the funeral, so we can help them take ownership of the grief journey and find that in what may to other people seem slightly odd. actually matters, somebody processing their own their own response to loss.

"It's a privilege to be alongside people at the most difficult of times. Not because just because you want to do your job well and to do it to a high professional standard, but because you see the difference that makes to the people that you're working with. They are being assisted through a difficult time – it's immensely satisfying.

Acorns is a free service – even to those who are not clients of the firm. Contact them by email acorns.info@gmail.com The next programme begins on 10 January 2020 at The Eric Liddell Centre but you must sign up before attending.

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Tom Gordon