

For information only. Parts of this correspondence will have changed since its issue.

Dear Funeral Directors/arrangers

This is our first update since 1 May and is Covid19 update number 7.

We thank you all for your assistance over the past few months in dealing with the issues we have all faced in the light of the pandemic. Families in the most part have been very understanding and supportive in our efforts to protect the public and staff and to ensure the continuity of our business.

As we are starting to see a decline in the number of funerals, as of this week we have implemented some positive changes to assist our families.

Permitted number of mourners. We have now increased the number of mourners permitted in the chapels and at graveside from 10 to 16. This is based on a reassessment of risk but not on any change made to government legislation, therefore restrictions permitting immediate family members only, remain in place until the legislation changes.

This is an absolute maximum. Other people will be turned away. Please may I ask that you do not put our chapel/burial attendant in a difficult position and continue to work with families to keep the numbers low and we suggest that families withhold the details of the funeral to other persons.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

Alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff only the following are to attend:

- members of the person's household
- close family members
- or if the above are unable to attend, close friends
- attendance of a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved request this (not included in the 16 permitted persons)

Throughout the pandemic we have not had the need to reduce the service times in chapels. For early services (before 10am) the allotted time is half an hour with 20 minutes for the service. For services after 10am the allotted time is 45 minutes with 30 minutes for the service. The additional time 'buffer' is for cleaning and preparation for the following service. Please continue to ask families to aim to arrive 10 minutes prior to the allotted start time. The service starts at that time regardless of the time mourners enter the chapel or the minister starts the service. Overruns are chargeable.

Extended (double) slots are now available for cremation services at Putney Vale and the appropriate fees are payable. These allow for a one-hour service.

Webcasting: The fee for the live webcast will return to its normal rate of £52 from 1st July. We will honour the reduced fee for any services already booked for July up to the end of today.

Burial of cremated remains will be reintroduced from 1st July however we will not introduce the scattering of ashes in the gardens until a later date when we have the staffing resources in place to carry these out safely.

Cremation memorial sales will be reintroduced from 1st July and we will contact families in due course.

The crematorium building remains closed (other than for funeral services) and there is no public access until further notice. We are well aware that it is Father's Day this coming Sunday but as the building is closed by law we regret that families are still not able to visit their loved ones plaques/niches.

The temporary mortuary located in the car park at Putney Vale has reassuringly not been required but will remain in place and on standby for the foreseeable future – therefore we still have limitations on parking.

Parking: For the last four weeks we have had a parking scheme in place along the main drive for funeral parking, with allocated disabled spaces nearer the chapel. This has worked very well in keeping vehicles away from the chapels. Please advise your families of the need to park within the designated areas and if these are full to turn right and park in a sensible place in the cemetery.

And a few reminders...

Burial gatherings: We are still seeing some burials at graveside with a large number of mourners regardless of the restrictions in place. Many of these mourners do not adhere to social distancing. I have instructed my colleagues and our contractors that if a large gathering is taking place to keep well away from the graveside until it is safe to approach to carry out their duties.

We are required by law to identify the coffin so please ask your Funeral Director to ensure that this can be done safely either at the hearse or at the grave prior to the interment. The attendant will then withdraw to a safe distance. Funeral Directors must stay until the mourners leave the site and must take control when asked to do so by our staff or our contractor. The grave will not be backfilled until safe. Backfilling by family is still not permitted with the exception of a handful of soil and this again must be controlled by the Funeral Director.

Family collection of ashes: We are getting complaints from applicants that we are not contacting them to say that their loved one's ashes are ready for collection. Please note that we do not do this until 3 months have passed. The applicant (or nominated person on the form 1) needs to contact the office to book a date and time to collect. For Funeral Director collection please continue to collect these as we are limited on space.

Depending on government and industry guidance and changes to legislation the above may be reviewed at any time and we will endeavour to contact you with further updates in due course.

Thank you for your time and continued support.

Stay well and take care.

Kelvin.