

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Death Registration and Funeral Protocol (COVID-19)

The changes below to standard procedure have come from "Guidance for care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)" published by Public Health England 31/03/20 and by directives from the General Register Office.

This guidance was published on 06/04/20. As further official information about Covid-19 is confirmed this guidance may be changed accordingly.

Contacting the Funeral Director:

- You will need to contact the Funeral Director as soon as possible about the death and burial/cremation plans so they can start preparations and timetable you into their schedule.
- Bereaved family members will want to go through the grieving process with dignity and respect for the deceased, and all services in place will support you to enable this to happen. We urge you during these difficult times to make arrangements with your Funeral Director for the funeral to take place as soon as is possible. Your Funeral Director will advise you on how to proceed with this, with the upmost of care.
- If your faith requires a quick burial, i.e. Muslim, Jewish and Gypsy/Roma you will need to ask for a Short Notice Burial.

Contacting Your Local Place of Worship:

- Until further notice your local place of worship cannot be used for the funeral service. This can only take place at the grave side or at the crematorium for a maximum of 10 immediate family members only.
- You may wish to contact your local place of worship by telephone so that arrangements can be made for a priest to attend the funeral at the cemetery or crematorium.

Contacting the Register Office:

- Within working hours (Monday to Friday 9 a.m. until 5.30 p.m.). please contact the Register Office on 01709 823542 (option 2).
- The on-call Registrar for the out of hour's burial service can be contacted on 07748142634 or 07717456795 Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Changes to the Death Registration Process:

- The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), which would previously have been given to you in a sealed envelope, will now be scanned and sent electronically from either the GP, Bereavement Centre or Coroner's Office directly to the Register Office. This will include contact details for the next of kin.
- The Registrar's Office will then contact the next of kin to arrange a **telephone only** appointment to register the death.
- Please note where there is no Coroner involvement, the General Register Office requires a death to be registered within 5 days.
- All death registrations will now take place over the phone. You will **not** be required to attend the Register Office in person as this is now closed to the public.

- After the death registration appointment has been completed the Registrar will send the Green Form 9 electronically to the Crematorium, Funeral Director and notify the hospital mortuary as appropriate. This will allow the body to be released.

Performing of Ritual Body Washing:

- Guidance will be given by your faith leader and Funeral Director on how and where this will take place if required.
- Government directive states that "mourners should not take part in rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body. Contact with the body should be restricted to those who are wearing PPE and have been trained in the appropriate use of PPE". Your faith leader and Funeral Director will give guidance on who has been given this training.
- HSE guidance "Managing infection risks when handling the deceased":
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg283.htm>
- PPE guidance from The Royal College of Pathologists:
<https://www.rcpath.org/uploads/assets/0b7d77fa-b385-4c60-b47dde930477494b/G200-TBPs-Guidance-for-care-of-deceased-during-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>
- Guidance for the donning and doffing of PPE equipment:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control#anchor>

Cemetery and Crematorium Protocols and Procedures

Please follow these protocols and procedures to ensure a consistent approach is used throughout. This will ensure all requirements are met sympathetically and protect religious rights, beliefs and most importantly keep everyone safe.

Family Representative:

- 1 immediate family member must be chosen as a point of contact between the council and the Funeral Director throughout the process.
- If immediate family members are in self-isolation, then someone from their extended family can be chosen as their representative.

How many people can attend the Cemetery/Crematorium?

- A maximum of 10 immediate family members. This is subject to change. All Funeral Directors will be kept informed.
- If the deceased has neither household nor family members in attendance, then it is possible for a modest number of friends to attend, observing the max number of 10.
- Government guidelines state: Social Distancing of at least 2 meters (3 steps) to be observed at all times, including when travelling to and from the funeral.

Who can attend the Cemetery/Crematorium?

- 1 priest to lead the religious rites (appointed by the family).
- Funeral Director.
- Up to 10 maximum immediate family members (To be discussed with the Funeral Director).

- Individuals who have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), or who are part of a household where someone has symptoms, or who are vulnerable to severe infection should not participate in rituals or religious gatherings.
- The cemetery/crematorium requests that attendees do not arrive at different times and follow on behind the hearse observing the social distancing rule.

Funeral Prayers/Service at the Crematorium:

- Funeral prayers/service must only take place at the crematorium.
- The priest should lead the prayers/service while the mourners should seat themselves in the crematorium observing the social distancing rule. Seating has been adjusted to help with this.
- The deceased should be cremated in a coffin complete with nameplate.
- After the prayers/service have been completed the mourners should leave the crematorium observing the social distancing rule.

Funeral Prayers/Service at the Cemetery:

- Funeral prayers/service must only take place in the cemetery at the grave side.
- After the prayers/service have been completed, the deceased should be buried immediately.
- Only those lowering the body should be at the side of the grave, everyone else should maintain adequate distance observing the social distancing rule.
- The deceased should be buried in a coffin complete with nameplate.
- After the prayers/service have been completed the mourners should leave the crematorium observing the social distancing rule.

Health and Safety:

- Mourners should not take part in rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body. Contact with the body should be restricted to those who are wearing PPE and have been trained in the appropriate use of PPE.